

IN MEMORIAM
MILDA IRENA IGNATAVIČIŪTĖ
(1930–2015)

On 7 January 2015, Dr Habil. Milda Irena Ignatavičiūtė passed away in Vilnius, aged 84 years, after a prolonged period of frail health. With her death we lost a prominent colleague in Lithuanian mycology.

Milda Ignatavičiūtė was born on 15 June 1930 in Viduklė (Raseiniai district) in a family of a school teacher. She started her education in her native town, and continued in Vilnius, whereto the family moved during troubled and dangerous post-war years. After matriculation in 1949, she enrolled as a student at Vilnius University, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, where she graduated with a diploma of biologist (Botany) in 1954. In the same year, she started her PhD studies at the Institute of Botany of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. On 16 June 1959, she defended a doctor's (candidate of sciences) dissertation "*Ustilaginales* fungi in Lithuania" and was appointed a senior researcher at the newly established Laboratory of Phytopathology (later – Laboratory of Phytopathogenic Microorganisms) of the Institute of Botany of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. On 22 October 1972, she defended Doctor Habilitus thesis "*Ustilaginales* fungi of the Baltic Region". In 1981, she moved her scientific activities to the Laboratory of Cryptogams (later – Laboratory of Mycology), where she worked until her retirement in 2000.

As early as during the student years, M. Ignatavičiūtė became interested in fungi, which was much due to Professor Antanas Minkevičius, founder of the studies on cryptogams in Lithuania and bearer of European research tradition in the country under the Soviet rule. Prof. A. Minkevičius later supervised doctoral thesis of M. Ignatavičiūtė, and they collaborated in research almost until his last years of life. Primary research interest of Milda Ignatavičiūtė were smut fungi, which resulted in books "The smuts of the Baltic Region" (1975) (a revised version of her Doctor Habilitus thesis) and „*Ustilaginales*“ in the series *Mycota Lithuaniae* (2001). However, she



studied other pathogenic micromycetes as well and published a number of papers and three more books, together with co-authors.

Most of M. Ignatavičiūtė active research life took place when Iron curtain was still down, so her possibilities to contact colleagues abroad or to take part at the international events were very limited to non-existent. However, she took active part in the Symposiums of Baltic Mycologists and Lichenologists (starting from the first one held in 1959, in Tartu, Estonia) and other conferences in the Soviet Union.

During her research, she collected a rich material of pathogenic microfungi, which make a significant part of fungal collection at the Herbarium of the Institute of Botany, Nature Research Centre (BILAS). She also popularised mycological and phytopathological research by publishing articles in various journals for farmers and gardeners.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to work closely with "Doctor Milda" (for so she was called at the Laboratory of Mycology) will remember not only

her vast knowledge, her extraordinarily sharp mind, but also her everlasting optimism, love of life and all its aspects, her beautiful singing and last, though not the least – her excellent sense of humour, so everlasting, that some pieces still live as a Laboratory folklore. The memory of Milda Ignatavičiūtė will long live among friends and colleagues.

Her last resting place is in Rokantiškės cemetery, Vilnius, along with her beloved husband Balys and her parents.

Printed books by Milda Ignatavičiūtė

IGNATAVIČIŪTĖ M., 1975: The smuts of the Baltic Region. – Vilnius. (In Russian).

IGNATAVIČIŪTĖ M., 2001: Kūliečiai (*Ustilaginales*). Lietuvos grybai (Mycota Lithuaniae), 4. – Vilnius.

IGNATAVIČIŪTĖ M., TREIGIENĖ A., 1998: Acervuliečiai (*Melanconiales*). Lietuvos grybai (Mycota Lithuaniae), 9. – Vilnius.

MINKEVIČIUS A., IGNATAVIČIŪTĖ M., 1991: Rūdiečiai (*Uredinales*). Lietuvos grybai (Mycota Lithuaniae), 5(1). – Vilnius.

MINKEVIČIUS A., IGNATAVIČIŪTĖ M., 1993: Rūdiečiai (*Uredinales*). Lietuvos grybai (Mycota Lithuaniae), 5(2). – Vilnius.

Jurga Motiejūnaitė
Nature Research Centre, Institute of Botany
Žaliųjų Ežerų Str. 49, LT-08406 Vilnius,
Lithuania