

Closing remarks by John Joule

I have now attended two of the annual meetings of the Polish Chemical Society – the first in Lodz five years ago and the second here in Czestochowa. Each was special, with its own flavour. Of course, this Czestochowa meeting was special for me personally in the award of the Maria Sklodowska-Curie Medal of the Polish Chemical Society, a great honour, which gives me great pleasure. But the Czestochowa meeting is also special for all the wonderful chemistry, mainly Polish that we have enjoyed.

Then there have been all the social and religious events, some of which *only* Czestochowa could have provided.

We have had a feast of music, starting during the opening Ceremony with a beautiful rendition of the Polish National Anthem, sung in four-part harmony – for me as beautiful as any of the music we enjoyed later in the week. The music of two pianos and from a multitude of objects that needed to be hit (including drums) by the two other members of the ensemble, was rousing, though I cannot say that I have been humming the melody during the rest of the week!

Then there was the glorious music in Jazna Gora echoing up through the fantastic decorated golden choir and to the ceiling – one has to admire the poise and professionalism of the four singers who dealt calmly with the electronic glitch and simply walked to the front and sang without microphones.

And we have had magic – there was the magic of Professor Negishi's post-Nobel chemistry, making highly optically pure compounds by total synthesis and at the end of his lecture, before our very eyes, and as if by magic, the stage was transformed into a galaxy of colour, sound and spinning Poles. The transformation was so rapid that I can only conclude that the whole cast must have been hidden behind the screen, listening quietly to Professor Negishi's lecture. As we left the theatre my wife said "Look around you at the people – everybody is smiling" – and they were.

And the final magic musical moment was at the banquet on Tuesday: Nobel Prize-winner Negishi, singing 'O Sole Mio', accompanied by a jazz band – I am sure that Pavarotti could not cross-couple like Negishi can.

Of course mainly we came here for some good Chemistry – and we were not disappointed. I like the plan to allow plenary speakers only a half hour to get over their message – this really focuses the mind of the lecturer and makes it easier for the listener to assimilate – three times half-an-hour is considerably less daunting than three times an hour (as would be typical in the UK). I am impressed by the high proportion of young people attending the conference – clearly our science is flourishing in Poland . . . incidentally, the young contributors' slides and posters were generally of exceptionally high quality and imagination – actually, in many instances, better than some of the plenary Lecturers' offerings!

You have already heard in detail of the many appropriate people who have made this meeting run so smoothly and successfully, but I will mention one of those people – Professor Józef Drabowicz. His enthusiasm and seemingly tireless efforts know no bounds. He seems to be everywhere and for everyone. If you have simply enjoyed his company, you are fortunate, as am I; if you had a problem, he and his colleagues will have sorted it out for you; if you haven't had a problem, that is certainly because Professor Drabowicz and Professor Kapuśniak had already avoided the problem, before it became one.

We should all thank the Czestochowa and Lodz teams for their fantastic work in creating this meeting. . . . and finally, the host institution – Rector to you and your colleagues I offer congratulations to the Jan Dlugosz University for the excellent facilities . . . and the constant sunshine!