

## Otto Braun-Falco and his scholarship

3<sup>rd</sup> Congress “Dermatology, Venereology and Allergology”, Gdansk, Poland 2018

Dermatol Rev/Przeł Dermatol 2018, 105, 644–655



Figure 1.

Today's session and the meeting after a long time with the former Otto Braun-Falco scholarship holders is for me a moving moment, and I thank Professor Nowicki – I thank you, Roman – on behalf of our “Förderkreis”, my colleagues and myself for the invitation, but above all for the idea and organization of this session, dedicated to the memory of one of the most important dermatologists of our time, Professor Otto Braun Falco (fig. 1).

Professor Christophers, who was particularly close to him, has already appreciated his life, his work and his great merits. I want to express today that Professor Otto Braun-Falco supported our group very much and that we are really grateful to him.

I miss him today, because I'm sure he would have loved to attend today's meeting with his scholarship students. He always took part in the events with his scholarship students, if he could. He accompanied them with his sympathy and he made all these events into special events with his personal charisma, his enthusiasm, his profound knowledge, his brilliant accuracy, his independence, his quick wit and humor.

With him we have lost a significant part of our support, and it's painful that we today and in the future have to get along without him.

Our circle of German-Polish Dermatologists is now almost 30 years old, old enough to look back from a distance.

From the beginning until today three people have been of particular importance to our project: Profes-

sor Enno Christophers, Professor Stefania Jablonska and Professor Otto Braun-Falco.

In a difficult moment when in 1989 we were undecided about whether we should really found this German-Polish circle of Dermatologists or not, Professor Christophers – at that time President of the German Dermatological Society – wrote us a letter and promised us his full support. I quote:

“I would like to support your intentions and can assure you I shall, as far as I can, give them all my help” (fig. 2).

This letter provided crucial support, and so Professor Christophers became the mentor and the coach of our project and the Association of German and Polish Dermatologists was founded on 24.11.1989 – 2 weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall (figs. 3–5). He was the link to the German Dermatological Society, received and reviewed the applications of all scholarships and supported us with considerable funds over a period of nearly 30 years. For this we owe him our very special thanks.

The second person to support our project was Professor Stefania Jablonska, at that time President of the Polish Dermatological Society. From her we had unwavering backing. She always helped us with the organization in Poland. She arranged and provided us fellows, participated in many meetings on the occasion of the granting of the scholarship in Germany and her empathy with us for many years was almost unbelievable. She was a really gracious lady and she often had her heart on her tongue. In 1990 she wrote me a dedication in a book: *Polonia semper fidelis* – The Poles are always faithful (fig. 6).

In the first years, we mainly carried out drug deliveries, aid transports of surgical equipment and UV radiation cabins, etc., to several Polish dermatology clinics amounting to about DM 3 million. The helpfulness of German industry – in the general spirit of optimism, surrounding the fall of the Berlin wall – was so great that we got incredible amounts of medical drugs. For example, the company Grünenthal donated corticosteroids worth a total of 220,000 DM, Böhringer Ingelheim 210,000 DM, Squibb Heyden 80,000 DM and so on (figs. 7–12).

At that time Poland was in a difficult situation. There was a lot of inflation, as shown by the year-to-year increase in taxi prices or the stamp cost of correspondence (fig. 13).

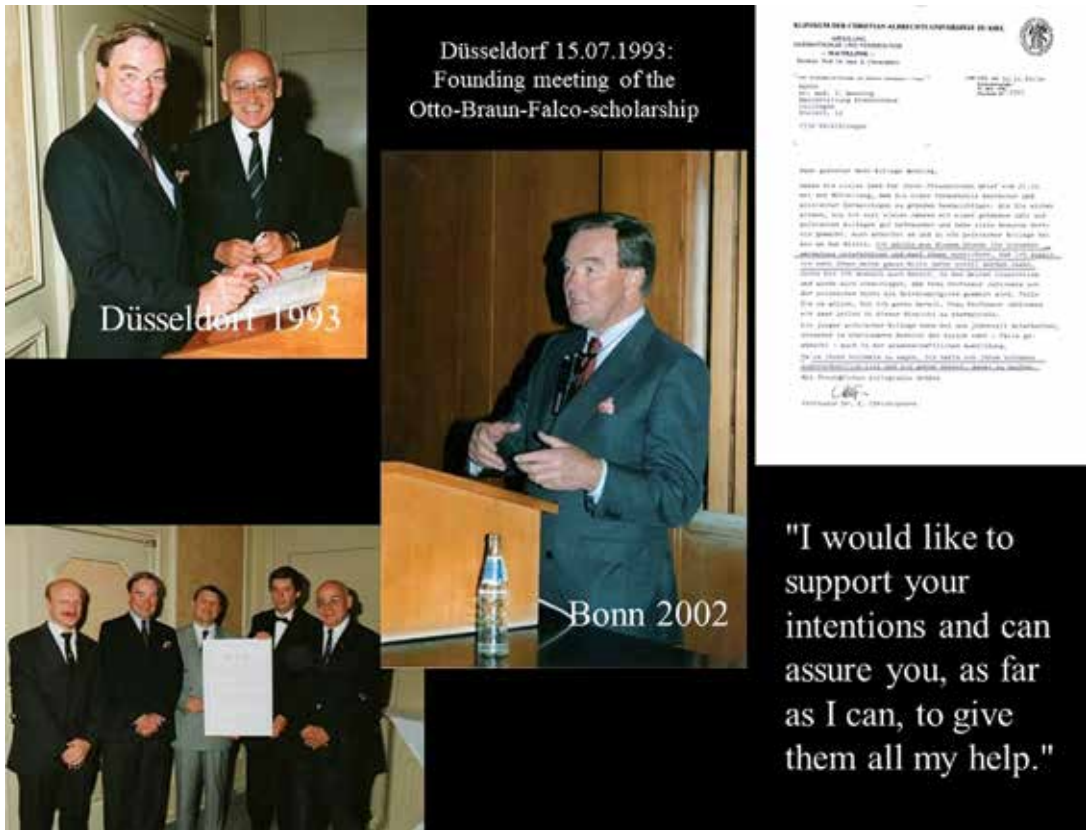


Figure 2.

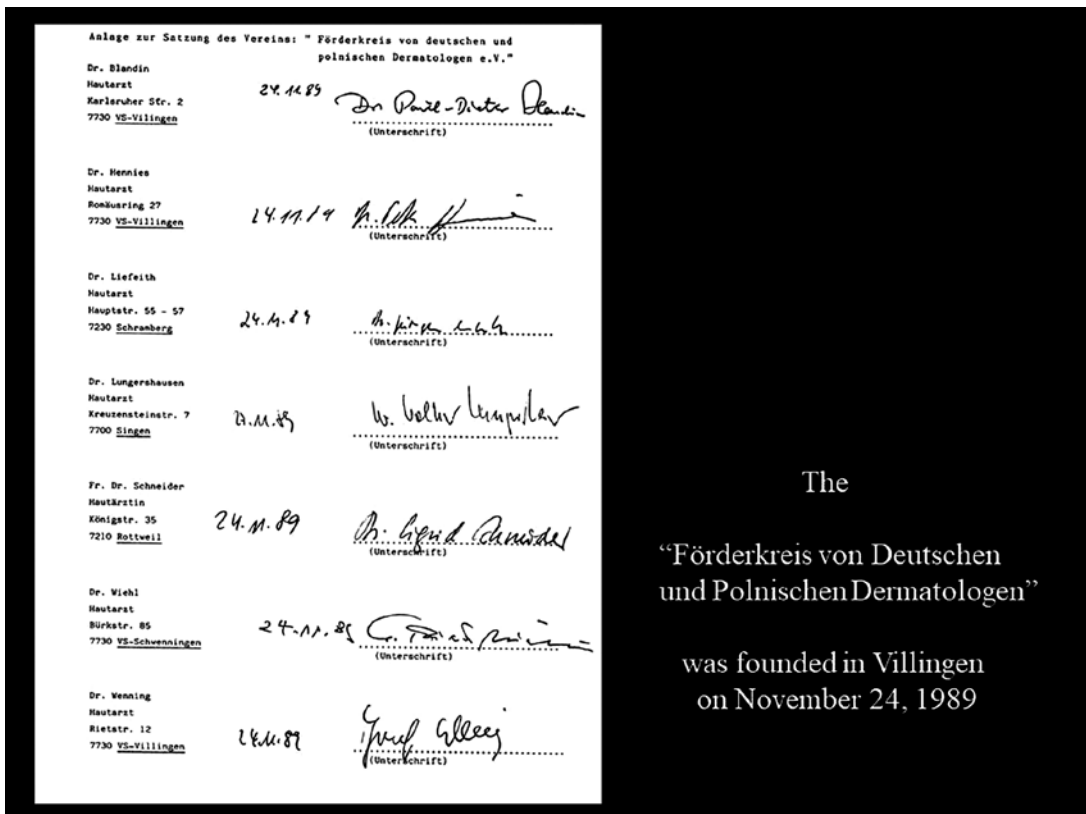


Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5. Villingen

The inner cities suffered from heavy smog in winter. The food supply was difficult, and when I visited Gdansk for the first time in 1989, the dialysis ward had just been shut down, because the nurses in the hotels alone earned more money from their tips than at the clinics (fig. 14).

After the situation of drug supply in Poland improved, we had the idea to install a postdoctoral fel-

lowship. But the question was, by what name should we name it. First of all, we approached the Institute of Medical History of the Albert Ludwig University in Freiburg and asked to give us the name of an internationally known Polish dermatologist from the time of the Polish Second Republic of 1918–1939. The Institute's recommendation was Professor Franciszek Krzysztalowicz, from 1919 to 1931 director of the dermatological clinic in Warsaw (fig. 15).

But this name was unsuitable for German scholarship for several reasons, especially because the name is difficult to pronounce for German tongues.

So the idea came up to ask Professor Braun-Falco to make his name available for this scholarship. During its decades of activity, Otto Braun-Falco has welcomed guest doctors from many nations to its clinic. Compared to this, our project was only very modest. But we knew that the exchange with Poland was especially close to his heart. Unpretentiously, he immediately announced his name for the planned scholarship. I quote: "It is a special honor and pleasure for me that you intend to name the scholarship the 'Braun-Falco Scholarship'. I am all the more pleased



Figure 6.



Figure 7. Donation notifications



Figure 8. The loading of the trucks in Villingen

Figure 9. One of the customs declarations

because, as you know, for decades I associate best relations with Polish dermatologists and above all with Ms. Professor Dr. Stefania Jablonska" (fig. 16). With this name our project could only be a success.

On July 15, 1993, the first Otto-Braun-Falco scholarship in Düsseldorf was awarded to Roman Nowicki (figs. 17–19).

Professor Bialynicki-Birula will tell you the history of the scholarship in greater detail, especially about the fellows.



Figure 10. Arrival in Gdansk



990

**REPORT**

sind stolz auf ihr Land. Sie wollen am Aufbau und an der Umgestaltung teilhaben. Diesen Enthusiasmus gilt es zu fördern.

Das Ausland, insbesondere aber junge Deutsche, auch junge Ärzte, sollten persönliche Kontakte aufbauen und pflegen, um die jungen Polen zu unterstützen – und dies nicht ausschließlich materiell. Denn eine polnisch-deutsche Aussöhnung und Freundschaft kann nur entstehen, wenn es individuelle und vor allem einflussreiche Kontakte gibt.

Ob die Deutsche Botschaft in Warschau mit ihren Angestellten wirklich das neue Deutschland im Sinne der politisch beabsichtigten Völkerverständigung repräsentiert –

990

**REPORT**

denen um die Verbesserung der Versorgung im Krankenhaus geht, die Rolle ist von Professor Dr. Szymon Jankowski, ein junger, energiegeladener Arzt, der in der Hauptstadt Warschau lebt und arbeitet.

Die Kommission hat sich am 10. November in Warschau getroffen. Die Kommission hat sich am 10. November in Warschau getroffen. Die Kommission hat sich am 10. November in Warschau getroffen.

990

**REPORT**

haben wir es mit einer Mission zu tun, die nicht nur die Gesundheit der Patienten, sondern auch die Gesundheit der Ärzte zu verbessern. Die Gesundheit der Ärzte ist ein wichtiger Bestandteil der Gesundheit des Landes.

Die Kommission hat sich am 10. November in Warschau getroffen. Die Kommission hat sich am 10. November in Warschau getroffen. Die Kommission hat sich am 10. November in Warschau getroffen.

Figure 11. Press reports from our delivery to Warsaw

In this context, I have to mention the role of my friend Dr. Peter Schlikker, at that time Deputy Managing Director of Casella-Riedel Pharma. He donated us the incredibly generous sum of 170,000 DM for the scholarship (fig. 20).

We received 30,000 euros later through the agency of Professor Christophers from the German Dermatological Society. Thus the financial basis for the scholarship was laid.

Professor Stefania Jablonska had had in those days a car accident and could not come to the founding meeting. She sent a young co-worker as her representative – today her successor: Professor Lidia Rudnicka (fig. 21).

Our Scholarship has only succeeded as a joint initiative of several supporters. Our role was – as I have repeatedly pointed out – only that of a midwife in the Socratic sense. We had the idea, created the financial conditions and raised the child from the baptism. Without the support of the promoters of the German-Polish friendship in dermatology and the support of the hosting clinics, the project would never have succeeded.

I am delighted to meet again with the former scholarship holders whose professional success and scientific careers we are proud of.

What would the Otto-Braun-Falco Scholarship be without its fellows? Your enthusiasm, your ambition

Figure 12. In Krakow we blocked the entire library with our medicines



Figure 12. In Krakow we blocked the entire library with our medicines



Figure 13. Stamp cost for a letter to Germany from 1,500 zł up to 65,000 zł



Figure 14. Gdansk, December 1989

and diligence, your creativity have contributed to the success and reputation of this scholarship.

What would the Otto-Braun-Falco Scholarship be without the support of the Polish clinics, which have released their assistants for a stay in Germany, and

without the hosting German clinics, which have taken in and looked after our scholarship holders?

Let me make a few remarks at the end.

After World War II, the process of German-Polish rapprochement was initiated by Professor Alfred

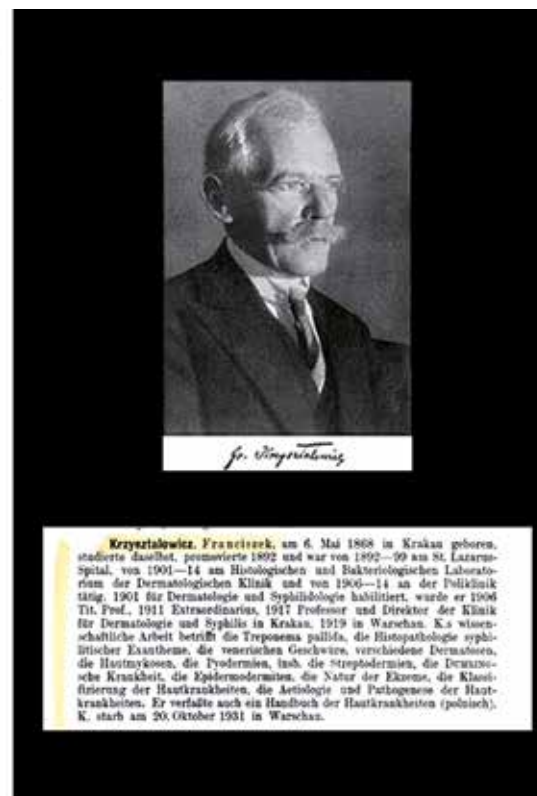


Figure 15. Franciszek Krzysztalowicz

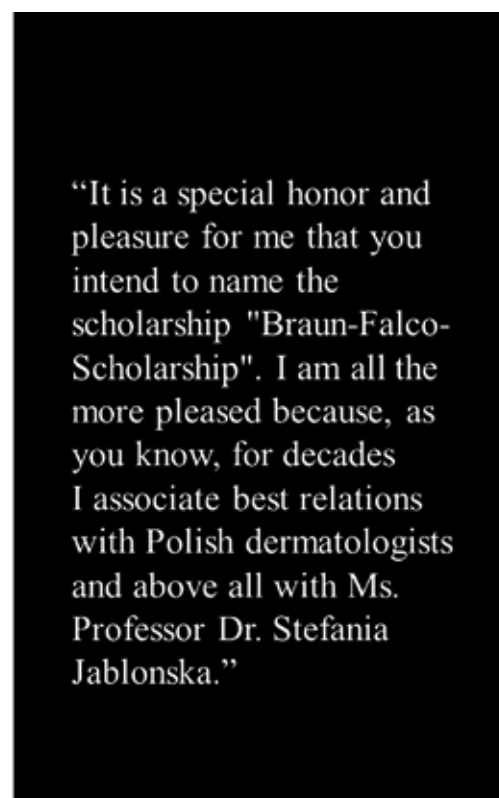


Figure 16.



**DER FÖRDERKREIS VON DEUTSCHEN UND POLNISCHEN DERMATOLOGEN e.V.**  
**IN ZUSAMMENARBEIT MIT DER DEUTSCHEN DERMATOLOGISCHEN GESELLSCHAFT**  
**UND DER FIRMA CASSELLA-RIEDEL PHARMA GmbH**  
**GIBT DIE EINRICHTUNG EINES STIPENDIUMS IN HÖHE VON**

DM 20.000,-

BEKANNT, DAS DEN NAMEN TRÄGT:

---

OTTO BRAUN-FALCO-STIPENDIUM

Dieses Stipendium wird jährlich verliehen an junge polnische, wissenschaftlich interessierte Dermatologen, die sich an polnischen Universitätskliniken in der Ausbildung oder Weiterbildung befinden und denen auf diese Art und Weise ermöglicht werden soll, bestimmte wissenschaftliche Methoden zu erlernen, eigene Forschungsziele zu verfolgen oder einen Post graduate-Aufenthalt zu absolvieren. Neben der fachlichen Weiterbildung soll dieses Stipendium der Förderung deutsch-polnischer Beziehungen im Bereich der Dermatologie dienen. Über den Stipendiaufenthalt in Deutschland ist ein Ergebnisbericht zu publizieren.

Bewerberinnen und Bewerber sollten über gute englische oder deutsche Sprachkenntnisse verfügen, einem hohen wissenschaftlichen Anspruch genügen und die Fähigkeit zur Teamarbeit besitzen. Die Auswahl unter den Bewerbungen wird von einer Kommission getroffen, der ein Vertreter der Deutschen Dermatologischen Gesellschaft, ein Vertreter der Firma Cassella-Riedel Pharma GmbH und ein Vertreter des Förderkreises von deutschen und polnischen Dermatologen e.V. angehören.

Bewerbungsunterlagen (wissenschaftlicher Lebenslauf, Nachweis der Sprachkenntnisse, Empfehlungsschreiben, Publikationsverzeichnis und ausführliche Projektbeschreibung der in Deutschland beabsichtigten Untersuchungen) bitten wir bis zum 30. Juni 1993 zu richten an den Präsidenten der Deutschen Dermatologischen Gesellschaft, Herrn Prof. Dr. E. Christophers Hautklinik der Universität Kiel Schittenhelmstr. 7, D-2300 Kiel 1, Deutschland

Die erste Vergabe des Stipendiums findet anlässlich des Kongresses der Deutschen Dermatologischen Gesellschaft vom 14. bis 18. Juli 1993 in Düsseldorf statt.



Figure 18. Dr. Ilge\*, Professor Christophers, Dr. Peter Schliker\*, Dr. Josef Wenning, Professor Dr. Otto Braun-Falco (\*Casella Riedel Pharma GmbH)

Figure 17. Announcement of the Otto-Braun-Falco scholarship



Figure 19. A look into the auditorium – Professor Klaus Wolff, Vienna, Professor Otto Braun-Falco, Franziska Braun-Falco, Professor Szarmach and Professor Wasik, Gdansk



Figure 20. Dr. Peter Schlikker



Figure 21. Professor Dr. Lidia Rudnicka



Figure 22.

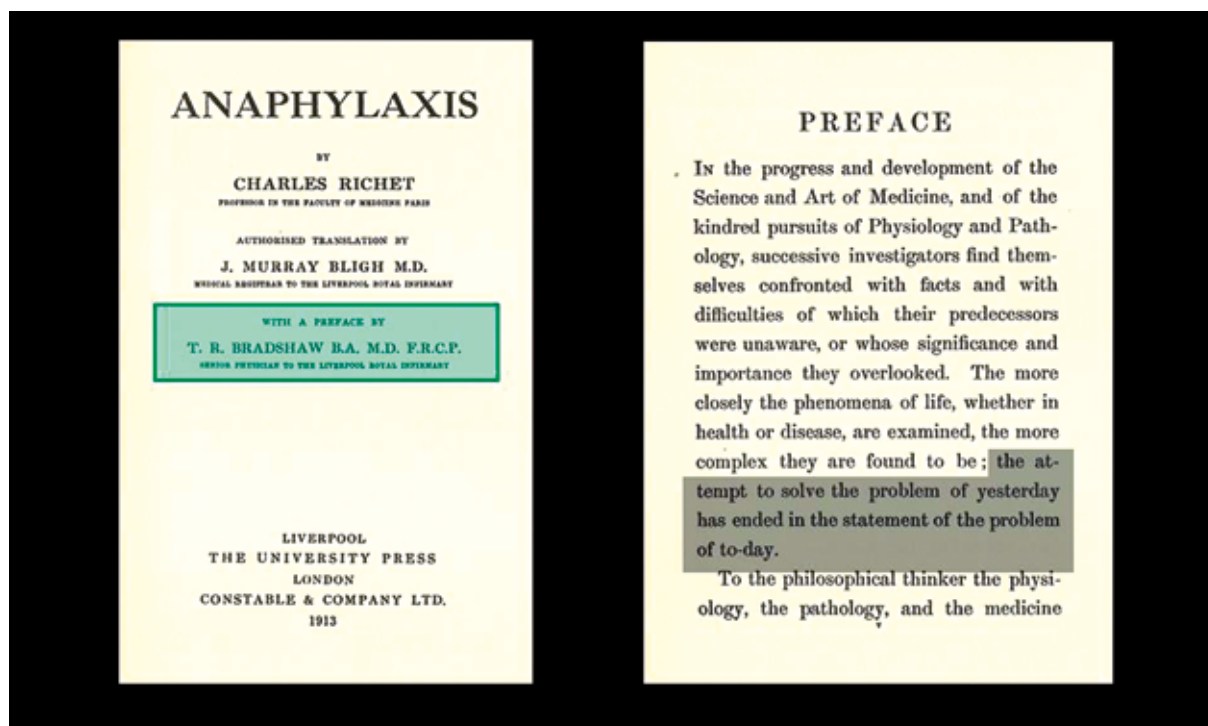


Figure 23. Anaphylaxis by Charles Richet



Figure 24. Science enchants the world

Marchionini, who himself had been persecuted during the Nazi regime. His motto, friendship through science, was taken over by Braun-Falco (fig. 22).

We ourselves have hardly raised the point of view of German-Polish reconciliation, which we have always kept in the background. But of course we hope that the efforts of German dermatologists to support young Polish scientists will have a long-term effect.

As a young student, I studied philosophy and clinical psychology in addition to medicine.

I like the interpretation of science from the point of view of radical constructivism after Paul Watzlawick and Karl Raimund Popper:

“Science is not authoritarian, it is revolutionary.”

Any new scientific discovery leads to the realization that we know less than we thought, because all scientific knowledge raises many new questions. “The attempt to solve the problem of yesterday has ended in the statement of the problem of today” wrote the anatomy Professor Bradshaw in the preface to the book *Anaphylaxis* by Charles Richet (fig. 23). In so far as science does not explain the world, it enchants the world (fig. 24).

Science is a process that overcomes prejudice and nationalism and opens the future.

But science alone does not enable the practice of the medical profession. Even a scientific career involves the danger of “elbow mentality” and the development of a self-centered worldview. In this respect, humani-



Figure 25.

tarian aspects such as “friendship through science” are a valuable addition to the scientific education.

All our scholarship holders were talented, highly educated, versatile, linguistically competent and successful young men and women. They are our future.

Some of them were guests in our house and spent a weekend with my wife Barbara and me (fig. 25). We are happy to see you today again.

Probably the scholarship program is one of the most meaningful things that our circle of friends has achieved.

Josef Wenning  
Villingen, Germany