

## Four Decades of FEBS

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### THE FOUNDING OF FEBS AND DEFINING ITS ROLE

FEBS, the Federation of European Biochemical Societies, came into official existence on 1 January 1964, with 18 adhering societies from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Since 1959, this founding had been preceded by contacts of The Biochemical Society with several continental Biochemical Societies and by holding joint meetings. At the opening of the first meeting, on Sunday 22 March 1964 at the National Liberal Club in London, the 18 Society delegates to the FEBS Council, plus the officers of FEBS (Fig. 1), autographed a copy of the statutes 'of the first hour' which filled only one page (Fig. 2) (to date the FEBS Statutes occupy some 32 pages). The decisive goal

is formulated in paragraph 1: "The Federation exists to promote the science of biochemistry, and in particular to encourage closer contacts between European biochemists by arranging meetings, exchanging information, and promoting contacts between the members of the Constituent Societies."

Asking myself why it was the early sixties FEBS came into existence, I reckon that this was exactly the period after the war, when young scientists in Europe, many of them having just finished their academic education or having started a research career, sought a forum to establish contacts with their colleagues from other European countries. Thus, it was a far-sighted decision and a rewarding initiative of the founders of FEBS in setting up an organisation to promote co-operation among European biochemists, by organizing annual meetings and fostering advanced courses that would not only serve to provide training in new experimental strate-

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\*Lecture presented at the 29<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Federation of European Biochemical Societies, Warsaw, Poland, 26 June–1 July 2004.

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gies but also to bring together young biochemists from all over Europe. Clearly, this concept was to bear fruit: it provided an excellent opportunity among young researchers to exchange their ideas and views, both in scientific and in political terms. I think that scientists have contributed a great deal to overcome national barriers, at a time to build contacts between people from 'Western' and 'Eastern' countries, and to promote the idea of a European Union. I even dare say that in this respect scientists were much ahead of the

pendence, though sometimes it was not easy for Council to define how far to extend the 'European area'. Today, with more than 40 000 members distributed among 41 countries, FEBS is one of the largest organisations in European life sciences. The members (the Constituent and Associated Societies of FEBS) as per 2003 can be taken from Fig. 3.

From its beginning, all FEBS activities are supervised by Council, which is composed of one delegate from each Constituent Society and the members of the Executive Committee



**Figure 1.** First meeting of FEBS Council at the National Liberal Club in London.

current political developments. Remember, it was only in 1967 that the European Union came into existence, in which year the former bodies of the EEC (founded in 1957) were unified. But this excluded any of the "Eastern countries", and it finally took to the year 2004 that the EU was prepared to execute the step of integrating 10 new member states.

Around 1989/90, the Federation counted 27 member Societies, because FEBS aimed at intensifying contacts and cooperation preferably with Eastern European Societies. After the 'silent' revolution in the Eastern block, FEBS was further open to memberships from those countries that had acquired their inde-

(Tables 1 and 2). Council meets during every full FEBS Meeting and on other occasions, when necessary. Between meetings of Council the administration is entrusted to the Executive Committee that has overall responsibility; it is composed of the Chairman (of Council), Immediate Past Chairman, Secretary General, Treasurer, Chairman of the Publications Committee, Chairman of the Advances Courses Committee, Fellowships Officer, and Meetings Counsellor. These arrangements have the advantage of being highly flexible and keeping the administration costs extremely low.

**Table 1. Composition of the FEBS Executive Committee**

FEBS Chairmen		
1964–1965	Frank Happold	United Kingdom
1965–1966	Otto Hoffmann-Ostenhof	Austria
1966–1967	K. Zakrzewski	Poland
1967–1968	Alexander Pihl	Norway
1967–1969	Frantisek Sorm	Czechoslovakia
1969–1971	J.R. Villanueva	Spain
1971–1972	Todor Nikolov	Romania
1972–1974	Laurens L.M. van Deenen	The Netherlands
1974–1975	Ferenc Guba	Hungary
1975–1976	Jean-Pierre Ebel	France
1977–1978	Frank Lundquist	Denmark
1978–1979	Samuel Rapoport	Germany (DDR)
1980–1981	Nathan Sharon	Israel
1981–1983	Hamish Keir	United Kingdom
1983–1984	Claude Liébecq	Belgium
1984–1986	Yuri Ovchinnikov	Russia
1986–1987	Karl Decker	Germany
1987–1989	Vito Turk	Slovenia
1989–1990	Doriano Cavallini	Italy
1990–1992	Peter Friedrich	Hungary
1992–1993	Norma Ryan	Ireland
1993–1995	Lars Thelander	Sweden
1995–1996	Joachim Seelig	Switzerland
1996–1998	Carlos Gancedo	Spain
1998–1999	Brian Clark	Denmark
1999–2002	Guy Dirheimer	France
2003–	Claudina Rodrigues-Pousada	Portugal
Secretary Generals		
1965–1967	William J. Whelan	United Kingdom
1968–1974	Henry R.V. Arnstein	United Kingdom
1975–1977	Laurens L.M. van Deenen	The Netherlands
1978–1983	Moritz Yomtov	Bulgaria
1984–1989	Guy Dirheimer	France
1990–1998	Vito Turk	Slovenia
1999–	Julio Celis	Denmark

Treasurers		
1964–1990	Prakash S. Datta	United Kingdom
1991–	John Mowbray	United Kingdom
Meetings Counsellors		
1978–1987	Simon G. van den Bergh	The Netherlands
1988–1996	Horst Kleinkauf	Germany
1997–	Joan Guinovart	Spain
Chairmen Fellowships Committee		
1979–1983	Guy Dirheimer	France
1984–1992	Carlos Gancedo	Spain
1993–2001	Israel Pecht	Israel
2002–	Maciej Nałęcz	Poland
Chairmen Publications Committee		
1966–1972	Claude Liébecq	Belgium
1972–1974	Bo G. Malmström	Sweden
1975–1977	Samuel Rapoport	Germany
1978–1983	Trever W. Goodwin	United Kingdom
1984–1989	Uriel Z. Littauer	Israel
1990 (Interim)	Vito Turk	Slovenia
1990–1996	Karl Decker	Germany
1997–	Willy Stalmans	Belgium
Chairmen Advanced Courses Committee		
1965–1967	Henry R.V. Arnstein	United Kingdom
1967–1970	Peter N. Campbell	United Kingdom
1970–1977	Max Gruber	The Netherlands
1978–1986	Giorgio Bernardi	France
1987–1995	Horst Feldmann	Germany
1996–2004	Karel Wirtz	The Netherlands
Chairman of the Science and Society Committee		
2002–	Federico Mayor	Spain
Chairman of the Working Group to Explore Ways of Improving Assistance to Central and Eastern European Countries (WOGA)		
1999–	Guy Dirheimer	France

Working Group on Education in Biochemistry		
1999-	J. Wallach	France
Member of the Executive Committee for a one time 3 year appointment:		
Working Group on the Career of Young Scientists		
2002-	Marja Makarow	Finland
Working Group on Women in Science		
2003-	Sissel Rogne	Norway

**Table 2. Other Appointments**

Chairmen of the Editorial Board of the <i>European Journal of Biochemistry</i>		
1967-1988	Claude Liébecq	Belgium
1989-1998	Philipp Christen	Switzerland
1999-	Richard Perham	United Kingdom
Managing Editors of <i>FEBS Letters</i>		
1964-1985	Prakash Datta	United Kingdom
1986-2000	Giorgio Semenza	Switzerland
2000-2001	Matti Saraste	Germany
2001-	Felix Wieland	Germany
Editors of FEBS Bulletin		
1965-1983	Prakash Datta	United Kingdom
1984-2001	Jan Skoda	Czech Republic
Counsellor of SARS		
1990-	Peter Campbell	United Kingdom

## THE YEARS OF FEBS IN RETROSPECT

The foundation of FEBS opened a number fruitful activities and brought useful achievements during the years to follow, underlining the importance and merits of an organisation like FEBS in the concert of international efforts “to advance research and education in the science of biochemistry and molecular biology”.

### FEBS Meetings

Since its foundation, FEBS holds a full Meeting every year (Fig. 4) in which the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Bi-

ology does not organize a Congress. In the years in which an IUBMB Congress takes place outside Europe FEBS organizes a Special Meeting with a restricted programme. Normally, no Meeting is held when an IUBMB Congress takes place in Europe. The financial arrangements for a FEBS Meeting (since 2004 renamed FEBS Congress) and its organization are the sole responsibility of the Host Society. This has been proven a highly desirable arrangement since local conditions vary so much that it is conceivable that any central organization could do the job, unless the meetings were to be held in the same one or two places year after year.

The suggestion has been made that this would be efficient and reduces the vast

amount of preparatory work that is now done by the organizing committee of the host society. A major disadvantage, however, would be that such an arrangement would give rise to a stereotyped kind of meeting whereas one of

when some of the universities in Spain were closed and the question was raised whether the meeting in Madrid should be held as planned. In the event, the meeting took place and was most successful. In 2002, the natural



Figure 2. The FEBS Statutes 'of the first hour'.

the most stimulating aspects of the present system is the diversity of places where FEBS meetings have been or will be held and the freshness and enthusiasm with which each one is organized. When one considers the size of the FEBS Meetings and all the problems involved in their organization it is remarkable how few serious difficulties there have been. Even though we live in troubled times the only two occasion when a FEBS meeting came near to being in jeopardy was in 1969

choice for the site of the meeting organized by the Israel Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology had been Jerusalem. However, as the organizers were confronted with severe difficulties already during the two years of planning, the initial choice had to be abandoned as early as March 2001. They then decided to move to the Red Sea resort of Eilat, a city more remote from the tragic events. But again, in December 2001, the Organizing Committee was forced to reconsider



**Figure 3. Member Societies of FEBS in 2003.**

Eilat, in the wake of some of the worst acts of terror in Jerusalem and Haifa. Fortunately, the Turkish Biochemical Society offered their help to host the meeting in Istanbul, the closest and most attractive city that could provide the required facilities. The experience of dealing with such crises ultimately strengthened FEBS and incidentally established useful general criteria for judging the practicability of holding international meetings in delicate political conditions.

In some instances FEBS helps by lending money to the Host Society or by giving a guarantee against loss but in these cases it requires to be acquainted with the budget of the Meeting. In order to facilitate the work of the Meeting organizers, and to pass on the experience of former organizers, the office of the Meetings Counsellor was created in 1978. Of

course, the question as to whether it is meaningful organizing such large and broad meetings as FEBS Meetings have become was raised several times. But finally the general opinion that emerged was that FEBS Meetings should continue to be held since they were felt to be very useful, especially for young biochemists. FEBS Meetings often provide the only opportunity for young people to present their results to a broad audience and also to meet outstanding scientists. FEBS Meetings were ever conducted in a friendly and congenial atmosphere and lead to lasting scientific and human relationships.

As regards the publication of symposia arising from meetings, it was reaffirmed in 1972 that each society was free to make its own arrangements with publishers. Although the possibility of FEBS setting up its own publish-



After 1977, under the chairmanship of Giorgio Bernardi, the Advanced Courses Committee increased its activities and adopted a new policy, namely to sponsor almost exclusively events of educational value and to refuse to fund symposia and other types of meetings beneficial mainly to well-established scientists. The new policy underlined the concern felt by FEBS for young biochemists, who alone are entitled to receive grants from the FEBS Youth Travel Fund to attend FEBS Advanced Courses.

During the period 1973 through 1995, the Committee was also responsible for selecting and sponsoring Lecture Tours by prominent scientists, both from within and outside Europe, who visited different 'FEBS' countries, where, besides giving lectures, they visited several laboratories for discussions and consultations. These Lectures were financed by the publishers of Springer-Verlag and had therefore been termed "FEBS Ferdinand Springer Tours".

### FEBS Publications

A further early suggestion was that FEBS might venture into the field of publication, particularly something along the lines of *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications*, which seemed a first-rate innovative idea with scope for imitation. In 1966, Theodor Bücher, who was appointed chairman of a sub-committee, proposed that instead of FEBS founding a new journal, he would use his best efforts to persuade his Society in turn to persuade Springer-Verlag to agree to convert the *Biochemische Zeitschrift* into the FEBS journal. At the Council meeting in Poland, the alternatives were proposed of founding a new journal, or of accepting Bücher's suggestion regarding the *Biochemische Zeitschrift*. It was the second suggestion that was adopted and the officers were empowered to negotiate with Springer-Verlag. Claude Liébecq was already appointed as

Editor-in-Chief; Sir Hans Krebs became Honorary Chairman of the Editorial Board.

In 1967, the idea of a new journal was raised again and presented to Council. After many discussions, Bücher took the initiative by using all one's powers of persuasion on prominent European biochemists who were at the Oslo meeting, asking if they would join the editorial board of the new journal, for which a name was already to hand – *FEBS Letters*. It was on this basis that the first editorial board came into being. As a result of discussions with the projected editorial board, it was agreed that it would be the policy of FEBS Letters that although its contents would consist of short communications with rapid publication, the board would insist that these were to be publications in a final form, not to be re-published elsewhere. This was accepted, and it was agreed that unofficial approaches could be made to publishers to see whether anyone was willing to put the capital into such a journal, because FEBS itself had no capital at that time. Despite contacting four publishers, there was an inevitability that the photo-off-set process, so expertly developed by North-Holland, was ideal for the rapid publication envisaged for *FEBS Letters*. Prakash Datta, who had thrown all his weight behind the proposal, became the Managing Editor, and the first issue of *FEBS Letters* appeared in July 1968.

It is important to note that the two journals are financially very beneficial to FEBS, the income from them supports the larger part of the activities of FEBS. In fact FEBS had practically no resources at its beginning, and its assets did not exceed 1000 British pounds in 1967. This situation changed thanks to the income of the two journals, and thanks to the rigour and know-how of the two successive Treasurers of FEBS, Prakash Datta and John Mowbray. The income permitted FEBS to develop new initiatives, essentially in favour of young scientists, who remain one of FEBS major concerns.

Mention should also be made here of the *FEBS Bulletin* produced twice yearly between 1965 and 2000, first by Prakash Datta, and from 1984 onwards by Jan Skoda.

### FEBS Fellowships

The FEBS Fellowships programme started in 1979, and Guy Dirheimer became the first Fellowships Officer (1979–1983), under whom the programme got off to a good start and became very successful. Initially, fellowships were to support usually short-term visits (up to three months) by members of any FEBS Constituent Society to laboratories in another 'FEBS' country for the purpose of carrying out experiments with special techniques or other forms of scientific collaboration or advanced training. In the course of the first five years 200 fellowships were granted out of 298 requested. All 'FEBS' countries, except Iceland, had received or sent fellows, or both. Three fellowships were given to people not from a 'FEBS' country, two from Tunisia and one from Jordan. Most fellows have been young scientists with a PhD degree and they have been very appreciative in their reports and grateful for the opportunity their fellowship gave them.

In 1983, Council decided that fellowships should not be awarded to undergraduate students or those just starting research (a PhD degree or a publication in a major journal is a prerequisite), nor are senior scientists eligible. At this occasion, also the creation of Summer Fellowships and Long Term Fellowships was established. The latter was a very ambitious, but absolutely necessary activity in Europe because, due to administrative constraints, it is still not possible, in many European countries to manage grants, like in the USA. Very often there are no salaries included in these grants and no possibility of converting bench money, or money for apparatus, to post-doctoral fellowships. This activity turned out to be rather expensive, and as FEBS never has been supported by public

(governmental) funds, the money had to be found from its own resources.

Bursaries permitting young scientists to attend the FEBS Meetings were created in 1990. Finally, owing to the difficult situation of the young Biochemists and Molecular Biologists in some Central and Eastern European countries, "Collaborative Experimental Scholarships", were established along with a "Follow-up Research Grant", which was established in order to favour the installation of the long term fellows in their country of origin, as well as to struggle against the brain drain, which the fellowships could promote. However FEBS cannot substitute for governments, and if decent salaries are not paid to young scientists and assistants in universities, the emigration will continue. One can only hope that the situation will improve in the near future.

### FEBS Awards

The organizing committee of every FEBS Meeting since 1968 has had the task of selecting the *Sir Hans Krebs Lecturer*. Thanks to a gift from the Lord Rank Research Centre, FEBS is able to invite a distinguished scientist to give a plenary lecture at each FEBS Meeting and the lecturer receives the Sir Hans Krebs Medal. The first recipient of this award was Max Perutz whose lecture was entitled 'X-Ray Analysis, Structure and Function of Enzymes'.

Inaugurated as part of the 10th Anniversary celebrations, a *Diplôme d'Honneur* is awarded to individuals judged by the Executive Committee as having made an exceptional contribution to FEBS activities. Nominations are solicited from the constituent Societies and recipients of the *Diplôme* will be selected by FEBS Executive Committee. The *Diplômes* will be presented at a FEBS Meeting and will be signed by the Chairman and the Secretary-General of FEBS. Recipients of the *Diplôme* are invited to attend FEBS Meetings without payment of the registration fee.

On the 10th Anniversary of FEBS, the Gesellschaft für Biologische Chemie (now Gesellschaft für Biochemie und Molekularbiologie, GBM) offered two prizes to be awarded at each FEBS Meeting for outstanding achievements in the field of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and related sciences. These are provided from the interest on a generous capital donation from Boehringer Mannheim GmbH and Eppendorf Gerätebau Netheler und Hinz GmbH, and are awarded to persons under the age of 40, selected from among the lecturers invited to give a lecture at one of the Symposia or Colloquia held during a FEBS Meeting.

The *Datta Lectureship Award* is provided by generous capital gifts from Elsevier Science Publishers and is awarded for outstanding achievements in the field of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology or related sciences. The award was set up in 1986 and is normally made at each Meeting of FEBS to one of the plenary lecturers, who should be from a FEBS country.

The *Theodor Bücher Lecture and Medal* was endowed by a generous capital gift from Frau Ingrid Bücher and is awarded since 1999 for outstanding achievements in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology or related sciences.

### FEBS Interactions

FEBS became the model for sister organizations; PAABS, in the Americas, and FAOB in Asia and Oceania. These three organizations now work closely with the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and greatly assist IUBMB for the reason that the Union's contacts with individual biochemists are only possible *via* the societies. The regional organizations link IUBMB with the societies. Also, FEBS is represented on the board of the European Cell Biology Organization (ECBO). There is no doubt that effective collaboration between the various international organizations interested in biochemistry and allied fields is highly desirable. An im-

portant step in this direction was to establish closer co-operation with the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO), with which in the early years there had only been sporadic contact.

### NEW FEBS ACTIVITIES SINCE 1999 AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

In the year 1999 it became evident that new activities should be developed by FEBS. The first idea, proposed by Julio Celis, was to set up a Science and Society Committee, the idea being that this Working Group was to bridge the gap between scientists and society so that FEBS could deal with those issues which are identified as a result of research developments. Federico Mayor, former Director General of UNESCO, agreed to be the chairman. The 41st FEBS Council in Lisbon, 2001, adopted the terms of reference for the committee, which are: 1. To discuss and advise the Executive Committee on problems arising or foreseen from advancements in science. 2. To participate in public debates and make recommendations on behalf of FEBS. 3. To interact with other organisations engaged in similar activities. 4. To organize a symposium or colloquium at the annual FEBS Meetings.

At the 26th FEBS Meeting in Nice a workshop called "Teaching Biochemistry in Europe" was organized and very well attended. As a consequence Guy Dirheimer proposed to the Executive Committee in Birmingham in 2000 that a Working Group on *Education in Biochemistry* be established, and this was effected.

At the Council meeting in Birmingham in 2000, it was also decided to increase the Executive Committee by two new members for one term of 3 years, starting in January 2002. These new members would serve not only as a liaison between Council, the Constituent Societies and the Executive Committee, but would be responsible of specific tasks. Marja Makarow (Finland) and Sissel Rogne (Nor-

way) were proposed to take care respectively of the *Careers of Young Scientists* and the *Role of Women in Science*. This was approved at the Council Meeting in Lisbon in 2001. One of the rewarding initiatives of Marja Makarow was to establish a FEBS *Forum for Young Scientists* preceding the annual Meetings. The first of these venues had already been organized in connection with the Lisbon Meeting, followed by similar events in Istanbul and Brussels.

In 2000, another initiative of FEBS was setting up of a *Working Group to explore ways to improve assistance to Biochemists of Central and Eastern European Countries*. This working group has already travelled to Romania and Ukraine, where it has defined supplementary assistances to be added to those of the "Scientific Apparatus Recycling Scheme", which was created in 1990, and to this day is brilliantly managed by Peter Campbell.

Under the impulse of its dynamic Secretary General Julio Celis, the relations of FEBS with IUBMB have been developed with the organization of a common Congress in 2000, but other important initiatives were also undertaken. At the FEBS Council meeting in Istanbul 2002, it was decided to expand the activities of FEBS, by establishing a Working Group actively engaged in the realisation of the European Research Area (ERA) and a European Research Council (ERC) which aim at fostering the integration and co-ordination of science in Europe. To ensure the participation of the scientific community in the initial stages of the ERC discussions, FEBS, the European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO), and the European Life Sciences Forum (ELSF) joined their initiatives in 2003. There is no doubt that FEBS could play a major role in establishing ERA, as its membership scatters across many countries in Europe. Thus, FEBS is well on its way to become one of the leading organizations in the life sciences in Europe, to the benefit of all Biochemists and Molecular Biologists whose role in the achievement of these sciences will

continue to grow in the century that has just begun.

## MY INVOLVEMENT IN FEBS

I became aware of FEBS through the early Meetings held in Warsaw, Oslo and Prague. They provided excellent opportunities for a 'beginner' to follow novel developments in biochemistry and molecular biology and to present his own results in short talks. In 1983, I was fortunate to be nominated by the Gesellschaft für Biologische Chemie for membership in the Advanced Courses Committee (ACC) of FEBS.

The chairman of the ACC at that time was Giorgio Bernardi, who succeeded in continuously raising the number of courses held per year from only a few in the beginning to more than a dozen, before he had to retire in 1986. Being elected chairman of the ACC by Council in 1986 and starting in 1987, I was lucky to work with a Committee the members of which were enthusiastic in contacting colleagues from all over Europe, who would be willing to run a FEBS Course. One particular advantage of running a FEBS Course, however, was that *Youth Travel Grants* were provided to assist attendance at these by younger scientists. As half of the FEBS Courses budget was designed for this purpose, up to 25% of the participants in a lecture course and all of the participants in a practical course could profit from this type of support. In accordance with FEBS' general policy, fellowships were preferably awarded to young scientists from Eastern European countries, who otherwise would have had little chance to receive funds from their national institutions. Another aspect connected to this issue is that the ACC sought to invite colleagues from these countries to organize FEBS Courses at their home institutions, an encouragement that in fact paid out successfully. I was glad to meet and to work with so many nice and enthusiastic colleagues from so many different countries,

above all the members of the Executive and the Advanced Courses Committees, but not to forget, the organizers of the FEBS Courses and the numerous student participants at courses which I had a chance to attend. I vividly remember the splendid atmosphere at the Committee meetings governed by hospitality and friendship and many exhilarating episodes that occurred at these occasions. In a way, I miss all these activities, but I am grateful that despite my retirement I have an opportunity to keep contact with the friends from my time at FEBS.

The third FEBS Meeting (and in fact the first such meeting I visited) was organised by the Polish Biochemical Society in 1966, and the Palace of Culture and Science in the centre of Warsaw was chosen as the convention site. Sessions were held in the Congress Hall and in smaller lecture halls at the 4th, 6th and 12th floor of the Palace built in the confectioner's style, since it was a 'gift' from the Soviet Union. Only much later it became clear to me, why the Polish Biochemical Society had chosen the year 1966 to host a FEBS Meeting: this year celebrated the 1000th Anniversary of the founding of the Polish State by Duke Mieszko, who converted to the Christian confession in 966. His son Boleslav Chrobry succeeded in extending the Polish territory enormously. A hint to this event were the extra stamps the Polish Post had edited (Fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** Polish stamps celebrating the 1000th Anniversary of the Polish State.

I vividly remember that the programme was scheduled in four (mostly parallel) Sections: G – Properties and Function of Genetic Elements (Symposium contributions and com-

munications); P – Biochemistry of Blood Platelets (Colloquium contributions and communications); M – Biochemistry of Mitochondria (Colloquium contributions and communications); and F – Free papers. In the Symposium 'Genetic Elements', contributions during the first three days were devoted to timely topics, such as the Genetic Code, molecular structures of nucleic acids (especially tRNAs), cytoplasmic DNAs, bacterial transformation, and virus replication. Though supplies at that time were short and restoration of the picturesque Old Town had just been begun, the Organisers had done their best to offer an attractive social programme: we could enjoy a great performance of Gounod's Faust at the Warsaw Opera House (Teatr Wielki) and admire the completely renovated Chateau of Wilanów. After we had discovered the splendid restaurant 'Krokodyl' situated at the Old Market Place, we forgot our disappointment of the first evening on which we were not able to find suitable nourishment at our hotel. We could enjoy many more interesting sites when I came back with my family to Warsaw during a car tour across Poland in 1976.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is no doubt that over the years FEBS has matured and is now an organization which has greatly contributed to the development of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in Europe and the World. There is also no doubt that FEBS, though mature, has preserved its youthful vigour and will continue its useful activities in the development of science.

It is a pity that in this short article it is impossible to pay tribute to all those colleagues involved in the foundation and successful development of FEBS, and those who have served as FEBS Officers (see Tables 1 and 2) or as members of the various committees with great devotion and enthusiasm. It is unthinkable, however, not to mention that the

present image of FEBS is still due to the creative imagination and persistence of William Whelan, its first Secretary-General, to the personality of Prakash Datta, its first Treasurer, and to the perseverance and thoughtfulness of Henry Arnstein, its Secretary-General during a long and most decisive period of its existence.

I am convinced that some of these reminiscences will live up during the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of FEBS at the Warsaw FEBS Congress in 2004 (Fig. 6).

I would like to thank the Organizers of the Warsaw Congress for their kind invitation to contribute this overview. Prakash Datta, London, has kindly provided photographs for Figures 1 and 2. A book "Forty Years of FEBS" has been published by Blackwell, Oxford, on behalf of FEBS in 2003. A selection of pictures memorizing the history of FEBS has been made available on a WEB page: <http://biochemie.web.med.uni-muenchen.de/FEBS-Warsaw/>



Figure 6. Prospective celebration of the 40th Anniversary of FEBS in Warsaw.