

Foundation of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society 30 years ago

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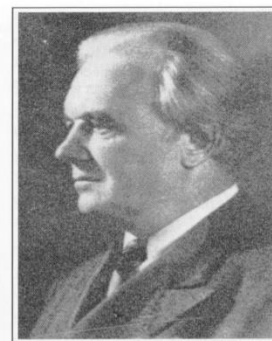
Neuroscience in Hungary has long traditions, marked by prominent personalities well known for their achievements throughout the scientific world interested in studies on the nervous system. It is enough to mention the names of István Apáthy and Mihály Lenhossék, the famous anatomists from the beginning of the 20th century, Károly Schaffer, the great neuropathologist, Ambrus Ábrahám, János Szentágothai, Kálmán Lissák and Endre Grastyán, most outstanding neuroscientists in this country during the later periods of the century (Figure 1). Their scholars, the second generation grew up mainly in their scientific schools, and the pupils of them, now representing the third and the fourth generation, constitute the bulk of the members of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society.



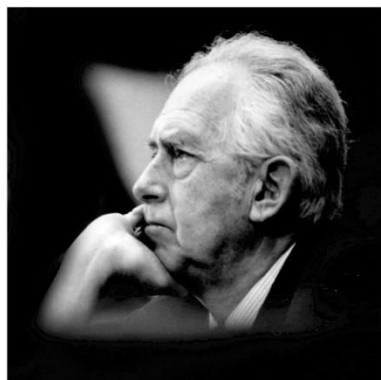
István Apáthy



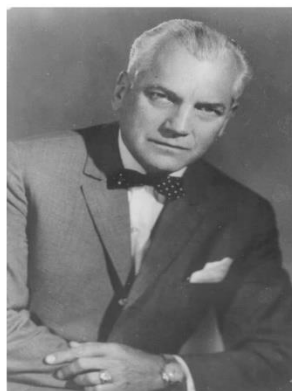
Károly Schaffer



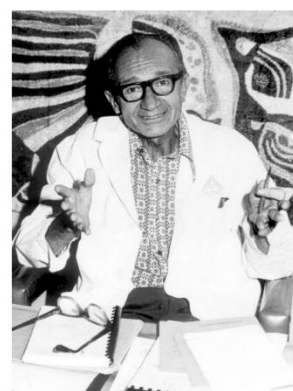
Ambrus Ábrahám



János Szentágothai



Kálmán Lissák



Endre Grastyán

Figure 1. Some of the founders of neuroscience in Hungary.

The foundation of the **Hungarian Neuroscience Society (MITT – HNS)** has been preceded by a number of events in the field of neuroscience in Hungary. In the few decades after the World War II, the Hungarian Physiological Society (HPS) became the most attractive community and scientists preferred this Society over their strict disciplinary classification. Due to increasing specialization in science, a number of sub-disciplines were defined, some of them expanded, and new branches of science and new societies appeared on the horizon.

In the meantime, a number of new international societies were founded, like e.g. the European Neuroscience Society and the European Brain and Behavior Society, (EBBS), in response to the more and more intensive scientific life in the world. In 1960, the International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) took shape and it became the „World Wide Union of Neuroscience”. Although a number of Hungarian scientists were invited, only a few of them could corroborate to the foundations because of the difficulties in traveling to West from

a communist country. This was a big disadvantage in establishing international connections and directing the Hungarian neuroscience into the mainstream of international interest.

Members of the HPS enjoyed the privilege of showing their results in separate thematic sections at the annual conferences. Soon, different sections (Muscle Research Section, Membrane Research Section) have been formed within the framework of the HPS, among others the **Neuroscience Section** (Figure 2). Without appropriate funds, the Sections had problems in regular daily activities, not to mention raising money for the establishment contacts with international societies.

Another event that preceded the foundation of the HNS was that the Hungarian Academy of Sciences launched a new program entitled Regulatory Mechanisms of Life Processes. Neurobiologists welcomed this opportunity, and they thought the best way to actively join this project was to organize meetings to show the level of advancement in neurobiology research. Therefore, the organization of **Neurobiology Colloquia** was decided (Figure 2). The First Colloquium was held in Tihany, 50 years ago, in 1974 (organized by János Salánki) and followed by others in different cities of Hungary: Szeged, 1978 (Ferenc Joó and Ottó Fehér) and Veszprém, 1979 (János Salánki). These series of meetings has become a kind tradition that wintertime, usually at the end of January, neurobiologists convened to present their recent findings. As a convention it has gradually been transformed into the Conference of the Neuroscience Section of the HPS within the program of the Regulatory Mechanisms of Life Processes. The first of these ‘new type’ of Conferences was held in Debrecen in 1981, organized by György Székely, and the second of such a conference was in Szeged, 1982, organized by Ottó Fehér, **where the Neuroscience Section of the HPS was officially founded.**

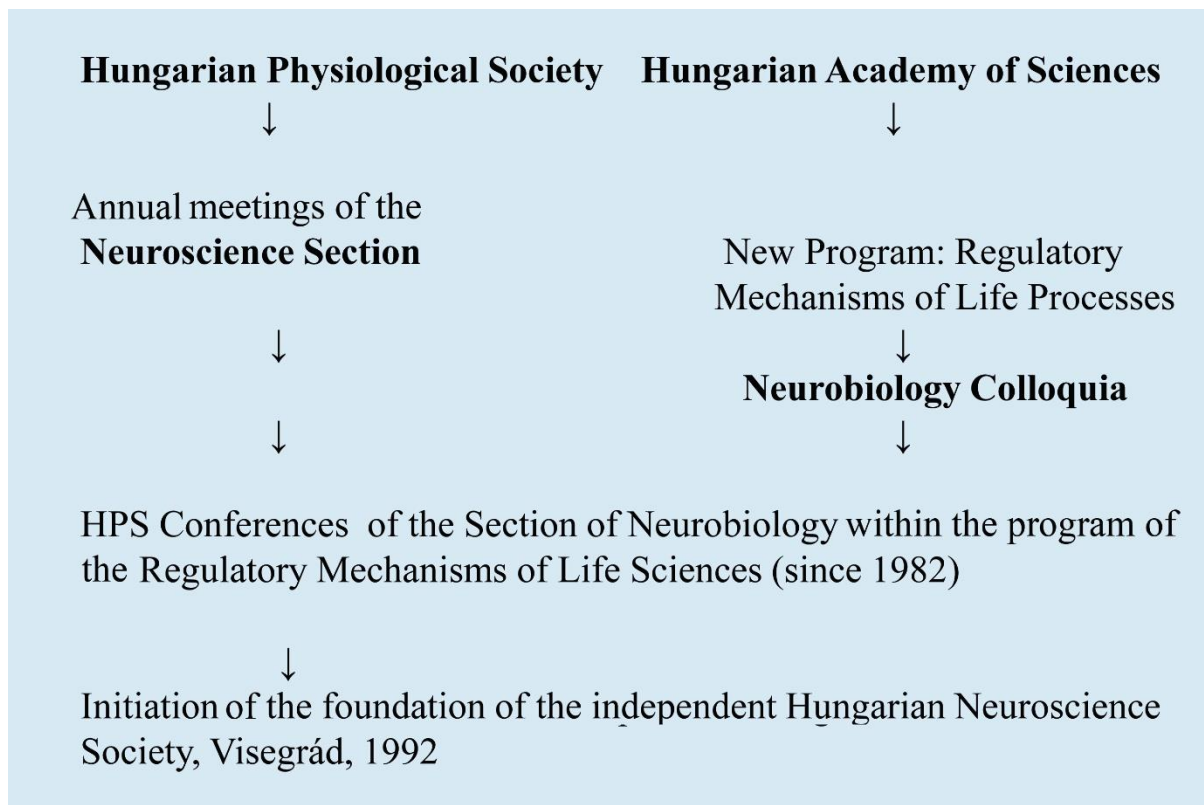


Figure 2. The predecessors of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society.

In the 1980ies time did not arrive yet to found an independent neuroscience society, still the need for an acceptable organized formation, and for international connections with foreign neuroscientists had to be solved. The initial organization did not have funds, and fees were not collected. The lack of finance and other circumstances initiated the suggestion, promoted by leading members of the HPS, to officially establish a Section of Neuroscience within the HPS. The Board of the HPS approved and supported the suggestion. The point in the suggestion was that the HPS, belonging to MOTESZ, was an associated member in the International Union of Physiological Societies (IUPS) and through this relation a Sections of HPS could realize their international ambitions. The international recognition of the HPS became significantly enforced by the successful organization of the 28th International Congress of Physiological Sciences in Budapest, 1980. Kálmán Lissák was the chairman of the Congress, and he was also the deputy president of the IUPS at the same time. Senior generation of the Hungarian neuroscientists organized a number of symposia during the congress and it opened a good opportunity for the younger generation to show their results in the front of an international audience.

In 1982, the **Governing Board of the Neuroscience Section of the HPS** was elected for 5 years as follows. President: János Salánki, secretary: György Kemenes, members: Ottó Fehér, Zsuzsanna Fürst, Endre Grastyán, József Hámori, György Karmos, György Székely, the current president of the HAS Neurobiology Committee (at that time it was Endre Grastyán), the current president of INTERMOZG National Committee and current president of the IBRO National Committee (at that time it was György Ádám). **The first Conference of the Neuroscience Section of HPS was organized by Endre Grastyán in Pécs in 1983.** In the forthcoming years the Conferences of the Neuroscience Section of the HPS were regularly held in different cities with rotation until 1993 as follows: Veszprém, 1984 (János Salánki), Budapest, 1985 (József Hámori and Elemér Lábos), Szeged, 1986, Veszprém, 1988 (János Salánki), Pécs, 1989 (Gyula Lázár), Szeged, 1990 (Bertalan Csillik), Veszprém, 1991 (János Salánki) and Visegrád, 1992 (György Ádám).

In 1987, an important event was the hosting of the 2nd IBRO World Congress of Neuroscience in Budapest. This was a favorable occasion for the organization of a number of satellite symposia. In the meantime, the European Neuroscience Society has changed the name for the European Neuroscience Association (ENA), suggesting a union of all neuroscientists of the European countries. The affiliation to ENA was inevitable, but payment of the membership in dollars caused a big problem. At that time, it was very difficult to raise Western currencies to cover the cost of travel and registration fees of conferences abroad. However, being members of the Neuroscience Section of the HPS, Hungarian neuroscientists became automatically members of the ENA, and this helped to arrange the payment. A domestic fund has been established in which we could deposit the ENA membership fee in Hungarian currency. Everybody who has paid the 200 Ft membership fee (about 0.5 Euro: in comparison: my monthly income was around 50 Euro that time), and the ENA acknowledged the payment, counted as full ENA members with all benefits.

During the Conference in Visegrád in 1992, the Board has contemplated that the time has arrived to start with the preparation of the founding of an independent society, the Hungarian Neuroscience Society (HNS). In the meantime, the fences at the border collapsed, a new political and economic system has been introduced, the significance of international relations increased and large number of scientists spent shorter or longer periods of time abroad. The importance of brain research was acknowledged worldwide, the Decade of

the Brain Program was announced and Hungary joined to the program. After the Conference in Visegrád the president of the Board sent out a circular to the members requesting help in formulating the statutes of the HNS. The statutes were accepted by the members and the **foundation of the HNS was officially announced on January 21, 1993**, during the Conference held in **Veszprém**.

During the Statutory Meeting (Ottó Fehér was elected to conduct the session and György Bárdos to keep the minutes) of the Conference of Neuroscience Section of HPS in Veszprém, 1993, the following decisions have been made:

Declaration of the foundation of the independent HNS,

HNS is the legal successor of the Neuroscience Section of HPS,

Approved the Statutes which immediately came into force,

Election of the Board of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society

Decision of the organizer, schedule and place of the 1st Independent Neuroscience Meeting

For the election of the Board the following **Nomination Committee** was formed: György Ádám (President), Gábor Czéh, Tamás Freund, Ferenc Joó, Klára Matesz, András Mihály. **Members of the polling commission** were Valéria Csépe (President), László Détári and Zoltán Karádi. The following Board of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society has been elected: **President:** László Lénárd, **Secretary:** Tamás Freund, **Members of the Board:** Attila Baranyi, Gábor Czéh, Károly Elekes, György Karmos (Bursar), Elemér Lábos, János Szolcsányi, János Salánki (Past President) and Gábor Makara (Supervisor).

The new Board had to look after the official registration of the Society. The date of application to the Court of Budapest was 10th of February 1993. The favorable answer came on the 17th of March. The Board had to make clear the relation of the HNS to the HPS. In his letter of the 15th May 1993 László Lénárd has expressed the thanks and gratitude to the HPS for supporting the Hungarian neuroscience and providing a forum for the presentation of scientific results for a long period of time (Figure 3).

*Appendix 3. A Magyar Idegtudományi Társaság
bírószági bejegyzési kérelme*

MAGYAR IDEGTUDOMÁNYI TÁRSASÁG

1083 Budapest, Szilgony u. 43.

A Fővárosi Bíróság
tanácselnökének
Budapest

Tárgy: bejegyzési kérelem
Kelt: Budapest, 1993 február 10.
Ügyintéző: Dr. Freund Tamás

Tisztelt Bíróság!

Azzal a kérelemmel fordulunk Önökhöz, hogy a mellékelt, az 1989 évi II.
trv. által előírt dokumentumok alapján a

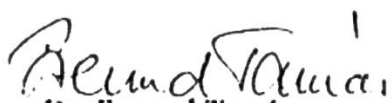
MAGYAR IDEGTUDOMÁNYI TÁRSASÁGOT

bejegyezni szíveskedjenek.

A Társaság képviselői: Dr. Lénárd László elnök
Dr. Freund Tamás titkár

A Társaság székhelye: 1083 Budapest, Szilgony u. 43 (MTA KOKI)

Tisztelettel:


Dr. Freund Tamás
titkár


Dr. Lénárd László
elnök

Figure 3. Legal request of the formation of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society.

The international relations had to be arranged, as well. On the 2nd of March, 1993, a letter was sent to Constantino Sotelo, the president and to Hugo Zwenk, the secretary of the ENA, informing them about the foundation of the HNS. The HNS was accepted as the full member of the ENA. Based on the suggestion of the HNS, Tamás Freund was elected in the Program Committee and György Karmos in the Nomination Committee of the ENA (József Hámori was already the member of the Council of the ENA). In the spring of 1993 we began to arrange

our relation with the IBRO. In 1994 we could achieve a corporate membership in the IBRO and Olga Popov, executive director of the IBRO sent an invitation letter to the IBRO Conference held in Kyoto, 1995. Presidents of national societies became the members of the Governing Council. László Lénárd represented Hungary. Miklós Palkovits, who was already a voting member of the Board, was also present at the meeting. In view of the financial difficulties in this early period of the HNS, it has been decided to ground a foundation for supporting young scientists. János Szentágothai approved the invitation and became the founder of the Károly Schaffer Foundation for the Promotion of Studies of Neural Function and Nervous Diseases. In 1994, however, the Hungarian neuroscience community was heavily stricken by the death of János Szentágothai. The Board of the HNS put an emphasis upon the publication of abstracts in English. In 1993, the newly edited periodical, the *Neurobiology*, which was the legal successor of the *Acta Biochimica and Biophysica*, accepted the request of the HNS to continue the annual publication of the abstracts. The Editor in Chief of the new periodical was Norbert Halász, and several members of the HNS were on the Editorial Board. Hence, it was not difficult to reach an agreement for the publication of abstracts.

The first independent HNS Congress was held in Pécs (organized by the president, László Lénárd) 30 years ago, between January 27-29, 1994 (Figure 4). The meeting was already bilingual, presentations could be registered either in Hungarian or in English. Colleagues were also welcomed from abroad and the first guests were Sigismund Huck, the president of the Austrian Neuroscience Society and Hitoo Nishino, the president of the Japanese Neuroscience Society (Figure 5). At that time, there were 275 members of the HNS, and 190 scholars registered with 112 presentations. Since then, every year in wintertime, Hungarian neuroscientists gather to present their new results during the annual meetings of the Society. By the middle of the 1990s the HNS has become a well-established neuroscience society. Increasingly large number of neuroscientists registered for its Conferences and after the introduction of the PhD education system, they became the first forum for the presentation of the results of the new generation. The frequent invitation of reputed foreign scientists greatly elevated the standard of Conferences, and the financial support to eminent researchers by conference organizers rendered possible participation of younger generation in IBRO, ENA and SfN conferences. The big international organizations (ENA, IBRO) have accepted the HNS an equal to other national societies in neuroscience.



Figure 4. The Opening Ceremony of the first Congress of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society, Pécs, 1994. From left to right: József Hámosi, the Rector of the Janus Pannonius University, Pécs, László Lénárd, President of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society, and Gábor Kellényi, the Rector of the Medical University of Pécs.

Founded in 1998 during the Forum of European Neuroscience, the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS) is the main organization for neuroscience in Europe. The ENA ceased to exist (July 1, 2000), when activities of ENA was taken over by FENS. FENS currently represents 44 national and single-disciplined neuroscience societies across 33 European countries and more than 22,000 scientist members. The HNS was among the founding societies of the FENS and HNS members were acting in different committees of the FENS (Károly Elekes, Zoltán Nusser, Miklós Palkovits, Dóra Reglődi), and for one term (1998-2000), Tamás Freund was the president of the FENS.



Hitoo Nishino President of the Japan Neuroscience Society (First Honorary Member of the HNS)



Sigismund Huck President of the Austrian Neuroscience Society



Figure 5. Distinguished guests at the first Congress of the Hungarian Neuroscience Society, Pécs, 1994

During the time passed since the foundation of the HNS, it always comprised and comprises a large number of young scientists filled with ambition and enthusiasm representing the sure guarantee that Hungarian neuroscience will remain in the foreground of the World scientific community. With the words of Prof. László Lénárd: „**We are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first Neurobiology Colloquim held in Tihany, 1974 and the 30th anniversary of foundation of HNS and its first congress in Pécs. 1994.** Vivat, crescat floriat Magyar Idegtudományi Társaság – Hungarian Neuroscience Society.