



WORLD MEETING OF CHEMISTRY HISTORIANS IN HUNGARY

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An international conference on the history of chemistry is organized by the The Working Party on the History of Chemistry (WP) of the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences (EuCheMS) joining about 50 member societies in 35 countries across Europe. WP works on projects, publishes books and biannually organizes international conferences on the history of chemistry. The major aim of the conferences organised by WP is to facilitate communication between historically interested chemists and historians of chemistry from all over Europe.

The 7th international Conference on the History of Chemistry

In Sopron, Hungary, the 7th international conference on the history of chemistry was given a special title *Consumers and Experts: the Use of Chemistry (and Alchemy)*. The conference focused on the theme 'the uses of chemistry (and alchemy)' covering both the practical uses of chemistry and the cultural consumption of chemistry.

There is a growing trend in the history of technology to examine the development and use of new technology from the user's (consumer's) point of view rather than that of the innovator or producer which has hitherto been the predominant standpoint in that field. This change in perspective can be particularly valuable for the history of chemistry a great use of which has been praised for many centuries, whether it was to make gold for royalty in the 16th century, improving crop yields in the 19th century or producing nanomaterials for aerospace industry in the 21st century. It was supported because it was considered to raise industry, agriculture and medicine. A social impact of chemistry has been considerable and helped in providing clean water and wholesome food, improving housing and increasing food supply in the face of the rapidly growing population. Less positively, chemistry has also been used in war from explosives and poison gases to synthetic petrol and rubber. Chemistry has also been the major theme in the international exhibitions and museums. The expertise of chemists has been used by lawyers to win patent disputes and murder trials and by governments to develop policy. The uses of chemistry is a topic that branches out from the history of chemistry and alchemy to many other areas ranging from the history of chemical industry and

pharmacy to the history of medicine, business and economic history, legal history, social history, cultural studies, museums and the study of material culture. This conference aimed to a better understanding of different ways chemistry and alchemy have been 'consumed' in countless ways over the last six or seven hundred years. It also seeks to explore how the consumers of chemicals and chemists have been created in their social and economic context.

The conference was organised by EuCheMS, Hungarian Chemical Society and the Complex Committee of the History of Science and Technology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and was sponsored by Hungarian Patent Office, Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry, the Complex Committee of the History of Science and Technology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Maastricht University. 68 papers were presented following by the abstracts in a book of summaries. 7 posters were exhibited. 79 registered participants attended the conference.

The scientific programme of the conference included plenary sessions such as *Chemistry and Art* (Cleaning Pictures: Chemists as Art Connoisseurs? by Geert Vanpaemel, Belgium, *Prussian Blue or the Pencil of Nature* by Pierre László, France) and scientific sessions with papers:

Chemistry in the 18th Century and the Sciences of the Earth (The Bureaucrat as an Anonymous Expert: Transformation of Saltpetre Production in Sweden Circa 1800 and the Authority of Chemistry in Practical Instructions; The Second Edition of Cronstedt's Mineralogy: Why Such an Enterprise?);

Educating the Public (Chemistry and Chemical Industry Approaching the Public at Budapest International Fairs (1906–2000); A Sociosemiotic Study on the Introduction of Everyday Polypropylene Objects in Italy; Chemistry Through the Waves);

Aspects of the Chemical Revolution (Natural Philosophy and Experimental Chemistry in the 2nd Half of the 18th Century: The Case of Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729–1799); Fermentation and Germination – A Scientific Dispute in the Later Years of the 18th Century between Vicente Seabra and Avelar Brotero);

The Public Image of Chemistry in the 20th and 21st Centuries (Chemistry.Com: Why the Lay Public Embraces Chemistry and Alchemy While Shunning Chemicals; Chemistry: A Challenge for Traditional Brewers?; Gendered Elements in Chemical Thermodynamics and their Historical Origin);

Popularisation of Chemistry in the 19th and early 20th Centuries (The Chemists of the French Association for the Advancement of Science (AFAS): Networks and the Promotion of Modern Chemistry (1872–1924); Drugs in Ads and News: Educating People in the 19th Century Press; Chemistry and Chemists in Moscow Natural History Societies in the 19th Century);

Chemistry and War (The First World War and the Shaping of Dual-Use Chemical Technologies: The Case of German Chemicals and Explosives, 1914–1925; Private Estates and War Practices: The Development of Fertilizers in Russia; The Development of Dutch Penicillin 1940–1950);

Industry and Chemical Expertise in Ireland (Sir Charles Alexander Cameron (1830–1921): Dublin's Medical Superintendent, Executive Officer of Health, Public Analyst and Inspector of Explosives; Chemicals from Seaweed: An Early Chemical Industry in Ireland);

History of Chemistry and Chemical Education (Introducing the History and Philosophy of Chemistry into the School Curriculum; Using Practical Chemistry to Introduce School Pupils to the History of Chemistry: A Case Study; Alchemy Lesson- Teaching Proposals for the Utilization of Literature in Science Teaching);

Periodic Table (The Early Reception of Mendeleev's Periodic Law in Russia; About the Periodic Table in German Popular and School Chemistry Books at the End of the 19th Century; The Role of the Czech Chemists in the Reception and Dissemination of the Periodic System in Europe; Chemical Classifications, Textbooks and School Disciplines in Spain in the 19th Century; The Reception of Mendeleev's System in Belgium; The Reception of Mendeleev's Periodic System In Sweden: A Non-Revolutionary Event; The Reception and Use of the Periodic System in Denmark, 1870–1920; The Reception of the Periodic Table among Norwegian Chemists, c.1870–1930s; Chemical Classification and the Response to the Periodic Law of Elements in Japan in the 19th Century);

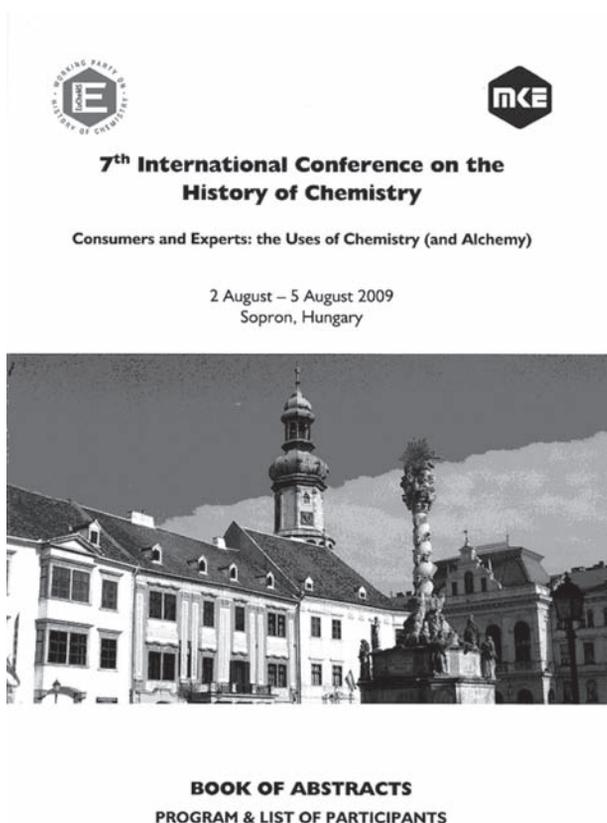
Chemistry and Chemical Industry in Asia and Latin America (Fryer and Billequin: a Comparative Study on the Introduction of Western Chemistry into China in the 19th century; From the Unitary Process to the Engineering Process: Emergence of the Chemical Engineering Profession in Mexico; Industrial Pollution in Amazonia: a Study Case about the Aluminium Plants of Barcarena);

Between (Bio)Chemistry and Physics (The Case of High-Temperature Superconductors: When Chemists Work and Physicists Speak; Does Fundamental Research Only Have Defenders and No Users? P. J. W. Debye in Fundamental and Applied Science; Isotope as Indicator: Radiation as an Indicator for Biochemical Processes);

Aspects of Alchemy and Alchemy-related Chemistry (Ripley Revis'd: Reading Medieval Alchemy in Early Modern Europe; Chemical Remedies in the 18th Century: Mercury and Alkahest; Alchemy on the 'Peripheries' of Early Modern Europe. Avenues of Research);

Specialised Branches of Chemical Industry (Not Only Goods: Difficult Social Life of Biodegradable Plastics; The Development of Fine Chemical Industry after the Second World War; G. N. Wyruboff (1843–1913) in the History of the Industrial Application of Chemistry of Rare-earth Elements).

The conference was held in a hotel close to the Sopron castle. The participants had a possibility of visiting the exhibitions of the Chemistry Museum in Varpalota (the Chemistry Museum is located in a 15th century 4-tower fortress built around a 14th century Gothic palace). Besides an alchemists' laboratory, the Museum's permanent exhibition embraces the following topics: the development of chemical industry from antiquity to the 'Reform' period; the chemical industry of the Reform period; the development of Hungarian chemical industry from 1919 to 1945; a portrait gallery of famous Hungarian chemists; a laboratory of the 60's; computer techniques in the service of chemical industry; an exhibition of balances; models of chemical works.



The conference was organised following the 23rd International congress of the history of science and technology held in Budapest on 28 July - 2 August of the same year. Some historians of chemistry participated in Symposia *Chemistry in the Aftermath of World Wars* and the regular session *Chemistry in the Contemporary Period*.

About the Working Party on the History of Chemistry

The European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences (EuCheMS) was founded on 15 October 2004, thereby taking over the role and responsibilities of the Federation of European Chemical Societies (FECS) founded in 1970. EuCheMS has about 50 member societies in 35 countries across Europe. Membership in WP is voluntary and based on the country representing idea. The Working Party on the History of Chemistry (WP) was founded in Budapest in 1977 and was chaired by Ferenc Szabadvary (1977–1985),

Hans van Spronsen (1985–1993), Hendrik Deelstra (1993–2003) and Ernst Homburg (2003–2009) and since September 2009 - by Carsten Reinhardt. The previous conferences organised by WP were held in Budapest in September 2003 ('Communication in Chemistry in Europe'), Lisbon in September 2005 ('Chemistry, Technology and Society') and Leuven in August 2007 ('Neighbours and Territories: The Evolving Identity of Chemistry').

WP publishes bulletins, full texts of conference materials and issues material compiled by the members: *Creating Networks in Chemistry: The Founding and Early History of Chemical Societies in Europe* (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2008) edited by Anita Kildebaek Nielsen and Sona Štrbánová originated from the workshop on chemical societies in connection with the 5th International Conference for the History of Chemistry in 2005; *Guide for Museums with collections on the History of Chemistry and Pharmacy* has already been issued for the third time; José Ramon Bertomeu-Sanchez has edited an extensive report on the status of the history of chemistry in Europe.

At the end of the conference, the meeting of WP was organised. The main topics of the agenda were the election of a new Chair and the place for the next conference. After voting, a new Chairman Carsten Reinhardt, a professor from the Institute of Science and Technology Studies, the University of Bielefeld was saluted. The next conference will be held in Rostock, Germany, in 2011.

PASAULIO CHEMIJOS ISTORIKŲ SUSITIKIMAS VENGRIJOJE

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Apžvelgiama Europos chemijos ir molekulių mokslo asociacijos Chemijos istorijos darbo grupės surengta jau septintoji tarptautinė chemijos istorikų konferencija. Renginys vyko Šoprone (Vengrijoje). Pagrindinės temos – vartotojai ir ekspertai, chemijos bei alchemijos pritaikymas. Konferencijos pranešimų pagrindinis tikslas – atskleisti chemijos potencialo bei vartotojo poreikių santykį. Pranešimų grupės apėmė šias temas: chemijos istorijos mokymas bei populiarinimas, chemija pasaulio karuose, periodinė lentelė, chemijos bei alchemijos santykis, specializuotos chemijos pramonės šakos ir kt.

Pateikiama trumpa Europos chemijos ir molekulių mokslo asociacijos Chemijos istorijos darbo grupės veiklos apžvalga.