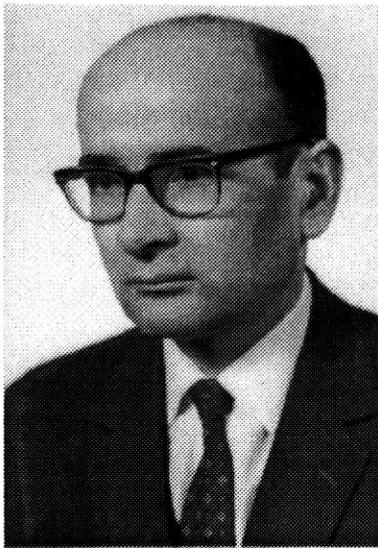


Chronicle

Maksymilian Pluta – the FNP-Prize Winner for the year 1995, in the field of technology



The fact of awarding the prestigious FNP-Prize* to Professor Maksymilian Pluta was acknowledged with great pleasure and satisfaction by the whole optics community in Poland. This is the direct result of his brilliant personality and the tremendous accomplishments he has attained in the field of applied optics and in light microscopy, in particular. This important event provides also a good opportunity to reflect briefly on profundity of his work and versatility of his activity.

Born on February 28, 1929, in a small Polish town, he showed an

exceptional interest in physics and astrophysics already when attending the high school. As a pupil, he keenly studied the popular literature on the two subjects (written by outstanding university professors, like C. Białobrzęski, W. Zonn, J. Blaton, and others) with passion characteristic of his personality. His interest in physics became even more intense first when he took up his undergraduate study of physics at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow and then, during his graduate study in the same field at the Warsaw University. An essential influence shaping his highly positive attitude first as a student and next as a researcher was exerted by such distinguished professors, as H. Niewodniczański, A. Janik, A. Hryniewicz, J. Weissenhoff, B. Średniawa in Cracow and next C. Białobrzęski, S. Pieńkowski, W. Rubinowicz and A. Sołtan in Warsaw.

The scientific career of Professor Pluta is rich in formal degrees and posts. In 1981, he demonstrated his doctoral thesis on *Fourier transform of single and double slit and its application in microscopy*, and many years later, being already a professor

* FNP-Prize stands for prize of the Funds of Polish Science which is the highest award for scientific workers in this country.

and a scientist of international recognition, he submitted his thesis for an advanced doctor's degree devoted to *Variable wavelength interferometry*, being one of his most spectacular scientific discoveries.

What appears to be characteristic of his way of thinking is first the research and then the career. All his professional life has been connected with one scientific institution – the Institute of Applied Optics (formerly Central Optical Laboratory), where he took up the subsequent positions of assistant, senior assistant, associate professor, docent and professor. He used most of his great skill in two kinds of activity: research and organization. In both fields he has had outstanding achievements and one can hardly say which of them is more important.

As a passionate researcher he focused attention on many fields of optics, of which the following seem to be most important: light microscopy of both phase-contrast and interferometric types, microinterferometry, holography, Fourier optics, and microrefractometry. He published about 70 scientific papers, but his main success as an author was the famous trilogy entitled *Advanced Light Microscopy*, being a profound and many-sided treatment of this enthralling subject, a truly herculean task for one person. It is right and well-earned that this work was awarded the top scientific prize in Poland: the FNP-Prize, which is often called the Polish Nobel Prize. You are the one who certainly deserves it, Max. Let us offer you our heartiest congratulations.

But, as we have already said, the organizational genius of Professor Pluta, manifested in many works, is nonetheless important. Let me give just a few examples. It was thanks to his efforts that the Holography Lab at the Central Optical Laboratory in Warsaw was first built and next developed from almost nothing in a partly devastated building, which he procured from the authorities and adapted for this purpose many years ago. It was his exertion and passion that brought to reality so many scientific conferences in many fields of optics, to name the serial conferences on *Interferometry* as an example. Finally, it was his continuous and strong support to Polish scientific journals that helped them to survive over the last six difficult years of transformation in Poland, and last but not least he was the initiator and is still the number one person in our cooperation with SPIE, being the fellow of this society and the chairman of the Poland Chapter of SPIE from its very beginning.

Optica Applicata, being one of the journals enjoying his continuous backing and promotion, is extremely thankful for and honoured by his cooperation as a member of the Editorial Board.

Ireneusz Wilk