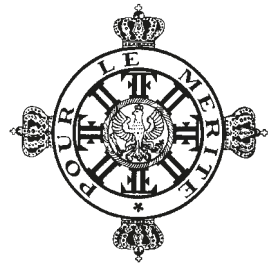
POUR LE MERITE

GEDENKWORTE

JACQUES TITS

12. AUGUST 1930 – 5. DEZEMBER 2021

Jacques Tits

Gedenkworte für

JACQUES TITS

von

Yuri I. Manin

Jacques Tits, one of the outstanding mathematicians of his time, passed away on December 5, 2021.
As signs of the international recognition of his achievements, he was awarded the Wolf Prize in Mathematics (1993), the Cantor Medal (1996), and the Abel Prize (joint with John Griggs Thompson, 2008). Since 1995, he was member of the Order Pour le mérite.
Jacque Tits was born in Belgium on August 12, 1930. He led a relatively normal professional life, but its stages still reflect the European turns and twists around World War II. He changed his citizenship from Belgian to French in 1974, in order to become Professor at Collège de France, but continued collaborating with the German mathematical school which was half destroyed during the war. He was Professor at the University of Bonn from 1964 till 1974, and kept strong professional connections and a friendship with Friedrich Hirzebruch, the founder of the Max Planck Institute for Mathematics (MPIM) in Bonn, who also was a member of the Order Pour le mérite.
After the war, it was not easy to restore the international unity of mathematicians. Efforts of Jacques Tits and Friedrich Hirzebruch

led to a slow transformation of the MPIM into one of the centers of the international mathematical community in Europe: periodic *Arbeitstagungen* in the MPIM started to attract world stars such as J.-P. Serre, A. Grothendieck (France), M. Atiyah (Great Britain), et al. Tits' life as a researcher was focused on the mathematical vision of »symmetry« and its various embodiments and variations. It goes back to Archimedes, Euclid, Copernicus and Evariste Galois, and continues through the whole 20th century (and later on). The type of symmetry depends on the type of objects, with whose symmetries we are dealing: finite groups acting on finite sets, Lie groups acting on objects of differential geometry, etc. Tits was mostly interested in symmetries of combinatorial objects with a complicated structure that appeared earlier during the investigation of Lie groups as well as in other contexts. He has introduced the theory of *Tits buildings* and found their multiple interesting appearances.
His contributions will be remembered for many years.