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Polish Traces of Great Nobel Prize Winners in the Field of Physiology and Medicine

On 27 November 1895 Alfred Nobel signed in Paris his famous last will providing for a part of his legacy to be bequeathed to the author of a breakthrough discovery in physiology or medicine.

The first prize in this field was awarded in 1901 to Emil von Behring for his work on serum therapy, especially its application against diphtheria, by which he opened a new road in the domain of medical science and thereby placed in the hands of the physician a victorious weapon against illness and deaths.

Both Emil von Behring and the other Nobel Prize winners described in this study — Paul Ehrlich (1908), Gerhard Domagk (1939), Tadeusz Reichstein (1950), Konrad Emil Bloch (1964), Andrew Victor Schally (1977) and Günter Blobel (1999) were born in the territory of Poland. Although one of them — Andrew Victor Schally — was born in Vilnius, the present capital of Lithuania, it should be remembered that in the years 1922—1939 Vilnius was within the territory of the 2nd Republic of Poland as the capital of the Voivodeship of Vilnius. Moreover, his father, General Kazimierz Schally was born in Nowy Sącz and considered himself to be a Pole in spite of his Austro-Hungarian and possibly Swedish and French background. Though Schally is referred to as an American biochemist and physiologist, his Polish origin cannot be denied, especially, since apart from his place of birth, he is also known to have completed his secondary education, among others, in Warsaw.

The subject and simultaneously the aim of this study is, on the one hand, to present links joining these well-known and sometimes, surprisingly, practically unknown Nobel Prize winners with Poland and, on the other, to point to numerous objects related to them. What seems to be of least importance is the analysis of the influence which their life and work have had on the history of medicine confirming their obviously being an integral part of it.

The study will take you on a unique and fascinating journey following the footsteps of the Nobel Prize winners having Polish links.

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