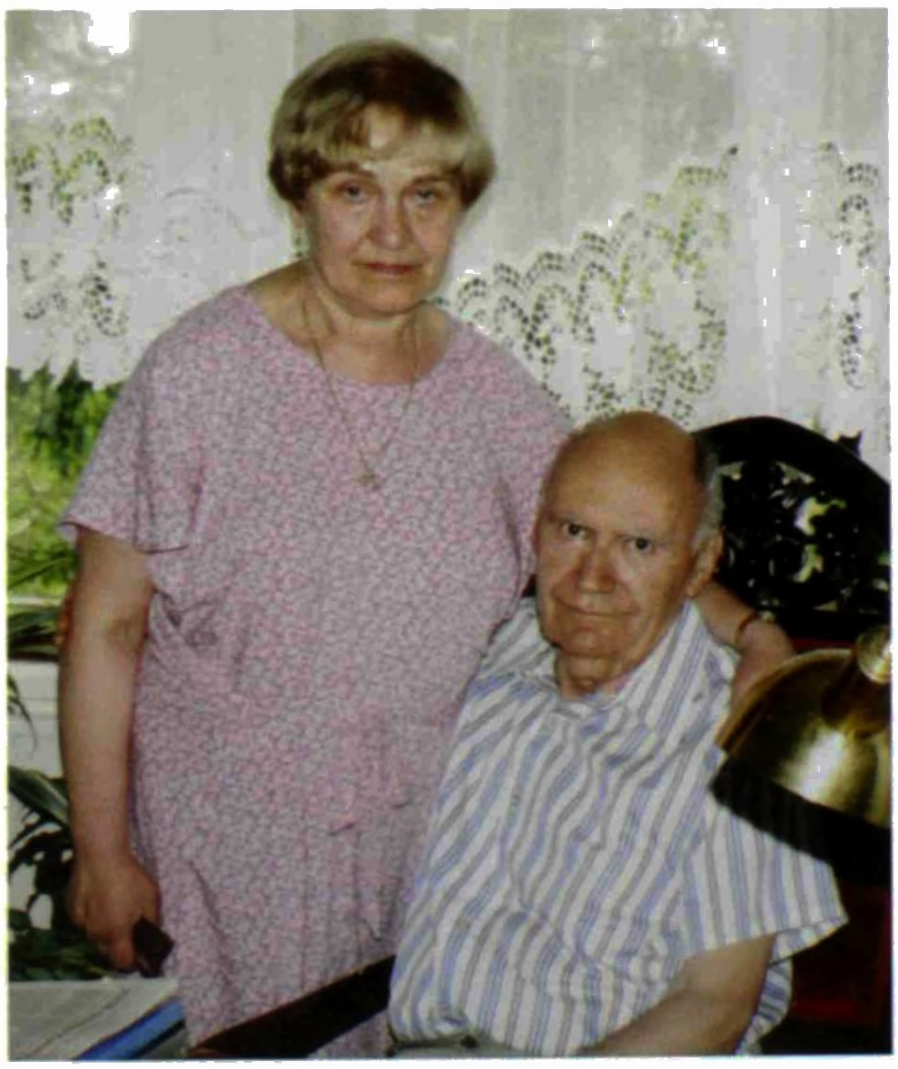
Prof. PETER AND Dr. MAGDOLNA TETENYI OF BUDAKALASZ, HUNGARY.

by R. O. B. Wijesekera

In the tranquility of the Hungarian suburb of Budakalasz, not far from Budapest itself, nested a unique Institute dedicated to the study of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants. This Hungarian Institution and its Director for many decades Professor Peter Tetenyi, has been very well known to those interested in Phytomedicinals throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia. A pioneering authority on "chemosystematics" – the science of classifying plants based on their chemical constituent secondary metabolites, - Professor Tetenyi and his wife and collaborator, Magdolna nee Erdosy, are universally identified with their book entitled: "Infraspecific Chemical Taxa of Medicinal Plants."

Professor Tetenyi, and Magda Tetenyi realized only too well, the dichotomy resulting from the renaissance of interest in medicinal and aromatic plants, which was a prominent phenomenon of the decades following the 1970's.



Prof. Peter Tetenyi and Dr. Magdolna Tetenyi in their home in Budapest

Those in the developing part of the world knew well that the interest in these plants had scarcely declined. But in the wake of this renaissance a twin danger became apparent; that the constituents of these plants and the plants themselves were fast in danger of becoming sacrificial to the industrial process, and as a consequence the damage to the biodiversity, mostly in the countries of the Third World, by excessive and unsympathetic utilization. Professor Tetenyi, as the President of the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Section of the International Society of Horticultural Science (ISHS), was mindful of this dilemma. Together with Dr. H.H. van der Borg, the secretary-general of ISHS he set forth to foster a dream of commemorating the 500th anniversary, of the expedition of Christopher Columbus to the Americas. It was believed that this was the landmark event in the exchange of germplasm from the vast Americas, to Europe.

This dream of his brought forth a unique event where the world's specialists on medicinal and aromatic plants gathered together to discuss the aspects of human welfare and the plant systems. Thus was born the First World Congress of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants for Human Welfare or WOCMAP, which was staged in Maastricht, Netherlands, in July 1992. The record of this highly successful and very scientific congress is published in Acta Horticulturae of 1992.

WOCMAP brought together not only over 350 scientific personnel representing a variety of disciplines, but also the UN agencies, FAO, WHO, UNIDO, and UNESCO who all had interests in the area. This initial effort inspired by Tetenyi continues, and now like the ASOMPS inspired by Finn Sandberg, (See LNP Digest vol.2 issue 2, p.09), continues to this day and has been staged in a variety of venues.

On a personal note, this author and his wife were privileged to share a special relationship with the Tetenyis, and frequently enjoyed their

hospitality at Budapest Uniquely, we spent my sixtieth birthday at the Tetenyi's and enjoyed the hospitality the fine cooking of Magda.; and also a special birthday cake made by her.. We shared common interests in the subject area of medicinal and aromatic plants. The home of Magda and Peter was a delightful experience for us. In 1996 the author and his wife Marina again visited the Tetenyis during the World Science Congress in Budapest. He was recovering then from a heart condition. Fortunately, they are both well and spend a comparatively quiet life with sons Peter, Tomas and the families.

Tetenyi served as a UNIDO expert and visited many countries in Africa, with a special interest in Rwanda. Known universally for his modest bearing and his wife for her warm welcoming personality, Peter and Magda Tetenyi are a most popular scientific couple among many international friends.

Several Sri Lankans have spent their training in the Medicinal Plants Research Institute of Hungary in Budakalasz, during the period Tetenyi was at its helm.

The Digest wishes the Tetenyi's good health and many more years.

PHYSICIAN - SCIENTISTS AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

If a country's medical research enterprise is to make the contributions it is poised to deliver, the progressive dangerous decline in the number of physician-scientists must be reversed. This decline-most pronounced among trainees and young investigators-has resulted from societal pressures toward careers in primary care, economic disincentives, a shift in funding priorities, and the growth of managed care. Because physician-scientists are indispensable participants in the bi-directional flow of information from bedside to laboratory, and because no single agency can correct this problem alone a major national effort is recommended to establish a climate in academia conducive to creating physician-scientists, to set up a network of clinical research units to enlist the support of foundations, biopharmaceutical companies and managed care entities, as well as government and academia, and to set up a national database of physician scientists.

Source:
L. E. Rosenberg, Department of Molecular Biology, Princeton University, NJ 08544 USA in Science 15 Jan 1999 Vol 283 p 331-2.

PARACELSUS - THE PHYSICIAN – CHEMIST WHO SHAPED THE DESTINY OF CHEMISTRY AND MEDICINE.

Phillip Theophrashis Bombast Von Hohenheim Paracelsus, b. Switzerland 1493 is the subject of a Book by Phillip Ball (Winner of 2005 the Aventis prize for science books) called "The Devil's Doctor".

Ball reckons that Paracelsus who lived at the beginnings of modern medicine and science, who practised medicine and Chemistry, should have ranked with the greats of renaissance science –such as Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, Boyle, Vesalius, and Harvey.

It was his temperament that may have been responsible for this lapse. He was also strongly wedded to superstition, magic and religious belief. The sixteenth century was all of this and out of the moves towards rational thinking modern science came about.

The book is reviewed by George Mills Chem World. 2006, p62.

Paracelsus has his place in the History of Science for the identification of Chemistry with Medicine. Early Chemistry and the therapeutic agents were largely plant-based.

Sourced from Chem World.4,62(2006)