

LUIGI ALOE: SON OF CALABRIA, ARISTOCRAT OF WORLD NEUROSCIENCE

The ancient Greek word ἀρετή (*arete*), in its basic sense, means „excellence of any kind“, and, respectively, aristocrat (*aristos* - best, *kratos* - power) – power of the best, of the excellence, of the moral virtue, of the nobility, of the knowledge and study. The man of *arete* is a person of the highest effectiveness, using all own creative faculties to achieve real results.

Dr Luigi Aloe, a perfect example of *arete*, was born in 1943 in Amantea - 600 km south of Rome. We leave in the morning with his Lancia and passed through Campania and Calabria to get in Amantea, moving along orange and olive trees and vineyards of Southern Italy - Enotria (from Greek, the land of vine) as it was called in the time of *Magna Graecia*.

- Southern Italy is not just wine, it is a land of philosophers - said Luigi. Here in Elea were Xenophanes, Parmenides and Zeno and his paradoxes. And as a student recited a verse of Parmenides' “fast flying chariot, and girls pointing my way”. Pythagoras and his students were also Southerners - lived in Croton and drank *Ciro* during the symposium. In Calabria was born philosopher Tommaso Campanella and Nobel Prize winner in medicine Renato Dulbecco.- *Hopos esti* (that is) - all roads lead to Enotria first, and then to Rome - summed up his story Luigi.

Amantea is a relatively small city, located between the Tyrrhenian Sea and the mountain Celia, in the province of Cosenza, Calabria region. Since they were born, sea and mountain are entwined in plenty of sun, wine and fish.



During the winter population of about 15,000 people, while in the summer - more than a million visitors. They ate tons of fish and drank thousands of liters of wine. Here you can feel better the sense of Italian *bel paese* (beautiful country) and *dolce vita*.

Luigi reminds frequently of his grandmother Rosaria who very diligently cared for him and his brothers Rocco, Franco, Alfredo and sister Rosaria.

The sun was rising when we left Amantea and move 600 kilometers north to continue our research in Rome. When returned to Varna, I wrote to Luigi:

*Absent already in Amantea,
Signora Rosaria is drinking
wine with God in Paradise.*

And delightedly smiles seeing that Luigi Aloe is a force and a soul of nature, who strives to always be *arete* in studying the multiple biology of NGF and related molecules in health and disease. A selected list of his research as Visiting Scientist includes: Department of Biology, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, USA; Chicago Faculty of Medicine, Chicago University, Chicago, Illinois, USA; Department of Anatomy, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA; Department of Biobehavior Science, Oxford University, Oxford, England; Department of Anatomy, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England; Department of Pharmacology, McGill University, Montréal, Canada; Nancy Institute of Warsavia, Warsaw, Poland; Laboratory of Cell Biology, Medical University, Varna,

Bulgaria; Faculty of Medicine, University Arcavacata, Cosenza, Italy.

Starting his scientific carrier in 1967 with Rita Levi-Montalcini in Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, Luigi Aloe in 1973 returned to *bel paese* at Institute of Neurobiology, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR) in Rome, from 1995 being Research Director of the Institute.

Sicut matribus sit Deus nobis (As to our mothers may God be to us)*, Luigi.

George N. Chaldakov

**A paraphrase of the Latin proverb Sicut patribus sit Deus nobis (As to our fathers may God be to us).*