Professor NGUYEN VAN HIEN

Foreword

This special issue of Acta Mathematica Vietnamica is dedicated to Professor Nguyen Van Hien on the occasion of his 65th birthday.

Prof. Nguyen Van Hien was born on February 20, 1943 in Nha Trang, Vietnam. In 1960, he received a scholarship of the Vietnamese government to study mathematics in France. He got his Ph.D. diploma in Applied Mathematics and his diploma in Civil Engineering (Ponts et Chaussées) in 1968 in Paris. Afterward, he moved to Clermont-Ferrand, France, where he obtained a position of "Maître-Assistant" in Applied Mathematics at the Faculty of Sciences of the University Blaise Pascal. In 1972, he got a tenure track at the Department of Mathematics of the University of Namur, Belgium, with an academic promotion to the rank of Full Professor in 1979, where he had to take on the responsibility to create a research unit in Optimization and to organize the teaching in Optimization. His objectives were to develop fundamental research (theory and algorithms) and applied research by working on real life optimization problems submitted by practitioners from different backgrounds. Among the themes in fundamental research, he developed nonsmooth optimization as a leading area, first in the framework of nonsmooth convex minimization and more recently in the framework of variational inequality problems and equilibrium problems. He wrote numerous papers in international journals on this subject mainly with J.J. Strodiot, and supervised many doctoral theses in this area.

Among a variety of topics in the applied research of his team, let us mention the mathematical modeling and the numerical treatment on a computer of the optimal cutting of a diamond and his participation in the European Project BRITE-EURAM OPTIM concerning the optimum aircraft design with aerodynamic, structural and noise overall constraints. His concern has always been to establish scientific relationships with researchers of other universities and countries. So he spent several months abroad to visit research institutes and laboratories as the Brookhaven National Laboratory (Division of Applied Mathematics), Long Island, New York, USA, and the Research Institute of Hydro-Quebec, Montreal, Canada. He was also invited to give many "mini-courses" on Optimization and Applied Mathematics in Brazil, Canada and France. In 1998 he organized in Namur together with J.J. Strodiot the 9th Belgian-French-German Conference on Optimization. More than 100 researchers attended that meeting. Among the invited speakers were Prof. Hoang Tuy (Vietnam) and Profs. M. Fukushima (Japan), R. T. Rockafellar (USA) and R. J-B. Wets (USA).

Parallel to these research and teaching activities, Prof. Nguyen Van Hien had to take administrative responsibilities in the University of Namur. First he was elected Head of the Department of Mathematics during ten years (1982 - 1991), then Dean of the Faculty of Sciences (1995 - 1998) and finally Member of the University Board of Trustees, Responsible for Research at the University and President of the Research Council (2001 - 2004). During

this mandate, Prof. Nguyen Van Hien obtained from the Board of Trustees the creation of two Institutional Programs for Postdoc Fellowships and Four-Year Ph.D. Scholarships, the later program being dedicated to foreign students from the "South" who would like to work toward a Ph.D. at the University of Namur.

In 1996, he obtained from the Belgian C.U.D. (Commission Universitaire pour le Développement) a financing for developing a project of institutional university cooperation with the Department of Mathematics and Informatics of the University of Natural Sciences (National University of Vietnam) in Ho Chi Minh City. One of the objectives of this project was to encourage scientific contacts between students, researchers and professors of the two countries. In that context more than twenty Vietnamese researchers have received a scholarship for a research stay at the University of Namur. Another important part of the project was the organization by Prof. Nguyen Van Hien and some of his Vietnamese colleagues of seven C.U.D. Summer Schools devoted to Applied Mathematics and Optimization. These schools were really an opportunity for the students to learn more about Optimization and to meet and discuss with foreign professors.

On October 1, 2008, Prof. Nguyen Van Hien is retired with the title of Full Professor Emeritus, and entrusted with an institutional mission for educational and research cooperation with Vietnam by the University of Namur.

October 6, 2008
Jean-Jacques Strodiot
Phan Quoc Khanh
Le Dung Muu