MICROBIOLOGY IN LATIN-AMERICA

THE second Latin-American and the first Costa Rica National Congresses of Microbiology were jointly held in San Jose during December 10-17, 1961. The meeting was attended by about 300 participants from 16 nations, including 50 from England, Canada and the United States.

Listed in the scientific programme were more than 150 titles, encompassing the following fields: general, medical and veterinary bacteriology; immunology; helminthology; mycology; protozoology; virology; phytopathology; and agricultural and industrial microbiology. The predominant interest was expressed in medical microbiology. Abstracts of papers are published in a general programme and résumé, with full papers to be submitted individually through the usual scientific journals.

Special symposia or panel sessions were concerned with leishmaniasis, intestinal parasitosis, microbial physiology and biochemistry, and teaching of microbiology and parasitology. Simultaneous Spanish-English translation made language no barrier to effective communication in the special sessions.

Those present at the Congresses were afforded opportunity to inspect the entirely new and remarkably designed buildings comprising the University of Costa Rica. The status of microbiology in the host nation was indicated by its position as a separate College and by an impressively functional and well-equipped building in University City. A day was devoted to a trip through the mountainous countryside to the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Science.

Among the commercial and scientific exhibits, interest was especially expressed in *Revista Latinoamericana de Microbiología*, an international journal of the Latin-American Microbiological Association, now in its fourth volume. Lucid abstracts are

provided in translation of the articles, which are usually in Spanish. Important for coverage in a great geographical area of microbiology, *Revista* is available at 6 dollars (U.S.) a year through the editor, Dr. J. M. Gutiérrez Vázquez, Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Biológicas, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Mexico, D.F.

The programme of the Congresses incorporated well-organized social events, including a grand ball in the Latin-American manner, which, as the inaugural session, was attended by the President of the Republic, Senor Mario Echandi Jimenez.

The Congresses were supervised by an Organizing Committee of the Costa Rica Association, the secretary-general of which was Dr. John L. de Abate. Officers of the Latin-American Association were: *President*, Geraldo Varela; *Vice-President*, Renato Soto Pacheco; *Secretary*, Luis Palencia Franco; and *Treasurer*, Enriqueta Pizarro Suarez. Their counterparts in the Costa Rica Association were, respectively: Renato Soto Pacheco, Roger Bolanos, Fernando Montero-Gei, and Guillermo Monge Amador.

Newly elected officers of the Latin-American Association are: *President*, A. Pomales Lebron; *Secretary*, Jose Oliver Gonzalez; and *Treasurer*, Irving Fox.

The American Society for Microbiology was officially represented by Philipp Gerhardt (secretary) and R. W. Sarber (executive-secretary). Their travel was sponsored by the National Science Foundation and Difco Laboratories, Inc.

The Latin-American Congresses are convened at three-year intervals, the first in 1958 at Mexico City and the third scheduled for 1964 at a place yet to be named. It holds promise of being as stimulating and rewarding as that just concluded.

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THE INFORMATION PROBLEM IN BIOSYSTEMATICS

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IN many branches of science to-day problems of communication and dissemination of data and ideas are causing increasing concern. Progress depends in no small measure on the extent to which scientists can become informed of the work done by others so that they can build on it, or at worst not repeat it unnecessarily. Plant taxonomy is, by its very nature, largely concerned with the utilization and arrangement of published data, and has established over the centuries, and particularly in modern times, a complex series of methods and channels for its purpose of assembling, collating and presenting information. The way this is done should be compared with the facilities open to the younger discipline of plant biosystematics. For traditional taxonomy the information is dealt with at national, regional and international levels, and finds its expression in the form of lists, indexes, catalogues, revisions, Floras and the like. Individual countries usually

prepare up-to-date Floras, and through national organizations and journals arrange the collection of floristic and taxonomic data. All this tends to minimize the delay between the original publication of new information and its easy accessibility to a wider public.

Regional organizations have also been set up towards similar ends. Association pour l'Etude Taxonomique de la Flore d'Afrique Tropicale, the Flora Malesiana Foundation and the Flora Europaea Organization are examples. International co-operation is also effected through bodies such as the International Association for Plant Taxonomy, which greatly assists the work of taxonomists through its various publications such as the *Index Herbariorum*, *Index of Collectors*, *Index Nominum Genericorum*, *Index Filicum*, etc. It also handles the collection of information for revision of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature. Abstracting journals and