

IN MEMORIAM

ASSEN HADJIOLOV Jr, WID, DSC

A Bulgarian pride In molecular genetics

On April 22, 1996, Academician Assen Assenov Hadjiolov, an outstanding Bulgarian molecular biologist, at his most creative age, suddenly died of stroke in Toulouse, France. He was one of the world-famous Bulgarian scholars in the field of molecular biology- of the cell. He devoted his life to the study of ribosomal genes and cancerogenesis. His name could undoubtedly be listed along with the names of the most praiseworthy modern scientists in biomedicine of mankind. It presents a high peak in world science and thus a national pride, too.

He was born on December 10, 1930 in the city of Sofia. His father, Academician Assen Ivanov Hadjiolov, was one of the founders of histology and cytology in Bulgaria. There are only a few examples in the history of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (B AS) when both father and son were simultaneously its members. Dr Hadjiolov was grandson on his mother's side of Gen. Georg Silagy, who, like many other military and cultural celebrities in Europe, responded to Abraham Lincoln's appeal for aid in the war against slavery and for the unification of the Northern and Southern States of America. Gen. Silagy took an active part in the war, and soon was promoted to the rank of Deputy Chief Commander of the Army of the North, coming only second after Gen. Grant. This is the reason why many of the documents in the Gettysburg Museum are connected with the name of Gen. Silagy. After the war ended, Gen. Silagy left America and emigrated in the town of Shoumen in

Bulgaria to join his old Hungarian friend, Lajos Kosut. Assen Hadjiolov graduated *summa cum laude* from Sofia Institute of Medicine in 1954. As a student, he actively participated in its first BSc

program of biochemistry. He then became PhD student and assistant professor at the Department of Biochemistry. From 1962 till 1969 he was senior research associate, and later on full professor. He was the founder and Head of the Section of Molecular Genetics at the B AS Institute of Molecular Biology. In 1988, he was elected vice-president of, and in 1989, academician at the B AS. In 1990, he was a Minister of Science and Education of Bulgaria. Since 1992, he worked in the Laboratoire de Biologie Moleculaire Eukaryote du Centre de la Recherche Scientifique, Universite Paul Sabatier, Toulouse, France.

Milestones in his scientific career were some successful visits in the most eminent world laboratories and institutes directed by Prof. Straub in Budapest (1959), Prof. Vandreli in Paris (1961), Prof. F. Lipmann, a Nobel Laureate, in New York (1965). His stay in the National Institute for Medical Research in London (1970-1971) and in Rockefeller Research Institute in New York as a full

professor (1974) was also an important period in his scientific career. Dr Hadjiolov was member of the biochemical societies of Hungary, England, and France as well as of the editorial board of numerous international journals. As a phenomenal lecturer of rich general and information culture he was capable of identifying the core of a



Assen Hadjiolov
1930-1996

scientific problem in relation to the intrinsic logic of the matter. His individual development was characterized by profound theoretical thinking. His main research interests were focused on the interaction between structure and function at cellular level and on the mechanisms of intra- and intercellular communications. His purposefulness was combined with strong self-exigence at the background of luxuriant erudition and preciseness of thinking and expression. He always posed himself rational questions before attempting to answer them. The dynamic following-up of his creative works reveals that it started with functional biochemistry (1964), passed on to molecular pathology and then permanently to molecular genetics, thus reaching the intimate structure and function of the ribosomal genes. Assen Hadjiolov's own contributions to science were in the areas of mechanisms of protein biosynthesis, role of ribosomes in this complex process, and *The Nucleolus and Ribosomal Biogenesis* (1985, Springer-Verlag, Wien, New York). Numerous genes were isolated and identified in the BAS Institutes of Molecular Biology and Cell Biology under his guidance and with his active participation.

Assen Hadjiolov knew well and highly appreciated the role of the organization of science. His strong willing was to set the organization of Bulgarian science in accordance with that in the advanced countries. This is why, being a Minister of Science and Education, he established the first in the history of Bulgarian science National Foundation for Scientific Research. He was its first president. Friends of Assen Hadjiolov suggested an award be constituted after his name for the best investigations funded by the Foundation.

Dr Hadjiolov Jr will long be remembered for his quiet smile and for his creative enthusiasm for excellence in biomedical science.

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ASSEN HADJIOLOV Jr, MD, DSC

A great teacher and man

The Organizer of *Biomedical Forum* plans to establish the Assen Hadjiolov Jr Memorial Lectureship to honor Dr Hadjiolov and his scientific and educational contributions. A contribution to Bulgarian science and a Bulgarian contribution to world science are rather different statements. Dr Hadjiolov, indeed, was a great Bulgarian contributor to world biomedical science.

We all can learn much from the example of his life. He was a great teacher and man! We, students who attended his biochemistry classes during the 1961 -1962 academic year, admired his extraordinary⁷ gift of knowledge and his skills of an educator.

He will continue to serve as a role model for the generations to come.

Dr Hadjiolov will be greatly missed by his family, colleagues, students and all who had the privilege of interacting with him.

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Organizer, Biomedical Forum