Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics PAS team during celebration of Poland's accession to EU, 01.05.2004 (photo L. Laskowski)
This issue of *Acta Biochimica Polonica* comprises articles written on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland

It is a privilege to introduce to readers this special issue of *Acta Biochimica Polonica* — in fact, a two-fold privilege. First, because this issue honors the 50th anniversary of the Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics PAS, an institution with which I have been linked already for 37 years, an institution belonging to the constellation of world laboratories which for the last half century have worked toward understanding of molecular genetics.

Second, because the proposal to prepare this special issue was made by the Editor of ABP, the journal of the Polish Biochemical Society. The foundation of the Society and the creation of both ABP and the Institute occurred almost simultaneously, half a century ago, in a period when scientists were only just winning back their independence from ideologues. The history of ABP, PBS and IBB are interlaced and the Journal was always a trusted place for us to submit our results.

This issue obviously presents only a selection of research going on at the Institute. It is a kind of time-lapse shot of ongoing laboratory activity at the institute in the fall of 2004. In understanding with Editors, we have been willing to give a record of progress, but without either overdoing and keeping for this issue results otherwise ripe for publications or to infringe upon the editorial rules by including papers not up to the Journal’s standards. So even if this is indeed a special issue, it is still also a regular one, even if devoted to papers coming from one scientific institution.

This overview, while not complete, does however give us a general picture of the science done today at IBB. Bioinformatics (papers of Zielenkiewicz, Pawłowski, Wegrzyn) has become a standard tool for analysing cell metabolism. Bacteria gene regulation (papers by Sirko, Grzesiuk, Kern-Zdanowicz, Jagura-Burdzcy) as well as lower fungi molecular genetics (papers by Kruszewska, Szkoipińska, Zagórska, Grabińska) are analysed in a whole genome functional context. Such genomics culture stems from the expertise the Institute obtained through EU programmes on yeast genome sequence and function.

RNA genomes (papers by Bretner, Podstolski) are still focusing interest of several IBB research groups. The same is true concerning polyprehols structure and functions (papers by Bajda, Świężewska, Jankowski, Szkoipińska, Grabińska). The strong long-lasting interest of IBB in mutagenesis and repair is documented in papers by Tudek and Kuśmierek. Applied potential is indeed well documented by papers devoted to plant transformants and DNA immunisation of birds.

I hope the issue, even if devoted to one scientific institution, still presents an array of novel data in several fields of interest and would well show the main attraction of biology as a science — its versatility.

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