

Richard Wolters entered the history of the world of engineering geology as an outstanding secretary general of the IAEG (1972 to 1981). His name is on a par with the names of the founders and first presidents of the IAEG: A Shadmon, Q Záruba, M Arnould and EM Sergeev. His work was responsible for the spectacular growth of the Association (growth in its membership, its publications and the number and quality of its scientific meetings), which he delivered in a perfect spirit of heartfelt and friendly cooperation.

At Montreal in 1972, Richard Wolters was elected as secretary general of the IAEG. From that time on there was a period of very active development of the Association including the creation of new national groups, cooperation between groups and mutual enrichment through the sharing of scientific ideas and experience. At Madrid (Spain) in 1978, Richard Wolters was unanimously re-elected as secretary general of the IAEG.

Wolters was an outstanding personality; "He selflessly gave himself to the noble cause of the unification of scientists the world over", EM Sergeev. He was devoted to the idea of international cooperation. "Doctor Wolters spared no effort in the performance of his duties and did not hesitate to sacrifice his own time. In all his offices, and especially in that of secretary general of the IAEG he successfully endeavoured not only to promote contacts, exchanges and discussions among his colleagues in all countries, but also to develop relationships that were always fruitful and often became deep friendships", Mr Reiche, president of Geological Survey of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Wolters was also an optimist. He loved people; each person was important to him and he gave his respect, his assistance and his support to everybody. He was openhearted and his smile was radiant and shining. He attracted people to him and colleagues enjoyed meeting with him.

From the very beginning of the IAEG special attention was given to the idea of international cooperation. One of Wolters' main aims was to promote the creation of new national groups and to develop their activity. Through his personal efforts and intervention, he contributed to an increase in the number of IAEG national groups from 14 in 1972 to 42 in 1980. The acceptance of each group was heartily welcomed. The Association was open for individual and associate members. In his report in 1974, Wolters stressed, "Every member is important for the advancement of our aims and for engineering geology. In this connection, we should consider that we are the Association of engineering geology and not for engineering geologists. Herewith it is evident that the IAEG stands open for all who are interested in engineering geology and are willing to support and promote the scopes and aims of the IAEG regardless of their training, education and their job".

On his numerous trips to North and South America, Asia, Australia, USSR, and to all European countries Wolters established and strengthened the contacts between engineering geologists and specialists from other branches of geology. This resulted in exceptional growth of the Association, with membership increased from 960 in 1972 to 4200 in 1980, and associate members from 21 in 1972 to 86 in 1980. Individual members were from 30 countries worldwide.

In June 1974, for the 10th anniversary of the IAEG, Wolters, as editor, published the first issue of the IAEG newsletter. It comprised of all information on IAEG activities including the minutes of the general assembly and council, financial reports, reports of the vice presidents, news from national groups, reports of commissions, greetings, obituaries, forthcoming events and so on. The newsletter was circulated all over the world and played an important role in the advancement of the IAEG.

Wolters was also editor of the IAEG Bulletin, which had been published since 1970. This journal began to attract a growing number of published papers, which, combined with several volumes devoted to special current themes, led to greater numbers of subscribers.

In Paris (France) in 1980, Wolters made the following comments, "I feel that we have ... come up to one of the major aims of our Association which is "to collect evaluate and disseminate results and failures in engineering geological activities from all over the world expeditiously and for the benefits of all".

Also in Paris (France) in 1980, at a ceremony to award the Chevalier de L'Ordre National du Merite to Wolters, EM Sergeev said in his speech: "Doctor Wolters is not only a very talented organizer. I would like also to refer to him as a very prominent geologist and scientist. In April this year, I had the pleasure of visiting the Federal Republic of Germany upon the invitation of Doctor Wolters. While touring the country together I had the opportunity of seeing and enjoying Dr Wolters's profound knowledge of the geology of Germany. I would like to emphasise that Doctor Wolters is not only a capable field geologist but also an excellent experimenter. Lectures by Doctor Wolters delivered at the Moscow State University have remained unforgettable for us. They revealed to us his qualities as a top-rank scientific researcher... Doctor Wolters' work in, and for, the IAEG may hardly be overestimated".

"His success was so tangible, the council at Paris decided to make Richard Wolters the leader of the Association", said Marcel Arnould. Wolters was to have been elected president at the next congress of the IAEG. He was about to apply the culmination of his varied experiences as an engineering geologist for the benefit of others and planned to focus his efforts on the continuing expansion of the IAEG. Sadly, life disturbed these plans when Richard Wolters passed away in March 1981. He was struck down by a heart attack just a few weeks before the completion of his 60th year of life. His death was a shock for his family and his colleagues, for the IAEG and for his numerous friends the world over. Professor Leopold Muller wrote in appreciation of Richard Wolters, "The IAEG is tremendously indebted to him; without him, I believe it would not be today what it has come to be thanks to his untiring devotion, his incredible skill for negotiation and his ability to smooth over differences".

On the occasion of the first anniversary of Wolters' death, EM Sergeev sent the following telegram to the Minister of the "Nordrhein Westfalen Land" Herren Doctor Riemer: "International community engineering geologists with deep sorrow marks anniversary death IAEG General Secretary Doctor Wolters. We honour memory Doctor Wolters worthy son German People outstanding scientist man

organiser who selflessly gave himself completely noble cause unification mutual understanding scientists world over. President IAEG academic Sergeev.”

In May 1982, Wolters was awarded the Hans Cloos Medal posthumously. The honorary president of the IAEG, Marcel Arnould, handed over the medal to Mrs Wolters and delivered an emotional speech devoted to Wolters in which he said, “In 1972 Doctor Wolters started his activity in the IAEG as secretary general. He neglected his own interests to devote himself to promoting international understanding. His work was responsible for the spectacular growth of our Association... This has given me a chance to speak to you in person, Mrs. Wolters, and to your children with sincere feeling. I was for ten years a witness of the professional life of your husband and father, of a life that often kept intruding on his family life, and having known him well I can say to you: be proud of him. You, German colleagues, too: be proud of him. We join in your pride”.

In 1984, the Moscow Council supported the proposal of D Price and V Shibakova to create an IAEG prize named after Richard Wolters. The Richard Wolters Prize was formally established in 1986 in Buenos Aires (Argentina) to commemorate the life and work of Richard Wolters. The prize is awarded to younger members of the engineering geological profession for meritorious scientific achievements (for more information, please refer to chapter 15). In 1996 the IAEG celebrated the 75th anniversary of the birth of Richard Wolters at a special meeting. The activity of the IAEG, and in equal degree the activity of its leaders, has succeeded in developing the scientific and technical potential of all fields of engineering geology the world over. Moreover it has reinforced in every country the role played by engineering geology in ensuring improved use of land and better protection of the environment. It is with this context that it is possible to understand, and not to underestimate, the importance of the activity of Richard Wolters, an outstanding secretary general, an outstanding personality and a man who was always in a hurry to do good.

*\* This contribution has been provided by Valentina Shibakova, a senior scientist at the Geological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow) and past secretary of the USSR national group. Here she presents her own memories of Doctor Wolters using some published words devoted to him. Sadly, Valentina passed away during the preparation of this book. The IAEG acknowledges her contribution to the Association over many years and honours her memory.*