

Professor Jaroslav Sterzl
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30th March, 1992.

Dear Jaroslav,

Further to our recent telephone conversation, I am writing to convey my salient thoughts on the intention to establish an annual or bi-annual cycle of Immunological Conferences in a scenically attractive part of Czechoslovakia. I conceived this idea following last year's Congress of the Czechoslovak Immunological Society, whilst spending a few days in Tale in the Low Tatra mountains (a potentially ideal venue). Subsequently, I discussed the intention with professor Georg Wick from Innsbruck who responded enthusiastically and we both felt that such an initiative will attract support from our respective, ie. British and Austrian Immunological Societies. At this early stage, we would like to present our tentative views and seek partnership with the Czechoslovak Immunological Society as the principal host Institution.

As a background information, it should be noted that conferences comprising of morning and late afternoon scientific sessions with midday devoted to recreational activities are well established in the United States. They are of the highest scientific merit and enjoy great popularity. At present, there are no regular European immunological meetings of corresponding stature. Hence, it would be timely to take an initiative with potentially long-term aims.

The Conferences to be held for five days could commence from the Spring (May) 1994. The programme would comprise of 30-45 min lectures by about 30 invited accomplished speakers, allowing 6 lectures (3 morning and 3 afternoon) per day. Participants (up to 100 at all levels of seniority) could present posters matching the general themes of the Conference.

The scientific scope should be in the broad field of Immunology with clear emphasis to fundamental mechanisms and medical aspects. The meetings should be held under the auspices of the three Immunological Societies, each of which would delegate one (or two) representatives to the Organizing Committee.

It would seem suitable for the Organizing Committee to meet during the International Congress in Budapest to discuss and formulate all fundamental issues, such as:

1) General scope; 2) Financial support to invited speakers and fees from participants; 3) Location of the meeting in an area with scenic and recreational attractions and appropriate accommodation facilities; 4) Local organization; 5) General themes for the programme of the first Conference; etc. A "letter of Intent" to be produced from the first Committee meeting should be presented for approval to each of the three sponsoring Immunological Societies.

We would very much like to hear comments from the Czechoslovak Immunological Society on the described outline of plans. However, if you do agree with the principal approach, we would like the Czechoslovak Immunological Society to identify its representatives to the Organizing Committee.

Hoping that the Czechoslovak Society would join this exciting venture and with the kindest personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Professor Juraj Ivanyi
International Secretary of the British
Society for Immunology

Professor Georg Wick
(on behalf of the Austrian
Immunological Society)

JI/EH

Professor Klaus Eichmann, President of EFIS
Max-Planck Institut fur Immunobiologie
Postfach 1169
D-7800 Freiburg, Germany

29th September, 1992

Dear Klaus,

I have been away on holiday and was delighted to find on return your prompt and very positive reply in respect of the proposed conferences in Czechoslovakia. Following discussions with Georg Wick and Jeroslav Sterzl, we feel that there are two fundamental differences between our original intention and the Paul Ehrlich conferences:

1. We intended to give special character to the meetings, by combining top science with a fair amount of leisure activities in an attractive nature setting. This would start a new tradition in Europe, albeit with a precedent of the Gordon Conferences in the US. We feel that such a format is extremely favourable for creating an informal atmosphere, conducive for personal contact between young and established scientists.
2. We intended to sustain the venue in one region and call the meetings "Tatra Immunology Conferences", reflecting the name of the local mountains. We also envisaged running these meetings in continuity, bi-annually, or possibly annually, if the first conference meets with success.

In view of these aspects, I wonder if EFIS would consider extending its existing programme and approving the "Tatra" Conferences as an addition to the existing Paul Ehrlich and John Humphrey meetings. As organisers on behalf of the three constituent societies of EFIS, we feel that it would be most desirable to run the meetings including the EFIS banner. Consequently, I enclose copies of the draft Programme, which, together with an account of the meeting of the three organisers in Budapest, we intend to submit to the CEC.

The viability of our aim is of course dependent on sponsorship which must come from outside our respective Societies. Our application was submitted to the special scheme of the CEC, dedicated to the "Cooperation in Science and Technology with Central and Eastern European Countries", containing the section on "European Conferences, Workshops and Training Seminars (3.B.2.). This special source could be a valuable extension of support to European Immunology. However, if we were given only part of the required funding (or none at all), EFIS could re-apply for additional (or full) funding to the "Euro-Conferences" sector of the "Human Capital and Mobility Programme" as indicated in your letter. We believe, that these avenues for additional funding should be fully explored, before considering the existing EFIS funds allocated to the Paul Ehrlich Conferences.

Looking forward to hearing your further opinions and with best regards,

Yours sincerely

Juraj Ivanyi

cc. Prof.G.Wick, Innsbruck
Prof.J.Sterzl, Prague

**Report from the
1st Tatra Immunology Conference
on the "Molecular determinants of T cell Immunity"
in the Low Tatra mountains, Slovakia, 6-9 September, 1994.**

This conference held under the auspices of EFIS was organised by Juraj Ivanyi (BSI), Georg Wick (Austrian Immunol.Soc.), Jaroslav Sterzl (Czech Immunol Soc.) and Juraj Svac, local organizer (Slovak Immunol. Soc.).

The conference aimed and succeeded to achieve the front-line research standards in a nature reserve where the recreational activities helped to bridge contact between peers and disciples as well as between nationalities. The local organisation was wholly successful and participation was reasonable at the cost of \$ 250 for 5 nights accommodation, full board and transport from airport. The 114 participants were from central European (62), western European (42) and overseas (10), altogether 15 countries.

The scientific programme divided in eight separate sessions was dedicated to fundamental aspects of T cell research and presented by 30 mostly European invited speakers. One generally commented and appreciated aspect has been the presentation of a significant amount of yet unpublished exciting new data.

Following spontaneous enthusiasm from the participants (see attached correspondence) future plans are to hold the TATRA meetings in continuity bi-annually (next in 1996), retaining the original title of the conference and the programme dedicated to fundamental and medical aspects of T cell immunobiology. It is intended to hold the next meeting again under the auspices of EFIS and of the four original organising national immunological societies.

**Report to the BSI from prof.J.Ivanyi on the 2nd Tatra Immunology
Conference "Molecular Determinants of T cell Immunity" in the
Jasna Valley of the Tatra mountains, Slovakia, 2 -7 September, 1996.**

The scientific content of the meeting was represented by 30 high grade speakers, with strong representation from seven BSI members. The schedule of lectures was intensive, the social atmosphere was active and cordial, whilst the opportunity to enjoy the surrounding mountains was somewhat limited due to rainy weather. The bulk of the scientific organisation work was in the hands of Professor Georg Wick from Innsbruck who, jointly with the local organiser (Dr. Lubica Rauova), made the second Tatra Conference a distinct success. In particular, additional funding from the Austrian government and the EU, were essential for subsidising the attendance of all Slovakian and several young Austrian immunologists. Of the total of 130 participants, the majority were from Austria, Czech and Slovak republics, the UK (17) and the rest of Europe. Kay Dorelli (as at the 1st Conference) carried out a key administrative function during the conference and the BSI secretariat helped to make travel arrangements for the UK participants. A report on the financial position will be submitted on completion of all payments in the near future. A commentary on the scientific content of the conference will be written¹ by Dr G Kroemer from Paris and myself with the view to publication in the format of a "Meetings Report" in "Immunology Today".

Following several informal discussions on the continuity of the biennial Tatra Conferences, a meeting took place, attended by representatives of the British, Austrian, Czech and Slovak Immunological Societies. Enthusiasm was expressed to continue in the future on the grounds that the first two conferences achieved and sustained (1) a distinct scientific profile in an important area of immunology (2) an informal atmosphere favouring personal interactions and (3) a special opportunity enabling young scientists' exposure to debates at the cutting edge of immunology. For the next Conference in 1998, the decision was reached that Dr Vaclav Horejsi from the Czech Academy in Prague will take over the principal role in the organisation of the scientific programme whilst the local organisation will remain with the Institute of Rheumatology from Piestany, Slovakia. Following discussion with Dr. Klaus Eichmann, the past president of EFIS, I proposed approaching EFIS with a request to make these conferences part of a regular contingent of EFIS meetings. If this proposal is successful, regular rather than one-off support from EFIS could be forthcoming, thus adding significantly to the stability of the conferences in the future. These plans are being communicated to each of the four founder organising and sponsoring Immunological Societies.

Dr. Israel Pecht
President of EFIS
Dpt. of Chemical Immunology
The Weizmann Institute of Science
Rehovot 76100, Israel
(FAX 972-8-344141, Tel 343563).

1997 or 1998.

Dear Dr. Pecht

I am writing to you with proposals on the future status of the "Tatra Immunology Conferences" in relation to EFIS.

The first two of these Conferences have been held in the Tatra mountains of Slovakia in 1994 and in 1996. Sponsorship from EFIS (\$ 10.000 on each occasion) played a key role in both initiating and sustaining the continuity of these meetings. The original intention to establish a "Gordon Conference-like" atmosphere in a Middle-European geographic setting turned out to be clearly successful as judged by the participants (see attached correspondence with the BSI) and has encouraged the organisers to continue with these Conferences on a bi-annual basis.

When discussing the matter as to how to stabilize the status of future meetings, Klaus Eichmann suggested during informal conversation with Juraj Ivanyi, to consider the possible incorporation of the Tatra Conferences into the curriculum of meetings which are regularly and fully sponsored by EFIS. The conference organisers (signed below) enthusiastically accepted this proposition and with this letter, we wish to approach the EFIS board to consider our application for the acceptance of the Tatra Immunology Conferences under the EFIS umbrella.

The scientific content of the first two Conferences was covered within the title "Molecular Determinants of T cell Immunity" (see attached copies of the past two Programmes). We wish to retain this tradition in this field which is sufficiently broad to change specific topical subjects and speakers bi-annually. The scope for diversity is well illustrated when comparing the programmes of the 1st and 2nd Conference, each comprising 30-35 min lectures by about 30 invited speakers. The structure involving 7 half-day sessions and presentation of posters by participants seems most practicable and would be retained in the future. The main themes considered for the 1998 meeting are 1. Processing & MHC presentation of epitopes; 2. Specific receptors and signals; 3. Costimulatory and adhesive receptors; 4. T subsets and cytokine regulation; 5. Intracellular infections; 6. Autoimmunity & allergy; 7. Immunotherapy & immunomodulation. The programme co-ordinating role has been passed from Juraj Ivanyi (1994) to Georg Wick (1996) and falls next to Vaclav Horejsi (1998).

The past two conference venues (on the southern and northern slopes of the Low Tatra mountains respectively) provided a special informal atmosphere, made of cordial hospitality in a folkloric setting of a nature reserve. The local organizers (J. Svac and L. Rauova) proved their exemplary dedication as well as efficiency on both occasions. It is anticipated, that the meeting in 1998 would take place in the High Tatras in an establishment of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Attendance at the first 2 conferences has been 114 and 130 participants respectively. This approximate size will be retained in the future. Most speakers as well as participants came from Europe, with most prominent representation from Slovakia, Austria and the Czech Republic. Better efforts will be made to attract immunologists from the other neighbouring countries (particularly

Hungary and Poland) in the future.

The financial position of the Tatra conferences is represented in the attached two reports. It is to be noted, that actual expenditure per participant has been \$196 in 1994 and \$ 284 in 1996, which is quite reasonable, considering that it covered 5 day-accommodation with full board, transport to Vienna or Prague and excursions. Registration fees of \$ 250 (1994) or \$ 350 (1996) contributed to the travel & subsistence expenses of invited speakers. However, the bulk of that expenditure was covered by the sponsorships from EFIS, BSI and the Austrian government and it helped, that several invited speakers at the first and fewer at the 2nd Conference paid at least parts of their expenses. This self-funding is likely to decline further and the local costs will inevitably also rise. Hence, the anticipated request of expenditure from EFIS will rise to \$ 20,000 for the 1998 Conference. However, we would endeavour to retain support from the BSI and Austria in order to retain the low registration fees and also a limited number of bursaries for regional participants.

We would greatly appreciate closer contacts and comments on any aspect of the future Tatra Immunology Conferences from EFIS. We would be happy to oblige with more rigorous reporting or could co-opt an EFIS representative to the organising committee, if necessary.

Looking forward to hear your views,

Yours sincerely,

Vaclav Horejsi, (co-ordinator of the 3rd Tatra Immunology Conference)
Institute of Molecular Genetics, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague-4, Czech Republic

on behalf of co-organizers:

Juraj Ivanyi (London), Georg Wick (Innsbruck), Lubica Rauova & Jozef Rovensky (local organizers, Piestany, Slovakia)

Encl.:

Programmes

Financial Reports

Meeting Reports

6. Justification....etc

General approach and background: The "EFIS-TATRA Immunology conferences represent bi-annual meetings, running since 1994, jointly organised by the British, Austrian, Czech and Slovak Immunological Societies. They have a common scientific theme "Molecular mechanisms of T cell immunity", alternating the specific scientific sessions and speakers within this subject of key importance for fundamental as well as medically applicable (infections, autoimmunity and cancer) immunology. The conference style is inspired by the Gordon Conferences in the US, represented by lectures by invited top scientists in a nature-reserve setting with extended mid-day recreational activities, which create an informal atmosphere between peers and disciples as well between nationalities. Scientific reports have been published from the 1st (Immunology Today 16:561, 1995) and 2nd (Immunologist 5:67, 1997) Conference. Each of these meetings involved 30 speakers and about 90 participants, who were all active scientists with a high proportion working in one of the specialised topics. Hence, the discussions are at the cutting edge of science and are distinctly not in the realm of "summer schools". However, participants from the region, particularly Slovakia, Czech republic and Austria were prominently represented, thus greatly contributing to forging new personal contacts and research collaborations. The conference venues, alternating within the Tatra mountains have the attribute of low cost and enthusiastic local organization.

Plans for the forthcoming III Conference, to be held 6-9 September, 1998. An important new development has been the open ended acceptance of the TATRA Conferences to the regular programme of meetings which are sponsored under the auspices of European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS). The scientific programme and local organization for 1998 are both at an advanced stage. The Conference announcement (see Appendix 1) is listing the invited speakers and chairpersons who accepted the written invitations. This advertised announcement indicates, that the scientific and organization aspects of the next conference will closely match the preceding ones and will hopefully meet with equal success. The new venue has a central position at the bottom of the High Tatra mountains of Slovakia. The research programme includes new topics concerned with the signalling of antigen-specific and costimulatory receptors which has been in the focus of current developments in basic research, whereas the applied medical aspects were expanded to allergy. The keynote lecture, to be presented by professor Vilcek from New York (he was born and trained in Slovakia) is a another new feature. We will also aim to expand the poster session to boost the active presentation of the participants. The conference costs were sustained at low level, when compared with meetings elsewhere. Of the 30 invited speakers, 19 are from NATO countries.

Justification for the funding requested from NATO. The scientific and general features of the EFIS-TATRA Immunology Conference suggest, that it meets with the requirements for allocation to the priority area of "High Technology" of the "Advanced Research Workshops". Considering the multiple sources of sponsorship (EFIS, BSI, Austria ?) additional funding from NATO is requested exclusively for the reimbursement of flight travel expenses of the invited speakers. This item has been to a large extent "played by ear" at the two preceding conferences, resulting in significant voluntary personal contributions from several of the better established speakers. However, this arrangement has been far from satisfactory. It imposed a restriction in the selection of speakers, reducing the scope for attracting those from the U.S. and representing an uncertainty for the operational budgetary position of the local organizers. Therefore, financial cover of the travel expenses of all invited speakers by NATO would be extremely valuable and helpful. While estimating the total requested costs to US \$ 20,000, we would be willing to provide full documentation of the actual reimbursed travel expenses, with receipts from the individual speakers, after the end of the Conference.

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Professor Pamela Riches, General Secretary, BSI
Triangle House, Broomhill Rd
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Dear Professor Riches,

10 September, 2000.

Returning from the recent EFIS-Tatra Immunology Conference in Slovakia, I am writing to inform you, that I approached Professor Adrian Hayday, (who attended the meeting) with the view to take over my position on the Organising Committee and that he agreed to accept this function. I would greatly appreciate, if the BSI Council could consider and endorse this proposed change.

To recapitulate briefly, I initiated these Conferences in 1994, when serving as the BSI International Secretary and helped with their running for the past six years. The Conference is a bi-annual joint event from the Czech, Slovak British and Austrian Immunology Societies, but funded now predominantly by EFIS. This support emanated from recognition by EFIS of the scientific merits and of the importance of running a 'Gordon Conference-like' Immunology meeting in Europe. The BSI played an important role from the outset, being represented usually by 7 (out of 30) invited speakers. Mrs. Kay Dorelli had greatly contributed administratively. However, attendance by young BSI members has declined and I feel that, considering the 'remote' geography, special bursaries from the BSI could be beneficial and perhaps well justified.

I would hope, that the BSI will sustain its involvement and feel delighted, that Professor Hayday expressed his willingness to represent the Society. In joint discussion with Dr. Vaclav Horejsi (who carries on serving as the main Scientific Secretary, representing the Czech Society), it has been suggested, that Professor Hayday should also assume the function of the Conference Treasurer. This role has been carried until now by Professor Georg Wick from Innsbruck, who will be replaced now by Professor Hannes Stockinger from Vienna. However, I discussed and corresponded already in April this year with Kevin Horlock, if the BSI could administer the finances and possibly engage also in the presentation & promotion of future meetings. Dr. Horejsi is supportive of such change and will be providing a Financial Report after the completion of the current agenda.

Finally, I attach a copy of the Programme of the recent Conference and can report with pleasure, that both speakers and participants (about 80) greatly enjoyed both the scientific and social atmosphere. A particularly beneficial trend has been the expansion and high standards of the Poster Session; oral presentations of selected posters is being considered for the next (5th) Conference in 2002. I would of course be only happy to provide further information and help personally with the transition, if required.

Yours sincerely,

Juraj Ivanyi

cc. Dr. Marilyn Moore, International Secretary
Mr. Kevin Horlock, BSI Chief Executive
Professor Adrian Hayday, Dpt. Immunobiology, Guy's Campus KCL
Dr. Vaclav Horejsi, Inst. Molecular Genetics, Prague

Brief History of the Tatra Conferences

- 1992 Conception with J. Svac in Banska Bystrica; joined by J. Sterzl and G. Wick
- 1993 Funding from EFIS (K. Eichmann); hurdles passed: break up of the country, gesumping of the hotel venue.
- 1994 First Congress in Krpacovo, Low Tatras
- 1996 2nd Congress in Chopok, Low Tatras (G. Wick)
- 1998 3rd Congress in Tatr. Zruby, High Tatras under EFIS auspices (V. Horejsi)
- 2000 4th Congress at the same venue (1st rafting trip)
- 2002 Starting Now