

*Magnificencjo, Prof. Zgurovsky,
Honorable members of the Academic Council,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

The Igor Sikorski University of Technology, “KPI”, it is an outstanding institution. To be bestowed by this famous university the *doctor honoris causa* degree has, indeed, a very special meaning to me.

For many years, I have initiated and been involved in activities promoting Polish-Ukrainian cooperation in the field of education and science. I am deeply moved by the fact that the KPI Academic Council took notice of my activities and honored me in such a remarkable way.

There wouldn't be this ceremony today, if I did not meet, at a conference in Berlin, ten years ago, Prof. Michailo Zgurowsky. He is an extraordinary person, outstanding scientist and politician, talented rector and manager, a man Ukraine can be proud of.

There and then, we came to a conclusion that the first thing, to be done was to restore the privileged character of relations between the two leading technology universities: *Politechnika Warszawska* and *KPI*. This, we believed, will be followed by broader cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian technical universities and academic communities at large. We wanted to do it for the sake of the future.

Mikhail Zakharevich,

To our mutual satisfaction, and thanks to a good measure of luck, most of our plans have been fulfilled. The Polish-Ukrainian academic cooperation is getting bigger and faster. But of course, we were not alone in it. I am grateful to those who helped put these plans through!

Ladies and gentlemen,

My relations with Ukraine started 30 years ago. This had to do with the Chernobyl disaster. Earlier, being a student at the Electronic Department of the Warsaw University of Technology, I had been fascinated by the “unlimited” possibilities - as it then appeared - science and technology could offer. The explosion at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, and the radioactive cloud raising from the crater of block number IV casted a dark shadow on my fascination with technology.

In an attempt to overcome my worries, I traveled to Chernobyl as one of very few international journalists. I spent several weeks staying at the "Zelonyj Mys" quarters together with the "liquidators" and traveled to many places within the "zone". I also covered, as a journalist, the Chernobyl trial.

I am specially recalling this event here, at the best technological university in Ukraine, because the Chernobyl disaster drew a specific border line in the history of the development of science and technology. It ended the long era of "development through catastrophe". It can be best illustrated by the experience of the time of great discoveries. In England or Holland it was the captain who designed and build his ship. A poor constructor went down with his ship, a good one sailed the seas and made money. This is how the progress was made.

Until the Chernobyl accident little had changed in this philosophy; badly designed airplanes crashed, and better planes were build; poorly constructed building collapsed and new, better buildings were build. The cost in human life in the process was deemed inevitable.

The Chernobyl has shown that man created so powerful mechanism and engineering systems that their failure could bring about the destruction of the mankind. The nuclear industry, as well as some other technological systems cannot develop through catastrophe! This calls for fundamental changes in the engineering education.

There are various ways to define the profession of engineering. I would like to refer here to the XIX century definition from England that described engineering as an art in steering the forces of nature for the benefit of human. In other words, an engineer is someone who designs something with the idea that what he design works and even brings benefit.

After Chernobyl, we need to educate an engineer who will understand the consequences of his actions and will realize that he functions within a society. There is no such thing as production for the sake of production or technology for the sake of technology. Great engineers have also been humanists characterized by a deep understanding of the social consequences of their activities.

For this, I want to pay my respect to Prof. Zgurowsky and the academic staff of KPI for the way they educate engineers; for introduction of the interdisciplinary approach and problem based learning, for education

based on innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. The contemporary industry needs these kind of engineers.

I am especially impressed by the emphasis at KPI on the idea of sustainable development. I am sure, it is the right path for education following the Chernobyl disaster.

The honorable members of the Academic Council,

The higher education landscape in both our countries is changing fast. In Poland, just two weeks ago, at the National Congress of Science in Krakow a draft of the new bill on higher education was announced.

I noticed that all speakers at the Congress in their statements included the three worlds: internationalization, autonomy and excellence. I am sure these are the three key words of the reform of higher education in Ukraine as well.

In this context, I would like to say a few words about rankings as here there are challenges before universities in both our countries. I have a solid experience in this area. For the past 25 years, I have been publishing rankings of high schools and universities, and for the last decade, I have served as Vice President of IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence.

Ukrainian as well as Polish universities are underrated in the international ranking. They are classified lower than they should. To succeed, they miss one key component – an element of internationalization, especially in relation to the teaching staff. All the rest is a consequence: publications, citations and international reputation. One example: It is a known fact that co-publication involving authors from different countries by an average enjoy four times higher citations than co-publishing by authors from the same country.

I am convinced, our mutual internationalization efforts will bring, in this respect, a concrete result improving position of our universities in the rankings.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to thank you very much for your attention. But before I finish, please let me wish Prof. Zgurowsky many successes and good health since the challenges, he takes upon himself, demand strength and great spirit.

I can promise you, I will support your efforts to closely link Ukrainian science and higher education with the European education system, its standards and procedures.

We both need to anchor Ukrainian higher education firmly and permanently into Europe - so no cross winds may cut these links.

Once again, may thanks to the KPI Academic Council for distinguishing me with the degree of *doctor honoris causa* - thus, embracing me into the academic community of KPI.

Dziękuję za uwagę!