

Reminiscences from the Third (2009) Weigl Conference

KARL MARAMOROSCH

(Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey, maramorosch@yahoo.com)

and WACLAW SZYBALSKI

(University of Wisconsin, szybalski@oncology.wisc.edu)

OFFICIAL NAME OF THE CONFERENCE:

3rd UKRAINIAN-POLISH WEIGL CONFERENCE “MICROBIOLOGY ON SERVICE FOR HUMAN”,
Ukraine, Odessa, 14-17 2009

The third Polish-Ukrainian Conference honoring the memory of Prof. Rudolf Weigl was held in Odessa, Ukraine, in September 2009 at Odessa National I.I. Mechnykov University. This large meeting was organized by the bi-national committee headed in Ukraine by Volodymir Ivanytsia, Pro-Rector and Head of Microbiology and Virology, Mechnikov University in Odessa, and in Poland by Prof. Dr. Marek Niemiałtowski, Head of the Department of Immunology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW), and The Committee on Microbiology of Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). Prof. Niemiałtowski conceived the plan that combined the scientific part of the 3-day conference with visits to numerous historical localities en route from Warszawa to and from the Black Sea. Instead of flying, 38 Polish microbiologists traveled by a Volvo auto car through Lwów, Kołomyja, Czerniowce, Chocim, Kamieniec Podolski, Winnica, visiting en route Humań (with legendary historical park, Zofiówka, “pearl amid the steppes” and inspiration of several Polish poets, established in 1797 by Count Stanisław Szczęśny Potocki for his third wife, Zofia Galvani) and other historical localities, then traveling by boat and auto car to the Danube Delta and returning from Odessa *via* Kijov, Tarnopol, Krzemieniec, Począjów, Dublany (Agricultural College of Lviv Polytechnics) and Bełżec. All the details and the assembling of invited conference participants required a tremendous effort by Prof. Niemiałtowski, who for over a year corresponded with microbiologists from universities and research institutions in Ukraine and in Warsaw, Kraków, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Łódź, Lublin, Lund (Sweden), Madison and

New Brunswick (USA), Puławy, Opole, Olsztyn, Poznań, Szczecin, Toruń, and Wrocław, as well as with Prof. V. Sibirny (Rzeszów) who made all arrangements in Ukrainian hotels and provided detailed information about localities en route. Jointly with Prof. Ivanytsia, who was our perfect and dedicated host, Prof. Niemiałtowski prepared the detailed program of more than 200 oral and poster presentations.

The conference started with historical reminiscences and details of Weigl’s monumental development of the first vaccine against exanthematic typhus that saved the life of millions of people, were presented by A. and S. Hnatush and by W. Szybalski, who also spoke about his beginnings of synthetic biology. K. Maramorosch recalled how the description of Weigl’s use of human body lice as experimental laboratory animals inspired him to become a virologist.

The strictly scientific program covered several subjects: (1) Microbial systematics and ecology, (2) Microbial biochemistry and genetics, (3) Food microbiology and microbial biotechnology, (4) Antimicrobial preparations, (5) Virology and immunology. All together 30 lectures were presented. Among others, W. Barabasz (Kraków) discussed the effects of microorganisms on the quality of soils. J. Szczański (SGGW) presented the action of high pressure and temperature on *Salmonella enteridis*. V. Ivanytsia described his research of marine biology in Ukraine. A. Jaworski (Łódź) described bacterial protective mechanisms against bacteriophages, and A. Skorupska (Lublin) studies of symbiotic *R. leguminosarum* *bv. trifolii*. K. Wojciechowski (Warsaw/Dublin) described the CENTAUR organization, controlling

microbiological quality of food products. New antibacterial compounds were described by several Ukrainian scientists. M. Niemiałowski (SGGW) informed about his use of the *Ectromelia orthopox* virus as a variola virus model.

A 232-page volume with abstracts of oral and poster presentations was distributed to all conference participants.

In 2011 the 4th Weigl conference will be organized by Prof. Andrzej Gamian in Wrocław, Poland. The participants of the Odessa conference hope that the friendly collaboration between Polish and Ukrainian microbiologists will be further strengthened, resulting in significant joint achievements.

Karl Maramorosch and Waclaw Szybalski

NOTE:

The Polish participants in the Conference in Odessa are very grateful to our Senior Colleagues, Professors Karl Maramorosh and Waclaw Szybalski (Authors of the letter) for honoring us with their presence at the conference and their company en route. The possibility of having scientific discussions with them and participating together in all social events was very uplifting. We also greatly appreciate their friendship, interest in Polish scientific life and strong support.

Mirosława Włodarczyk