

A personal note on the founder of Optics Activities at ICTP

Prof Gallieno Denardo has played a very important role in my life and I believe this is true also for many scientists from the developing country visiting ICTP in the period when he was coordinating the ICTP office of external activities and all ICTP optics activities.

In January 1991, I was one of the participants of the two optics and laser schools organized that year at ICTP by Prof Denardo, namely the Second Training College on Physics and Technology in Lasers and Optical Fibers and the Winter College on Ultrafast Phenomena. The two events gave an extraordinary opportunity to more than 50 young scientists from developing countries to be exposed to fundamentals, state of the art and trends in lasers and optics presented by well-known names in the field.



Photo 1. College on Lasers and Optical Fibers, ICTP Trieste 1991. 1st row, far left: Miltcho Danailov; 2nd row, 6 from left: Gallieno Denardo

As a part of the program, the winter colleges also included hands on experience with optics and laser setups to which most of the participants didn't have access at their home countries. The winter colleges as well as other ICTP optics activities have had a decisive impact on the scientific career of many scientists. This was made possible by the extreme dedication, enthusiasm and vision of Prof Gallieno Denardo. He had an extraordinary capability of attracting the attention to the ICTP programs of high level scientists, institution and organization seniors and even commercial company representatives. He succeeded to convince many of them how important were the optics and lasers to the developing world and to obtain an active external support for a number of ICTP optics activities. For more than a decade I had the opportunity to collaborate

with him in the organization and conducting of some of these activities and have been continuously impressed by how well worked all he started. Gallieno's effort has contributed a lot to the initiation and growth of optics communities and networks in developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

While Prof Denardo himself was a theoretician, he recognized the importance of hands –on experience for the ICTP laser and optics activities and dedicated a lot of energy to the creation and expansion of the Laser and Fibre Optics Laboratory (LFO) at ICTP. There was nearly no budget available for purchasing equipment, so he attracted donations of costly instrumentation, mostly used but in good shape, from many scientific institutions, like Max Planck Institutes, ETH Zurich, CNR-INO and University of Florence, Imperial College, ISPRA, just to name a few. In addition, he convinced some laser companies to donate or deliver to ICTP for symbolic prices lasers and optics kits. In this way, few years after its creation, LFO was having excimer, nitrogen, Nd:YAG and dye lasers, a number of He-Ne lasers, holography, interferometry and Fourier-optics kits, that could be used for hands-on laboratory sessions on laser physics, physical optics and spectroscopy. In addition to the colleges, in this period Prof Denardo succeeded to obtain support from ICTP and IAEA for having the laboratory activities during the full year, for some research and extended Ph D level student training. Even when LFO had to be moved to a new location (Elettra), Prof Denardo continued to actively support it and the strong relation with ICTP activities has been preserved.

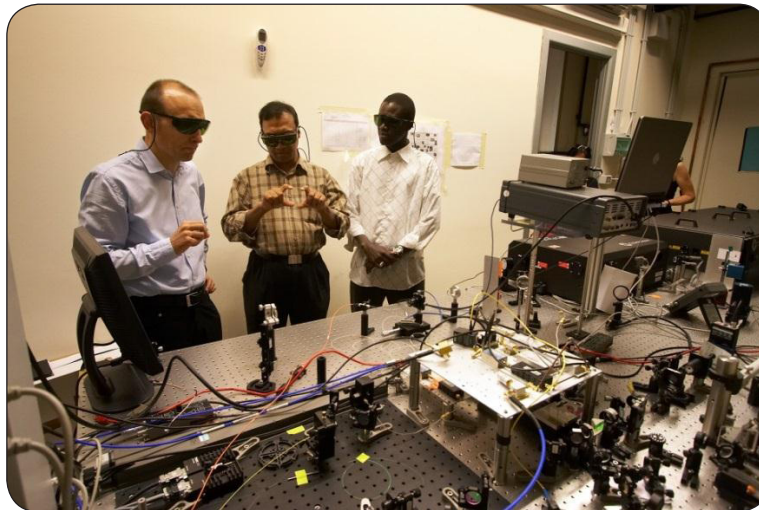


Photo 2. Laboratory session at LFO during one of the ICTP Winter Colleges after the laboratory relocation at Elettra. Miltcho Danailov (left) with college participants.

I will always recall the importance of Prof. Denardo was attributing to the direct human contact with everybody, his constant attention to the interaction with all participants in the colleges and other activities. From the first days of the Winter Colleges he was meeting in person nearly everybody and was perfectly remembering student names for years. He was always around, encouraging people to discuss informally ideas, needs and future plans. Everybody felt a member of a large family. I note that this tradition is still distinguishing the ICTP optics activities and I am extremely happy to see in this a sign that the ideas of Prof Denardo are alive and continue to give fruits.

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