

EDITORIAL

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CATECHOLAMINE SYMPOSIUM*

Z. M. BACQ

Université de Liège, Belgium

THIS symposium sponsored by the American Society for Pharmacology and experimental Therapeutics and supported by the National Institute of Mental Health (N.I.H., U.S.A.) was a great success. This success is the logical consequence of carefully planned and executed decisions. The chairman (S. Udenfriend) and the organizing committee, the secretaries (S. Garattini and A. Leonardi) of the Mario Negri Institute, and E. B. Cook of Bethesda, must be congratulated without any reservations. The U.S. and Italian governments and many private organizations supported this initiative. The atmosphere in the beautiful and comfortable Mario Negri Institute was most agreeable despite the fact that half of the roof was swept away by the gale just before the opening of the symposium; all the participants enjoyed many amenities among which transportation at strict hours, rapid lunch and free coffee at the Institute, drinks at the hotel to raise or smooth down discussions, were particularly appreciated.

The banquet held in the Museum of Technology "Leonardo da Vinci" ended with a speech of U. S. von Euler on "Twenty years of Noradrenaline" which reminded me that thirty five years ago I was helping Walter B. Cannon in his experiments on Sympathin at Harvard. What a change since these times!

Generally speaking, participants were well selected, speakers and reports carefully chosen.

Table 1 gives, in a purely quantitative way, the distribution of participants, speakers, chairmen and reporters. I know that the qualitative aspect, in this matter, is the most important one, but one cannot discuss it without dangerously arousing personal feelings.

TABLE 1.

	U.S.A.	U.K.	Sweden	Italy	Germany	Switzerland	Canada	Other countries	Total
Participants	95	26	21	18	10	8	6	35	219
Speakers	35	6	11	2	4	2	2	6	68
Chairmen	4	4	2	—	1	—	—	—	11
Reporters	8	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	11

* Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche Mario Negri. Milan, July 4-9, 1965

The dominant position of U.S. scientists is unquestionable; the N.I.H. contributed 17 participants among whom 14 were speakers. The country which most successfully contested this U.S. quasi-monopoly (more than half of the speakers were U.S. citizens) was Sweden; this is quite understandable if one remembers that two important leaders in the field, von Euler and Hillarp are Swedish and have had many outstanding pupils. To my mind the U.K. was underrepresented if one thinks about the very numerous publications on catecholamines and adrenergic mechanisms which appear regularly in the *Br. J. Pharmac. Chemother.* But many of the British or European authors still use classical methods, even *horresco referens* a smoked drum and isolated smooth muscles, and this is considered by many as a kind of regressive pharmacology. Other classical physiological techniques were also neglected; three people only showed figures with action potentials; in a cholinesterases symposium about half of the speakers would show nerve potentials. Thus, the dominance of advanced biochemical techniques was uncontested; it is natural since the scientists of Bethesda where these techniques have been most extensively developed were the promoters of the symposium, but also because the harvest of facts is most impressive and one cannot think of other methods to collect them. A brilliant demonstration indeed! This does not mean that, at certain stages, it would not be useful to find confirmation by physiological techniques of facts obtained by biochemical methods. Dr. Nickerson, myself and other participants in the discussion pointed out the danger of some interpretations of data along lines which are routinely accepted by biochemists; even the right to use some terms like pool, exchange, etc., was contested. Discussions, often lively, went on after each session and privately at the end of each afternoon in the hotels.

The presence of 10 scientists from the so called Eastern countries (U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia) was welcomed.

The proceedings of the symposium edited by George H. Acheson will be published as a fascicule of the *Pharmacological Reviews* but are obtainable separately at the price of 15 dollars and shall be available during the first quarter of 1966. Every scientist interested in catecholamines should keep this publication on his table because it is going to be for a long time the richest source of information in this field and because G. H. Acheson has been working hard in order to obtain from speakers and reporters on the spot as good texts as possible.

At the opening of the symposium chairman Udenfriend asked the audience to pay homage to the memory of Sir S. H. Gaddum whose recent death deprived the United Kingdom of one of its most devoted and kind scientists, a central figure in the pharmacology of amines and chemical transmission of nerve impulse.