



ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF POLISH ASSOCIATION OF NEUROPATHOLOGISTS ON "ENCEPHALITIDES", WARSZAWA, MAY 23, 1998

INTRODUCTION

The Annual Conference of the Association of Polish Neuropathologists concurred this year with the 20th anniversary of the death of Professor Ewa Osetowska, initiator and founder of the Association. It seemed appropriate to connect the main topic of the Conference with the scientific activity of the late Professor.

Professor Ewa Osetowska, the pupil and follower of two eminent neuropathologists – Adam Opalski in Poland and Ludo van Bogaert in Belgium, was a very active and productive researcher and her activity concerned numerous topics and aspects of both clinical and to a lesser degree, experimental neuropathology. Pathomorphology of viral and hyperergic encephalitides was a dominating field in her research interests. Sixty six of a total number of more than 150 of her publications concerned this topic. In most instances those were clinico-pathological analyses of various types of viral encephalitides, among which most of the studies were devoted to various aspects of the subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE), central-european tick-borne encephalitis, as well as so-called influenza and rheumatic encephalitides.

In the group of publications on SSPE a detailed study worthy of special attention was one on the topography of pathological changes and their particular elements in the brain in the context of the clinical course and duration of the disease, its clinical symptomatology and variances, age of the onset of the disease, etc. This unique study, based on the analysis of 50 cases, evidenced the authors morphological clear-sightedness and clinico-pathological mastery.

Interest in central european tick-borne encephalitis in its clinico-pathological aspect brought the best basis for histopathological diagnostics of the process, while the experimental studies offered a detailed analysis of histopathological picture in dependence on the degree of maturation of the central nervous system, on viral strain and the way of infection.

In the studies on controversial rheumatic encephalitis Osetowska turned attention to the almost pathognomonic diagnostic value of particular abnormalities accompanying inflammatory process and appearance in the brain of nodular reaction resembling Aschoff's nodules. Studies on the so-called influenza-encephalitis led the author to the considerations on the frontiers between encephalitic and encephalopathic processes in various types of viral infections of the central nervous system. The question of the encephalopathic component in encephalitides was the problem which she approached in numerous publications, concerning analytical descriptions of particular types of viral encephalitides, as well as in papers devoted to more general pathogenetic considerations.

An important part of her studies was also devoted to the classification of encephalitides. She tried to formulate a morphological classification of encephalitides based on two fundamental features: topography of the process and its cellular structure. Her concepts concerning this topic were most precisely presented in two large monographies summing up her experiences, considerations and ideas. Her English monography entitled "Tissue Neuropathology of Viral and Allergic Encephalitides", which she prepared during the advanced stage of her disease, fighting with suffering and running time, was published after her death.

The years which have since passed enriched tremendously our knowledge of the biology of inflammatory process. Progress in virology and immunology brought a new outlook on etiopathogenesis of many cerebral inflammations, the introduction of new morphological methods and techniques facilitated and deepened diagnostic procedures, increasing diagnostic accuracy. Nature brought new types of viral infections of the central nervous system, first of all that due to the human immunodeficiency virus an enhanced incidence of some previously rare or almost exceptional infections which accompany AIDS, such as cytomegaly or progressive multifocal leukoence-

phalopathy. Even, if in the light of present knowledge, we do not always agree with Osetowska's pathogenetic concepts and classification proposals, the unquestionable actual value of her perfect and precise morphological descriptions and deep analytical and clinico-pathological correlations is still retained.

I think, that the organization of the neuropathological symposium on encephalitides was an appropriate manner to commemorate Professor Ewa Osetowska and her role in the history of Polish Neuropathology.

Professor *Mirosław J. Mossakowski*