

Gallieno Denardo, a friend of Africa, is gone

All started with an article that I wanted to submit to ICTP (International Center for Theoretical Physics) in August 1986. I was told to contact first Prof. Gallieno Denardo. I can say that from this day, I had the luck to meet a formidable man. Especially his bursts of friendly laughter had already impressed me greatly. Since that period each year when I returned to Trieste for various activities at ICTP and particularly for Winter Colleges organized by Prof. Denardo, I was always very happy to collaborate with him on the organization of the LAMP seminars (Lasers Atomic and Molecular Physics). Working together was always very reassuring for me. I remember we used to meet early in the morning in his office, because he was always an early riser at ICTP. After these meetings I always left his office with at least one positive answer to the innumerable particular problems involved in the development of science in Africa.

During both decades when I had the privilege to work with him, Prof. Denardo helped the African scientific community to take qualitative steps for the development of optical sciences in Africa. One owes to him, together with the support of Prof. Abdus Salam and a few African scientists, the creation of the LAM Network (African Laser Atomic, Molecular and Optical sciences Network). Prof. Denardo also initiated the creation of all the ICTP affiliated centres in Africa. Furthermore he supported the organisation of several scientific meetings in physics and in mathematics in numerous African countries (Ivory Coast, Benin, Senegal, Ghana, Sudan, Cameroon, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, South Africa Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Ethiopia, Gambia, Mozambique, and Zambia). Thanks to him many isolated African researchers have become associated members at ICTP and many other have benefited from STEP (Sandwich Training and Education Program), a fellowship program initiated by him together with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Many others African scientists benefited also from the fellowship program that he initiated with ICS (International Centre for Science and High Technology). In addition, during the past three years Prof. Denardo still fought to make operational the TSOSA (Trieste System for Optical Sciences and Applications), with the tentative creation of the mentorship program and of a permanent group in optics at ICTP. In fact, one may say that Prof. Denardo was the god father of Africa at ICTP. He established useful and fertile interactions between African scientists and the international scientific community. It is with his support that the LAM could organize several international conferences, workshops and schools on lasers and optical sciences all over Africa. Thanks to these activities the LAM became an international Society member of ICO (International Commission on Optics).

His unstinting support and efforts have helped several African countries to become member or observers at IUPAP (International Union for Pure and Applied Physics). Moreover he helped to create bonds between African scientists and several International Societies in Optics such as ICO, OSA, SPIE, OWLS, etc. He was at the origin of the fertile scientific cooperation between LAM and the University of Lund in Sweden, LAM and the International Program in Physical Sciences at Uppsala, Sweden and with the financial support of SIDA (Swedish international development agency). With Abdus Salam, Prof. Denardo helped to create bonds between the African scientific community in America and African physicists and mathematicians by the creation of the Edouard Bouchet Abdus Salam Institute (EBASI).

Prof. Denardo was an untiring combatant, and that to the last breath, for the development of optical sciences in Africa, and he was a friend always present to initiate opportunities for scientific cooperation. Each visitor at ICTP, African, Asian, European or American, believed that he was the best friend of Prof. Denardo. That shows how much he was open, and in truth one must say that Prof. Denardo was a real internationalist. In fact at ICTP, one can say that he incarnated truly the ideal of Prof. Abdus Salam to make universal the sharing of science.

Prof. Denardo, you left us suddenly, this Monday July 23, 2007, but to paraphrase the Senegalese poet Birago Diop, in Africa, we believe that the dead are not dead, that they are in the running water, that they are in the blowing wind, that they are in the newborn child. But you Prof. Denardo, moreover, you are in the laser light of our laboratories that we have created together. You are in the pages of the books, in the memories and on the screens of the computers that we are using at the ICTP Affiliated Centres, you are in the doctoral theses and in the articles written by our students. You will be always with us during the activities of the LAM and ICO. In the corridors, the offices, seminar rooms and lecture halls of ICTP, we will always hear your bursts of laughter so sincere and so friendly.

On May 31, 2007 in Trieste, at the “Africa Day “ ceremony, dedicated to Africa by ICTP, like a premonition, unanimously African scientists paid a vibrant homage to your person, Urbi and Orbi .

Today, Prof. Denardo, Africa with endless acknowledgement from the depths of her savannas, deserts and forests, beyond the frontiers of space and time, wants to say: thank you Prof. Denardo.

Rest in peace, dear Gallieno.

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