



## WORDS ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF PROF. DR. PETER ANDONOV

Prof. Dr. Petar Andonov Stoynev was born in 1919 in the hamlet of Gorno Uyno, Kyustendil region. His remarkable life is a vivid example of how a poor peasant boy attained the highest levels of achievement in public health and science. Hopefully, his story will become an incentive for young people who, through hard work, perseverance and dedication, can achieve high goals.

Prof. Andonov's merits for the development of Bulgarian virology are indisputable. In 1957, having successfully defended a thesis in Moscow and ignoring the tempting offers for a career, he returned to Bulgaria. In 1958, the Ministry of Health entrusted him with organizing a separate Department of Virology at the Scientific Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology (NIEM). Initially, the Department comprised the existing influenza, enteroviruses, smallpox and rabies laboratories, and the unit of electron microscopy, located in the main building. Shortly, new collaborators were recruited for the new units for hepatitis, cell cultures, echo and coxsackie viruses. Soon afterward, in 1960, the

team was reinforced with the arrival of new members, and more laboratories were built and equipped for respiratory viruses, biochemistry and physiology of viruses, measles and mumps. The facilities of the former Anti-Plague Institute were assigned for the needs of the Department of Virology. At the time, the existing premises were only few - former stables adapted into several primitive laboratories by the collaborators themselves. Every week the team would meet to discuss the work in each of the laboratories and share scientific news. In warm weather, discussions were held in the courtyard under a blooming chestnut-tree, or in a wooden shack in the cooler seasons.

As early as 1956, Prof. Andonov managed to convince the leadership of the Ministry of Health of the need of a new building. His dream was materialized within a short term with the construction of the Department of Virology at 44-a Stoletov Boulevard. Later, after the onset of the AIDS problem, another special building was erected in the yard of the institute.

Owing to the efforts of Prof. Andonov, a network for epidemiological prophylaxis and prevention was created in Bulgaria. On his initiative, sanitary-epidemiological stations were set up in the major cities, which were specialized units for virological investigations.

The elected Specialized Council of Virology at the Higher Attestation Commission under the chairmanship of Prof. Andonov had an important role. In 1962, Prof. Andonov was invited to organize a course in virology at the Faculty of Biology, Sofia State University, and was elected professor of virology. The faculty became the source of young new specialists. Thus, Prof. Andonov successfully secured sources of both virology specialists and scientific potential, which took Bulgarian virology to a leading position in Eastern Europe.

In view of his outstanding qualities, the state assigned Prof. Andonov with a number of important positions: Deputy Chairman of the Medical Academy, Deputy Minister, Rector of the Medical University, Editor-In-Chief of *Zdraven Front* newspaper, and other responsible posts. Deservedly, for his successful work he was awarded with the highest state and academic titles.

Prof. Andonov's prolific and productive organizational experience, however, does not come short of his qualities of a scholar, which won him international prestige. He gained recognition by becoming member of a number of committees of the WHO, including the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses. Prof. Andonov has taken part in many international events and editorial boards of leading academic journals. His active research work was published in more than 200 articles and reviews. He is the author of the first Textbook of General Virology. Prof. Andonov is author, co-author and consultant to many major achievements of other members of the Department of Virology, and of more than 15 patents and inventions. The main directions of his extensive research focused on the prophylaxis, diagnosis and treatment of viral pathologies in Bulgaria. New methods were implemented fairly quickly in the Department. In most cases, teams worked hard under his leadership on the development of vaccines and therapeutic agents.

Based on original methodology, the team Andonov, Dundarov and Bakalov started the preparation of antiherpes type 1 and 2 vaccines, which by far outperform all other antiherpes vaccines. They

became the only commercialized vaccines in the world, used widely with great interest abroad. Owing to them and the efficient drug PANDAVIR, the lives of many new-born babies was saved, as well as the sight of hundreds of patients and thousands of patients with severe forms of genital, labial and skin herpes.

It is worth mentioning that the vaccines, diagnostic and therapeutic agents produced over the years in the Department of Virology contributed to the low morbidity and mortality rates. In that respect, Bulgaria was held up as a positive example to most countries in the world.

This enormous and fruitful work was covered in thousands of national and foreign journals and was popularized at local and international events.

The year 2018 will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Department of Virology at the National Centre of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, an event which we hope will receive well-deserved recognition and the role of Prof. Andonov will be highly appreciated.

Prof. Stefan Dundarov, MD, DSc  
Prof. Hristo Odysseev, MD, DSc