

IISL

OBITUARY

Dr Gyula Gál (1926 – 2012)



On 19 March 2012 after a serious illness Dr Gyula Gál Hungarian space lawyer has passed away in Budapest. He was a member of the IISL Board of Directors (1981 – 1996) and later its honorary director.

He was born in 1926 in Debrecen, Hungary. Studied in the Reformed College and University of his native town and took the doctor's degree („sub laurea”) in legal and political sciences in 1948. After some court practice in 1949 – 1952 he became an assistant at the University of Pécs. From 1957 until 1987 he was a legal advisor of foreign trade.

Meanwhile he lectured international air and space law at the Loránd Eötvös University from 1972 and later at the International Institute of the Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Budapest, as an assistant professor until 2010.

He started to publish papers on space law in 1960. His important, pioneering book *Space Law* was published in 1964 in Hungarian and already in 1969 – in an extended form – in the US in English. This fundamental work is cited frequently till today. He was a very active participant of the Space Law colloquia at many international astronomical congresses.

In 1970 he completed his PhD („candidate of legal sciences”). He was an active member of Section 4 of the International Academy of Astronautics since 1987.

He was chairman of the Control Commission of the Hungarian Astronautical Society for decades. Later he was rewarded with the honorary membership of the society.

He was a respected member of the international space law community. As an expert in several legal problems he published several papers on the delimitation problem, on the legal status of space tourists a.s.o. His opinion on the delimitation or definition of outer space was summarized in a letter to *Spaceflight* (July 2010) as follows:

„Delimitation or definition of outer space has been on the agenda of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) since 1967 without the slightest chance of a final agreement. Nevertheless, applying treaties and conventions signed in the 'golden age of space law' practically did not cause any difficulties. Against 'spatiality' the so called 'functionalist' approach necessarily prevails. Since law does not govern activities in a delimited outer space

but activities carried out by orbital movement. Freedom of outer space means freedom of such activities.

Recently, suborbital flights, aerospace craft and space transportation systems have brought the debate on spatialism versus functionalism back to the table. Obvious solution may be 'aerospace law' to be elaborated for rules of air and space activities. To my mind *eo ipso* without delimitation."

He was a charming personality with many friends both in Hungary and abroad. His spirit of enthusiasm and his warm and generous demeanor will be missed by many colleagues and students.