FAREWELL TO TAMÁS GÁBOR CSAPÓ

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."
Romans 12:15

I met Tamás Gábor Csapó in the spring of 2006, when we taught the course Speech Information Systems to the whole class of the then 5-year computer engineering course. He passed with distinction and contacted me saying that he was interested in the subject and would like to work on it. In the autumn, he presented a TDK (student research) paper on the machine implementation of prosodic variation, which won him 1st prize at BME VIK and 1st place at the 2007 OTDK (nationwide student conference) in Computer Science. In 2008, me and Mark Fék were the advisors of his successfully defended MSc thesis. The challenge has not been solved since then and is still a subject of research. In autumn 2008 he started his PhD studies at BME TMIT.

In the meantime, he has also been involved in teaching and our projects ranging from basic research to applications. In 2014, he spent six months at Indiana University as a Fulbright scholar with his family, where he was motivated to study articulation using ultrasound. After returning home, he defended his PhD thesis and was one of the initiators of the Lingual Articulation Research Group at ELTE, led by Alexandra Markó, in collaboration with BME (MTA-Lendület 2016-21). In 2017, he won his first OTKA (Hungarian National Science Program) grant on Articulatory Movement-based Speech Generation (2017-22). In 2022, he won another OTKA grant on Articulation and Brain Signal Analysis for Speech-based Brain-machine Interface (2022-26). Simultaneously, he became the Area Editor for Neural Speech Technology at the Infocommunications Journal. He has also built close relationships with colleagues at Szeged University. He has played a key role in winning and implementing our national (e.g. National Lab for Artificial Intelligence and National Lab for Infocommunications) and international (e.g. H2020, AAL, Horizon Europe) proposals. He has also contributed creatively to the development of our industrial applications. By the age of 39, he has published nearly 180 papers, with more than 320 independent citations. He has fulfilled the publication requirements for the degree Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA). Around Christmas, I encouraged him to start preparing his habilitation and MTA doctoral thesis.

Tamás was also open and supportive towards the students. Together we consulted Mohammed Al-Radhi, one of the first Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship holders at BME VIK, who has since become a valued colleague. Tamás was the supervisor of three PhD students in 2024.

Tamás was not only a great computer scientist, but also a great community and network builder. His open, relaxed and friendly nature and his deep faith in God made it easy to connect with him. We were honoured to attend their wedding in 2010 and followed with interest the growth of their family with four children. During COVID, he and his family started a new life in the countryside. It was good to hear his enthusiastic reports about the renovation of the house. In the summer of 2023, he organised a small international conference called Moonshine in his village. He was also involved in the ENFIELD Network of Excellence, which was launched in September 2023. On 25 January 2024, he still sent me an excellent research project plan.

It was a bolt from the blue that on 31 January 2024, his earthly journey came to an end and he moved to his heavenly home. Neither our closer nor our more distant colleagues were aware of the spiritual burdens Tamás was carrying. What led him to this point remains an eternal mystery. The lesson that remains with us is to try to look out for each other and support those around us. His wife and children can count on our solidarity and support.

2024. 02. 11.

On behalf of BME TMIT and Smartlabs,
Géza Németh, Head of SmartLabs

(The English translation was generated with the help of Deepl from the Hungarian original)