Profs. Arpad Somogyi (Berlin, Germany/Brussels, Belgium), Sandor Szabo (Irvine, CA, USA) and Yvette Tache (Los Angeles, CA, USA) are the last three of the 40 PhD students mentored by Hans Selye, the ‘father of biological stress’ (photo at right). In 2013 they initiated a series of symposia and conferences on the origins and modern developments in the stress response. The first symposium was held in 2013 at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, Hungary. Former students or coworkers of Hans Selye have given overviews of biologic stress research ranging from the original ideas to historical milestones, to the state-of-the-art. The subsequent conference was held in 2014 in Zagreb, Croatia. As many stress-related diseases are associated with gastrointestinal structural and functional disorders with significant pharmacological implications, and one of the organizers was the IUPHAR GI Section, it was decided to formalize the series in honor of Prof. Selye and to name it “the Summers Schools on Stress”. Because the topics covered and the quality of the presentations are high, the program has been approved for accreditation by the University of California, Irvine, USA.

This year the Summer School on Stress (some of the participants are pictured at left) was held in Grenoble, France, June 29th through July 2nd. It was hosted by the Clinique Universitaire d’Hépato-Gastroentérologie and Grenoble Institute of Neuroscience (GIN, INSERM U836), CHU de Grenoble. The Local Organizing Committee Chair was Prof. Bruno Bonaz, known internationally for his expert research, diagnosis and treatment of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD). His was assisted by Valerie Sinniger, PhD and Chantal Baumes. The international faculty members included Prof. Somogyi, Szabo & Tache (the course directors), Profs. Bruno Bonaz, Thierry Bougerol (both from France), Stefan Brunnhuber (Germany), Frédéric Canini (France), Ludmila Filaretova (Russia), Sonia Pellissier (France), Martina Rojnic Kuzman (Croatia), Amandine Rubio (France), Vassilia Theodorou (France), Jackie Wood (USA), and Oksana Zayachkivska (Ukraine). The main topics were the origins of the stress concept and the seminal discoveries of Hans Selye, such as distress vs. eustress & transtress – similarities in the adrenal glands, differences in the brain; the neuroendocrine mechanisms of stress; physiologic and pharmacologic actions of glucocorticoid; stress and structural GI diseases, e.g., gastro-duodenal ulcers, IBD; stress and functional GI disorders, e.g., motility disorders, IBS; PTSD & organ systems involved in biologic stress; management strategies for stress-pharmacologic interventions and/or life style changes.
In addition to the 30-40 minute interactive presentations, there was a successful poster session (photo at left), of the abstracts submitted from mostly young participants, both medical and PhD students, from Croatia, France, Hungary, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine. There were several excellent open forum discussions.

An educational sight-seeing tour (photo at right) of Grenoble and its surroundings culminated with a group dinner in a mountain-top restaurant (below left), which offered memorable views of the city (below right) and the surrounding mountains that served as the backdrop to the 1968 Winter Olympic Games.

The next “Summer School on Stress: From Hans Selye’s Original Concept to Recent Advances” will be held at the relatively new University of Osijek, Croatia from June 13th through 17th, 2016, immediately following the IUPHAR GI Section Special Symposium in Novi Grad, Croatia on the Adriatic coast. The website is already open for early registration, participation and abstract submission at www.stresseducation.org.

Sandor Szabo
GI Section