VIII Parnas Conference

VIII Parnas Conference, organized for the first time by the Polish Biochemical Society, Ukrainian Biochemical Society and Israel Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, was held in Warsaw from August 27 to August 31, 2011. The Conference took place in the Faculty of Biology of Warsaw University. To our knowledge, it was a first scientific gathering of representatives from Poland, Ukraine and Israel. It is planned that the next, IX Parnas Conference will be organized in Israel.

Parnas Conferences were established in 1996 by Polish and Ukrainian biochemists to commemorate the world known Polish biochemist Jakub Karol Parnas, who before the WWII was a professor of physiological chemistry at University in Lwów (in Polish) or Lviv (in Ukrainian) or Lemberg (in Yiddish). His laboratory was a unique place where in a friendly atmosphere young Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish scientists had studied glucose metabolism. The results of their work were highly appreciated as for many years glycolysis was also termed as Embden-Meyerhof-Parnas pathway. In 2009 Prof. Andrzej Dżugaj, President of the Polish Biochemical Society came out with an idea to broaden the Conference for Israeli biochemists, which was accepted by all three societies.

The Conference was under Honorary Patronage of Mr. Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prof. Barbara Kudrycka, Minister of Science and Higher Education. Honorary Committee consisted of Ambassadors of Israel and Ukraine in Poland and Polish Ambassadors in Israel and Ukraine as well as the President of Polish Academy of Sciences (Prof. Michal Kleiber), Secretary General of the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (Prof. Israel Pecht), Director of Department of Basic and Engineering Science within UNESCO (Prof. Maciej J. Nałęcz), Mayor of Warsaw (Dr. Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz) and former Presidents of the Polish Biochemical Societies (Professors Lech Wojtczak and Jolanta Barańska).

Figure 1. Prof. Ada Yonath
Figure 2. Prof. Aaron Ciechanover
Figure 3. Dr Aleksander Wlodawer
Figure 4. Prof. Israel Pecht
Figure 5. Prof. Maciej J. Nałęcz
Figure 6. Prof. Serhiy Komisarenko
Figure 7. Prof. Michael Eisenbach
Figure 8. Poster Session
Figure 9. Kavita Ramji receives the award for best poster presentation from Prof. Maria Jolanta Rędowicz and Prof. Andrzej Dżugaj.
Two Nobel Prize Laureates, Professors Ada Yonath (Fig. 1) and Aaron Ciechanover (Fig. 2), as well as Dr. Aleksander Włodawer (Fig. 3), the world known crystallographer of Polish origin, were the Conference Key Speakers. It was an honor for the Organizers to welcome Professors Israel Pecht (FEBS Secretary General, Fig. 4) and Maciej J. Nałęcz (Director of the UNESCO Science Division, Fig. 5) as well as members of Parnas’s family, his daughter-in-law, Barbara Parnas and his great grandson, Tomasz Parnas with his son Mateusz.

The Scientific Committee, chaired by Professor Andrzej Dżugaj, who conceived the idea of a tripartite Conference consisted of three representatives from each of the organizing Societies. Poland was represented by Professors Leszek Kaczmarek, Jacek Kuźnicki and Maciej Żylicz; Ukraine — by Professors Serhiy Komisarenko (President of Ukrainian Biochemical Society, Fig. 6) Serhiy Kosterin and Ganna Elska, and Israel by Professors Michael Eisenbach (President of Israel Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Fig. 7), Orna Elroy-Stein and Shimon Shuldiner.

Professor Maria Jolanta Redowicz, then Secretary of the Polish Biochemical Society, headed the Organizing Committee, consisting of fourteen members, scientists mainly from Warsaw Ochota Campus institutes. Also, almost two dozens of volunteers helped to organize the Conference.

Following topics were addressed during the Conference: posttranscriptional regulation, bioinformatics in gene expression, gene expression and brain disease, cell guidance, transporters in adaptation to hostile environment, protein structure and function, and calcium in signaling.

Nearly 270 participants attended the Conference, who were predominantly from Poland, Ukraine and Israel. There were 27 lectures (besides the Key ones) presented in nine sessions by outstanding researchers mainly with Polish, Ukrainian and Israeli roots. Also, 18 young researchers selected by the chairmen based on the submitted abstracts had oral presentations (two in each session). There were 134 posters presented in three session (Fig. 8). An award for the best poster presentation was received by Ms. Kavita Ramji from the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology (Fig. 9).

The organizers granted 50 fellowships for young researchers from Poland, Ukraine and Israel, the members of the national biochemical societies.

The main supporters were: the Nencki Institute headed by Prof. Adam Szewczyk (funds from Regpot-Bioimagine Programme), FEBS (within 3+ Meeting Programme) and Polish Ministry for Science and Higher Education as well as Sigma-Aldrich Polska and several other biotech companies. Photographies taken by Ms. Anna Mirgos from the Nencki Institute.

Andrzej Dżugaj
President of Polish Biochemical Society
Chairman of the Scientific Committee

Maria Jolanta Redowicz
Head of the Organizing Committee