



Professor Ullrich Trendelenburg, M.D., Ph.D.
(1922–2006)

OBITUARY

Professor Ullrich Trendelenburg, born on 31 December 1922 (in Gelsdorf near Rostock, Germany), died on 21 November 2006 in Tübingen (Germany) where he had been living after his retirement with his wife Christel. Following in the footsteps of his father, Paul Trendelenburg – a famous German pharmacologist and head of the Pharmacology Departments in Rostock, Freiburg and Berlin, Prof. U. Trendelenburg also became a pharmacologist. He first studied medicine at the University of Göttingen, and later on in Uppsala (Sweden) where he had also been working on his M.D. thesis at the Uppsala University Pharmacology Department under the supervision of Professor Ernst Barany. In the years 1952–1956 he was a Ph.D. student, a British Council scholarship holder and an instructor in pharmacology at the Department of Pharmacology (headed by Professor J.H. Burn) of Oxford University (England). After one year (1956–1957)

spent at the Pharmacology Department of the University of Mainz, Germany (headed by Professor G. Kuschinski), he became a member of the staff at the Department of Pharmacology at Harvard Medical School (Boston, Mass., USA) where he was awarded an associate professor position (in 1963), and where in the years 1966–1968 he became the Department's Acting Head after the retirement of Professor Otto Krayer who was his mentor and friend. From 1968 until his retirement (in May 1991), he was Head of the Institute of Pharmacology of the University of Würzburg (Germany).

Already in his student days in Uppsala, Prof. U. Trendelenburg became engaged in studying pharmacology, having examined the antitussive effects of morphine derivatives. In Oxford, he developed a lasting fascination with the sympathetic nervous system, having initiated studies into the pharmacology of ganglion

cells (nicotinic, non-nicotinic ganglion-stimulating agents). He was the first to report on presynaptic morphine receptors found on noradrenergic neurons. In Boston, his main research area was the pharmacology of directly and indirectly acting sympathomimetic amines and the effects of cocaine on their actions. He continued those studies in Würzburg, having focussed his attention on the uptake of monoamines by neuronal and extraneuronal transporters, on intraneuronal storage, as well as on the neuronal and extraneuronal metabolism of monoamines.

Professor Ullrich Trendelenburg was the teacher of many future pharmacologists, the most eminent of them being William W. Fleming, Salomon Z. Langer, Antonio Muskus, Salvatore Pluchino and Steve Brimijoin (in Boston), and Karl-Heinz Graefe, Heinz Bönisch, Martin Henseling and Edgar Schömig (in Würzburg).

Prof. U. Trendelenburg was also known for keeping up contacts with many scientists worldwide and cultivating friendships – often *via* long letters and invitations extended to other scientists and friends. A number of young researchers were his guests as scholarship holders, and a few eminent pharmacologists were visiting lecturers to his Department in Würzburg – to single out only some of them, e.g. the scholarship holders Lesley Brian-Lluka from Brisbane (Australia), Augusto Langeloh (Brasil), Vince Wilson (UK), Lisa Cassis (USA), Anna-Lena Ungell (Sweden), Kasujoshi Kurakashi (Japan) and Andrzej Rawłów (Poland), and the visiting lecturers Eduardo Pereira and Serafım Guimaraes (Portugal), Francisco Stefano (Argentina), Popat Patil (USA) and David Paton (New Zealand/Canada).

Prof. U. Trendelenburg was President of the German Pharmacological Society and the 2nd Vice-President of the IUPHAR; he was also a member of the Receptor Nomenclature Committee of the IUPHAR. He was an editor of the “Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics”, and a managing editor of many years of the oldest international pharmacological journal “Naunyn-Schmiedeberg’s Archives of Pharmacology”.

He was an honorary member of a number of pharmacological societies in Germany, as well as in Poland, India, Venezuela, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. He obtained a few honorary doctorates from foreign universities: in Tampere (Finland), Porto (Portugal), Ohio (USA), Lublin (Poland) and the Prague (Czechoslovakia). He was also a foreign member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences.

For many years Prof. U. Trendelenburg had been in constant and very friendly contact with Polish pharmacologists. The origins of those relationships go back to 1974, when during the German-Yugoslav-Portuguese-Hungarian Congress in Graz there took place a meeting between Presidents of the German and Polish Pharmacological Societies, i.e. Prof. U. Trendelenburg and Prof. J. Maj. Since then, due to Prof. U. Trendelenburg’s multiple initiatives, there has been established a close and most effective cooperation between these two Pharmacological Societies, as well as between many Polish pharmacology centres (including the Institute of Pharmacology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow) and German ones. Among others, on Prof. U. Trendelenburg’s initiative, the German-Polish Congress of Pharmacology was held in Hannover in 1976. Its direct organizer was Prof. E. Westermann, and at the organizers’ invitation over 20 Polish pharmacologists took part in it. That Congress had initiated a vast exchange of German and Polish pharmacologists, who later on participated many times in various scientific events organized in both countries.

Prof. U. Trendelenburg also paid frequent visits to Poland. Among others, he took part in the congresses of the Polish Pharmacological Society in Katowice (1977, 1998), Warsaw (1983), Lublin (1986), Białystok (1989) and Gdańsk (1992), having delivered excellent and inspiring lectures there and having been the driving spirit of numerous scientific and non-scientific (connected mainly with the Polish-German relations) discussions. Apart from his participation in those Congresses, Prof. U. Trendelenburg paid a number of visits to the Institute of Pharmacology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków, the Department of Pharmacology of the University School of Medicine in Lublin, and many other scientific centres in Poland. His visits always gave us an excellent opportunity to exchange views about pharmacology, science and life.

Prof. U. Trendelenburg also had many Polish pharmacologists as his guests to the Institute of Pharmacology of the Würzburg University, headed by him. Most frequently, they were workers of the Institute of Pharmacology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow (e.g. professors: J. Hano, J. Maj, E. Przegaliński, and others). One of them was the already mentioned Andrzej Rawłów, whose doctor’s thesis was later on based on the research conducted during his one-year visit to Prof. U. Trendelenburg’s Institute. All the pharmacologists who had paid a visit to his Institute

always praised Prof. U. Trendelenburg for his exceptional hospitality and for the warm and friendly atmosphere that he and his wife Christel used to create in their home.

In 1993 the Institute of Pharmacology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow organized a symposium on "The 20 years of cooperation between Polish and German pharmacologists". The soul of that symposium which – besides its regular scientific program – was also an occasion for many friendly meetings and discussions was, needless to say, Prof. U. Trendelenburg. In a book published on that occasion he wrote, among others: "That Symposium was – from the very beginning to the end – a great success. Nobody could complain about the shortage of truly scientific atmosphere, because scientific presentations were interesting and discussions lively. But even more important for me, however, was that its atmosphere was to a much greater extent like that of a family reunion than it used to be during other such symposia"...

Prof. U. Trendelenburg was deeply convinced and used to repeat that "it was of prime importance for the Polish-German collaboration that the German participants knew the past!"¹. Regrettably, he was unable to attend the Symposium on the 30 years of cooperation between German and Polish pharmacologists, held in Białowieża in 2003. All the same, in his letter to the participants of that symposium, read during the opening ceremony, he wrote:

...“Wars – and in particular the Second World War that caused Poland such immense suffering – do not usually foster better relations between former enemies. It is remarkable that Prof. Maj (who was an active member of the Polish Home Army) and Prof. Hano (who spent more than one year in the infamous concentration camps in Sachsenhausen and Dachau) decided to seek contacts with Germans who had fought in the opposing camp. My involvement began in 1975, during preparations for the Hannover congress, when Prof. Westermann (a former submariner) and I (a war-time pilot) were very happy to respond to those suggestions. The gradually developing relationships rested at first on respect for Polish researchers who had been doing excellent work under adverse conditions, but those bonds very often started up lifelong friendships as well (...).

The Second-World-war generation have already left us or are on the point of leaving. Since fate has decreed that Poles and Germans are neighbors, I sincerely hope that the post-war generations will con-

tinue to keep up and foster contacts between our countries. Personal acquaintance with one's neighbor is the best antidote to old and irrational prejudices. Of course, on certain occasions members of the same European family may fiercely quarrel with one another, as I occasionally do with my sister or even with my wife. This is of no importance as long as we respect one another, and when we remember the plentiful things we have in common. Actually, this is more easily achieved by scientists than by politicians, as we share our beloved hobby: pharmacology. Therefore, I do hope that the younger generations in our countries will persist in the efforts initiated by Professors Hano and Maj. If we accept that legacy, we shall all experience the joy I felt when I met with Polish hospitality, struck up Polish friendships and learned to admire Polish science. Please make sure that there is a successive commemorative meeting in ten years' time – each of you and both our countries would profit!"

Prof. U. Trendelenburg's last publication appeared in March 2006; however, that time it was not a pharmacological paper, but a booklet (entitled "Verfolgte deutschsprachige Pharmakologen 1933–1945"; *Persecuted German-speaking pharmacologists 1933–1945*) in which he compiled 69 short CVs of German-speaking Nazi victims.

Prof. U. Trendelenburg had been thinking about the German-Polish cooperation until the end of his days. One month before his death he wrote: "I persist in being convinced that the Polish-German scientific cooperation must be based on at least some knowledge of the past horrors. It would be very helpful if there existed a booklet about the Nazi plans for the Poles of the Generalgouvernement, and about their policy aimed at those who might play a leading role in the opposition to the German occupation of Poland". He finished his letter with the words: "If now I am no longer able to do anything for further German-Polish collaboration, this is due to certain health problems, and not to my loss of interest"².

We have lost not only a great man and scientist, but also a great protagonist of the German-Polish cooperation. Polish pharmacologists have lost a GREAT FRIEND.

Heinz Bönisch
Edmund Przegaliński
Barbara Malinowska

^{1,2} From his letters written to B. Malinowska on April 28, 2006¹ and October 19, 2006², respectively.