

LAUDATION TO ANDRZEJ NADOLNY

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

The World Federation of Physics Competitions awards a prize to individuals who have exceptionally contributed to physics competitions. The prize is awarded every two years. As the chairperson of the award committee I have the privilege and pleasure to announce this year's laureate, Andrzej Nadolny from Poland.

Andrzej spent almost all of his professional life as a physicist at the Institute of Physics in Warsaw. I will not describe Andrzej's research in physics, I will concentrate on his activities in physics competitions.

One of the Institute's activities was to support gifted high school students by co-organizing the Polish Physics Olympiad. The Olympiad, being a multistage competition for the students, existed since 1952. Andrzej, from the very beginning of his employment in the late 1960s was involved in the Olympiad as an organizer and author of Olympiad problems.

In the late sixties the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) started as a small international event where students from countries from the so-called Soviet bloc (Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, German Democratic Republic, Romania and Bulgaria – please note that some of these countries do not exist anymore) competed in problem solving. Andrzej was one of the people who was active in preparation of the Polish team. IPhO was held in Warsaw, Poland in 1967 and 1974. By that time the International Physics Olympiad had expanded, and new countries from the “west” participated. Andrzej was one of the organizers of these events in Warsaw.

In the eighties, when I joined the Polish Physics Olympiad Committee, Andrzej was one of the prominent members. He was the author of many problems, he designed experimental setups and, what is very important, co-authored books and articles on the Olympiad. The culmination of Andrzej's activity in this area came in 1989, when the International Physics Olympiad took place in Warsaw in 1989. Andrzej was responsible for the organization of the event, while others were responsible for the scientific aspect. I have to say some more at this point about the 1989 Olympiad. There was a severe political and economic crisis in Poland at the time. On the economic side - let me mention only the inflation rate – about 50% per month. On the political side – the communist system was about to collapse, and in fact it collapsed in the summer of 1989, right at the time of the Olympiad. The organization of IPhO in these conditions was a true challenge. In spite of all the odds the organization was just perfect. Andrzej's work contributed substantially to this success.

In later years Andrzej withdrew his interest from the Olympiad and became involved in the International Young Physicists tournament (IYPT). This competition for high school students was initiated in the Soviet Union back in early 70's, it was called YPT. For many years it was restricted to the Soviet Union and Russian was the only language used. I remember that in the late eighties Andrzej was invited to the event (held in Moscow) as an observer. He was very pleased with what he saw and proposed that Poland should participate in this tournament. This was perhaps the first time when it was said explicitly that the Tournament should expand to become an international

event. This in fact happened some years later. The first IYPT, with truly international participation took place in 1988, when two teams from outside of the Soviet Union (Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia) joined the competition. The first IYPT held outside the former Soviet Union took place in 1994 in the Netherlands, the second in 1995 – in Poland. Andrzej was the main organizer of the event, in which as many as 15 teams from 12 countries participated. I should also stress that the role of the English language expanded (at the expense of Russian), and this stimulated the development of national competitions of a similar kind outside the former Soviet Union.

Andrzej remained involved in the IYPT in later years. The competition grew with more teams participating, which required the formation of a permanent structure. For several years (from 2000 to 2006) Andrzej was secretary general. It is due mostly to his involvement that IYPT continued to maintain high standards both in the scientific part as well as the organization. It is at least partially due to Andrzej's efforts that the number of participating teams grew to 29 in 2016.

With one exception (IYPT in 1995 in Poland) Andrzej has never formally been the main organizer of an international competition. He was a person behind the scene, quietly doing the most significant work. It is mostly due to his endless efforts that the IYPT has acquired its present shape, its present recognition, and continues to maintain the highest possible standard.

By this award to you, Andrzej, we all want to express our warmest thanks!

Jan Mostowski