

## BOOK REVIEW

Đurđica Težak, Editor

*Professor Božo Težak,  
the Torchbearer of Science*

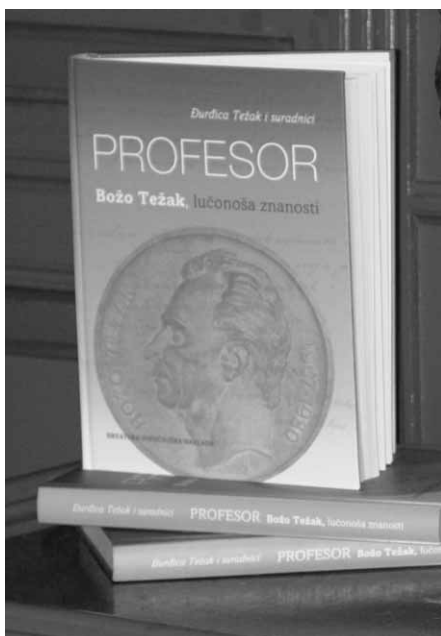
[Profesor Božo Težak,  
lučonoša znanosti]

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Professor Božo Težak (Varaždin, July 27, 1907 – Zagreb, May 16, 1980) was one of the most influential Croatian scientists in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His wife Professor Đurđica Težak and Težak's many coworkers and students have prepared this book to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth.



Professor Božo Težak at the time of his graduation



The title page of the book *Professor Božo Težak, the Torchbearer of Science*

Professor Težak was a polymath who influenced several areas of Croatian science and informatics. He completed elementary-school (1917) and high-school (1925) in Varaždin and graduated in chemical engineering (1930)

from the Technical Faculty in Zagreb. He spent a year (1930–1931) with Professor Frederick G. Donnan at the University College in London. After a year of compulsory military service (1931–1932) and four years (1932–1936) as a chemist employed by that-time Yugoslav Ministry of Defence, Professor Težak returned to Zagreb. Over the following 10 years, he was employed by the City of Zagreb (1936–1937), Zagreb Gasworks (1937–1938), Civil Defence School (1938–1941) and City of Zagreb Chemical Laboratory (1941–1945).

In 1945, Professor Težak became a lecturer in the Department of Pharmacy, University of Zagreb. That same year, he obtained his PhD from the Technical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, with the dissertation *Investigation of Precipitating Structures of Barium Sulphate* [Istraživanje taložnih struktura barium sulfata]. The following year (1946), he was appointed associate professor of physical chemistry and the first head of the physico-chemical laboratory within the Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb. In the early 1952, Professor Težak became full professor and remained head of the laboratory until his retirement in 1977.

Professor Težak was also involved in organizing research in physical chemistry at the newly founded Ruđer Bošković Institute in Zagreb. In 1954, he became head

of the Department of Physical Chemistry at the Institute and remained at that position until 1967.

In 1953, Professor Težak was elected Editor-in-Chief of *Croatica Chemica Acta*, the chemistry journal published since 1927 by the Croatian Chemical Society. He served as editor of the journal until his premature death in 1980. He modernized the journal and made it recognizable in the family of Mid-European chemistry journals. The Croatian Chemical Society introduced in 1988 the *Božo Težak Medal* to emphasize the important role of Professor Težak in the Society (secretary, 1946–1952, and president, 1952–1954) and in editing *Croatica Chemica Acta*. The *Božo Težak Medal* is awarded from time to time to a distinguished Croatian or foreign chemist in recognition of her or his work. There is also a Croatian national award for information science named the *Božo Težak Award* and a society of information scientists named *Božo Težak Association of Information Scientists*.

Professor Težak's research in chemistry was in colloid chemistry. He was especially interested in precipitation, crystallization, coagulation and flocculation in ionic solutions (see his partisan review in *Croatica Chemica Acta* **48** (1976) 391–421). His research and research of his co-workers became so recognizable that it was identified in the literature as Težak's (sometimes also the Zagreb) school of colloid chemistry. This was particularly visible at the five *International Summer Conferences on Chemistry of Solid/Liquid Interfaces* (I: Dubrovnik-Cavtat, June 23–July 4, 1969); II: Rovinj, September, 1970); III: Rovinj, June 27–July 5, 1972); IV: Cavtat, June 23–July 3, 1975; V: Cavtat, June 25–July 3, 1979) and especially so at the last one dedicated to the memory of Professor Težak (Cavtat, June 22–30, 1982). Besides chemistry, professor Težak did a lot of work in devising the INDOK (information-documentation-communication) system. His aim was to devise a user-friendly system for locating, selecting, classification and distribution of scientific information.

Professor Težak was all his life an idealist who believed in science and scientists. A year before he died (1979), he formulated the ethical guidance for scientists in four deontological principles: the principles of openness, freedom, responsibility and trust.

The book *Professor Božo Težak, the Torchbearer of Science* describes in 16 chapters Professor Težak's life and his achievements, as summarized above. They are written by Professor Težak's students, co-workers, colleagues, friends and admirers – in toto 41 authors from home and abroad. The Editor, Professor Đurđica Težak, designed the book so that each author described the particular period of time when she or he was associated with Professor Težak. From the book, Professor Težak emerges as a scientist-altruist with a very wide range of interests and fundamental achievements in each area of his work. Thus, the reader learns why Professor Težak as a chemist became an internationally known physical chemist, how as an editor he made *Croatica Chemica Acta* an internationally recognized chemistry journal, how as an organizer of scientific meetings, helped by several younger colleagues, he succeeded in organizing the five most influential chemistry meetings on solid/liquid interfaces, how as an information scientist he was among the first visionaries who in the early 1960s predicted the pivotal role that computers would have in the development of science in general, and in informatics in particular, how he founded in 1967 the Referral Center of the University of Zagreb, how he founded in 1969 and edited until he died the journal *Informatologia Yugoslavica*, the first Croatian journal of Informatology – with which journal and his work information science was established in Croatia, about his role in the Dubrovnik conferences on information systems and many, many more details about his activities in science and informatics.

I belong to the group of Professor Težak's admirers. However, I was also his student in the sense that as a graduate student I attended his lectures on *Research Methods and Techniques*, held for 2 semesters in the academic year 1962/1963. Professor Težak was also a member of the examining board for both my MSc thesis and PhD thesis. Finally, under Professor Težak's influence, I became a member of the Editorial Board of *Croatica Chemica Acta* in 1967 and have been serving faithfully this journal since that year. I do not believe that before Professor Težak there had ever been a scientist like him in Croatia and I know that after him there have been none to date.

Nenad Trinajstić