

IN MEMORY OF BIOLOGIST PROFESSOR PRANCIŠKUS BALTRUS ŠIVICKIS



For a few decades, a large circle of nature researchers have been gathering at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (LAS) to celebrate the birth date of one of the famous Lithuanian biologists – Professor and Fellow of LAS Pranciškus Baltrus Šivickis. Below follows a brief survey of events of the autumn of 2012 devoted to commemorate P. B. Šivickis' 130 years birth anniversary. These special events not only offered an opportunity to remember and honour the outstanding personality but also to go into the history of science which often is forgotten in the never-ending everyday routine work. A survey of the long passage of the person devoted to science teaches and inspires. Analysing the activities of the prominent person, one may find the rudiments of new trends of research and trace back the history of science. It is also important that the knowledge of the past brings closer the researchers of former and recent generations.

Two events were devoted to P. B. Šivickis' 130 years birth anniversary. They were organized in the beginning of October, 2012, at the LAS in Vilnius: the scientific conference **"Contribution of Fellow of LAS P. B. Šivickis to the development of biology in Lithuania"** was held at the conference hall of the Academy and the exhibition **"Pranciškus Baltrus Šivickis"**, devoted to a survey of professor's career, was opened in the LAS Wroblewski Library.

The information about these events was disseminated in advance. In its issue of September 28, 2012, the newspaper "Voruta" published P. B. Šivickis' portrait and material about the opening of the exhibition devoted to the Lithuanian biologist prepared by Donatas Ustinavičius, a staff member of the Wroblewski Library. The information about the exhibition also was available in the web page (www.alkas.lt) which contains an article by the

mentioned author about P. B. Šivickis' personality. Besides, in the end of September, the planned events in commemoration of P. B. Šivickis' anniversary were covered in the web sites both of LAS Library (www.mab.lt/ht/naujienos...) and Nature Research Centre (NRC) (www.gamtostyrimai.lt/lt/pages...).

On September 27, 2012, an exhibition in honour of P. B. Šivickis also was opened in the library of the Institute of Ecology. The exhibition introduced the personality and professional career of professor. It is noteworthy that P. B. Šivickis' birth anniversary coincided with the 60th anniversary of scientific research laboratory named after Šivickis (P. B. Šivickis Laboratory of Parasitology, Nature Research Centre). This laboratory was founded on the initiative of Prof. P. B. Šivickis in 1952 at the LAS Institute of Animal Science and Veterinary Research (later transferred to an institution, which has become a part of the present NRC. Head of the library of the Institute of Ecology, NRC, Audrė Trumpienė and librarian Dovilė Raginytė reminded about the double anniversary (130th birth anniversary of P. B. Šivickis and 60th anniversary of his laboratory) by informative stands. The abundance of archival photographs and chronicle information attracted researchers' and visitors' attention. The exhibition stands displayed scientific and science popular books, articles and other works published during the lifetime of P. B. Šivickis. During the solemn opening of the exhibition, Director of the NRC Fellow of LAS Dr. Habil. Mečislovas Žalakevičius spoke about P. B. Šivickis' devotion to science and everyday efforts to numerous visitors: members of research staff of the Institute and guests including P. B. Šivickis' family members – daughters Marytė Dirvanauskienė, mathematician Dr. Ramona Simonaitienė and chemist Dr. Teklė Juodienė. Speeches were made by head of P. B. Šivickis Laboratory of Parasitology Fellow of LAS Gediminas Valkiūnas and staff member Dr. Tamara Arnastauskienė. They reminded about the fields of scientific research developed by P. B. Šivickis and continued by his followers. Dr. Tamara Arnastauskienė made a succinct survey of the most valuable achievements and presented interesting details about the joint work.

The mentioned conference (organized by the Department of Biology, Medicine and Geoscien-

ces, LAS, together with the NRC, the Wroblewski Library and Faculty of Medicine of Vilnius University) was the most important event devoted to P. B. Šivickis' commemoration. The conference presentations covered the most important facts of P. B. Šivickis' biography, stages of his scientific research, connection between the works started before World War II and today's scientific research (modern methods, advanced research equipment and high standard internationally recognized scientific investigations).

The conference was opened by Fellow of LAS, head of Department of the Biology, Medicine and Geosciences Prof. Vytautas Basys. The opening was followed by a speech made by one of the first P. B. Šivickis' followers Prof. Irena Eitminavičiūtė. In her presentation **“Academician P. B. Šivickis' disciples and winners of P. B. Šivickis' prize”** she surveyed P. B. Šivickis' life path, remembered his graduate students and took pleasure in telling about prolific scientific works of her teacher. She pointed out that even ten Lithuanian scientists have been awarded P. B. Šivickis' prize (the prize was established by LAS; it is awarded every four years to the best scientists in the field of biology). Prof. I. Eitminavičiūtė recommended publishing a collection of conference presentations devoted to commemoration of P. B. Šivickis' 130th birth anniversary.

Fellow of LAS Prof. Vincas Būda – initiator of the new but increasingly popular chemical ecology research in Lithuania – in his presentation **“Chemical interactions between organisms”** introduced the achievements in this field of research for which he was awarded P. B. Šivickis' prize in 2012. Investigations of this kind are carried out at the Laboratory of Chemical and Behavioural Ecology, Institute of Ecology, NRC, established and successfully headed by Prof. V. Būda.

Fellow of LAS Prof. Vaidutis Kučinskas from the Department of Human and Medical Genetics, Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University, was word-painting in his presentation “Genetic insights of P. B. Šivickis – modern approach”. He beautifully paralleled the achievements of modern genetics and P. B. Šivickis' writings “about ‘taking after’ or genetics”. The speaker has thoroughly analysed P. B. Šivickis' works and was able to introduce his insights which have come true and were confirmed by modern researchers.

P. B. Šivickis had strong convictions and was not disposed towards compromises. In the years of Stalin's dictatorship (1948), P. B. Šivickis was fired from the University without the right to ever work in the field of education for his attitude towards genetics as a branch of science, i.e. for stating that the American Thomas H. Morgan was an outstanding scientist and his theory of chromosomes and genes heredity was plausible, for promotion of eugenics and for not following the "leading spirit of Michurin's biology". Today, genetics at the Vilnius University is lectured even at several faculties. Since 1990, human genetics has been lectured at the Faculty of Medicine whereas clinical genetics was legalized in 1991 as a discrete specialty. This faculty used to have a Centre of Human Genetics which in 2002 was reorganized into a Department of Human and Medical Genetics. In 2003, a new scientific division was established in the faculty – Centre of Human Genome Research. Prof. V. Kučinskas suggested that the Faculty of Medicine of Vilnius University (where P. B. Šivickis used to work) should more seriously honour one of the most outstanding scientists, e. g. by naming one of the lecture halls* of the faculty after P. B. Šivickis.

Dr. Laima Petrauskienė who has been working at the Institute of Ecology for many years and who is an expert of the history of biology in Lithuania made a presentation **"A few new episodes from Academician P. B. Šivickis' scientific cultural heritage"** introducing P. B. Šivickis' films made using an amateurish yet then modern filming camera (it is on display at the Lithuanian Theatre, Cinema and Music Museum in Vilnius). She was the first to analyse this field of P. B. Šivickis' activity. The speaker demonstrated a few fragments from the archival silent films which are of historical and cultural value. Her comments and remarks about the pictures of images, events and persons taken before the war carried back the listeners to the Lithuanian past and encouraged more often to refer to historical heritage.

* At the beginning of 2013, the Faculty of Medicine of the Vilnius University announced a national conference to be held in June of 2013 "Scientific and Academic Heritage of the Famous Lithuanian Anatomists and Histologists (P. B. Šivickis, S. Pavilonis and G. Česnys)". During the conference, it was announced the lecture halls of the Department of Anatomy, Histology and Anthropology (Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University) will be named after these prominent scientists.

As was mentioned above, the exhibition titled **"Pranciškus Baltrus Šivickis"** organized in the Wroblewski Library, LAS, was another important event devoted to celebration of the 130th birth anniversary of P. B. Šivickis. The exhibition was opened by Dr. Sigitas Narbutas, Library Director. He briefly introduced the exposition and reminded about the tradition of the LAS library to honour the famous scientists. He was happy about the rich P. B. Šivickis' heritage stored at the library. The heritage includes more than 1 300 manuscripts, drawings, photographs, maps and other documents in different languages. The greater part of the documents – unpublished scientific material, lectures, presentations, reviews, reminiscences and autobiographical material – was transferred to the library by professor himself in 1948–1956. After his death, his wife geographer Petronėlė Šivickienė transferred the remaining part of the documents. Sometime later the stock was supplemented by Vytautas Petrauskas, Editor in Chief of scientific journal "Proceedings of the LAS", staff members of the Institute of Zoology and Parasitology and other persons.

President of LAS Valdemaras Razumas who visited the opening of the exhibition, took pride in Lithuania who, having famous Lithuanian scientists living abroad (to whom Prof. P. B. Šivickis undoubtedly belongs), finds new evidence proving their outstanding activities. The exhibition material demonstrated Prof. P. B. Šivickis to be one of the most famous Lithuanian biologists and revealed his merits as educator and scientist. Head of the P. B. Šivickis' Laboratory of Parasitology, Institute of Ecology, NRC, and Fellow of LAS Dr. Habil. Gediminas Valkiūnas pointed out that professor was a creative universal scientist who had a grand feeling of the flow of life. Dr. Tamara Arnastauskienė, a parasitologist, reminded of the times when Prof. P. B. Šivickis was her scientific supervisor. She confirmed that the exposition revealed P. B. Šivickis as an erudite. Yet much is still unknown about his broad fields of activities.

Speaking about the P. B. Šivickis anniversary celebration it should be mentioned that in journal "Ecology" (No. 3, 2012; headline *Chronicle*) Tamara Arnastauskienė, Jadvyga Grikiėnienė, Tatjana Ježova and Gediminas Valkiūnas published a thoroughly prepared article "A double anniversary: 60 years to P. B. Šivickis Laboratory of Parasitology,

Institute of Ecology, NRC, and 130 years after the birth of its founder P. B. Šivickis” (in Lithuanian). The authors reminded the readership about the circumstances under which the Laboratory of Parasitology was established at the Institute of Animal Science and Veterinary Research, LAS, in 1952. In 1956, the Laboratory was incorporated into the Institute of Biology, LAS, and now it is an important part of the NRC. The article includes a list of professor’s graduates with indication of the main research fields. It also contains much factorgraphic material about the recent development of these research fields. The authors pointed out that P. B. Šivickis’ scientific traditions are respected and further developed. The rich experience of a few generations of scientists is used for enrichment of the internationally recognized research results. The text is supplemented with historical photographs of the laboratory life.

It is encouraging that the cycle of events devoted to the anniversary of the famous Lithuanian scientist did not peter out with the mentioned exhibitions. The edition of October 31, 2012, by the weekly radio broadcast “Žinių amžius” (Era of Knowledge), designed as a survey and pro-

motion of the Lithuanian science, was devoted to the NRC. Director of the NRC Fellow of LAS Mečislovas Žalakevičius and Dr. Dalius Butkauskas as well as Fellow of LAS Prof. Vincas Būda spoke about the newest scientific research works and plans for the future. The broadcast ended with Fellow of LAS G. Valkiūnas’ (head of the P. B. Šivickis’ Laboratory of Parasitology, NRC) speech. G. Valkiūnas is the leader in the field of fowl blood parasites and one of the most famous researchers of protists in Europe. He introduced Fellow of LAS P. B. Šivickis as the founder of the Laboratory of Parasitology whose young researchers successfully compete within the international scientific community.

On December 20, 2012, the Lithuanian scientific journal “Mokslo Lietuva” (Science in Lithuania) published a survey of events in the Lithuanian scientific community commemorating P. B. Šivickis’ 130th birth anniversary. The authors of the article pointed out that one of the most outstanding Lithuanian biologists of the 20th century “is alive in our works” because his scientific works and ideas are successfully pursued by the young researchers of his laboratory.

Dr. Algimantas Jakimavičius,
Prof. Dr. Habil. Vincas Būda