

Andrzej Pelczar (1937–2010)



Andrzej Pelczar

The 6th European Congress of Mathematics will be held in Kraków in 2012. The idea of organising the congress in Kraków was due to Andrzej Pelczar, the Chairman of the organising committee of the congress. Sadly, the congress will now take place without him, as he died suddenly of a heart attack on 18 May 2010. He was in good shape and no health problems were indicated.

He worked actively in many areas. On the day before he died, a Fields Medalist, Shing-Tung Yau, visited Kraków and delivered a special lecture – the first *Łojasiewicz lecture*. Over supper after the lecture, Pelczar and Yau talked a lot. This turned out to be one of his last mathematical conversations.

It is impossible to describe all his achievements in this short note. We outline just the most important facts.

Andrzej Pelczar was born in 1937 and spent his childhood in Gdańsk. His father Marian Pelczar, an historian, received his PhD degree from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków before the Second World War; after the war, he worked in Gdańsk. Andrzej Pelczar's life and work were strongly connected with the Jagiellonian University from 1954, when he began mathematical studies. He received his PhD from there in 1964 under the supervision of Tadeusz Ważewski and in 1980 he was promoted to professor at the mathematics institute. On many occasions he emphasised how grateful he was to Ważewski.

The activities of Andrzej Pelczar may be divided into three main parts.

Firstly, he discovered many important results in the theory of differential equations and dynamical systems.

Of particular importance are: his adaptation of the Ważewski retract method to the case of partial differential equations; the wonderful unification of stability theory in general dynamical systems; the creation of new methods of successive approximations and their applications; and some results on sufficiency for jets. Recently, he became interested in the history of mathematics. A couple of years' research resulted in a fully documented monograph on a 17th century Polish mathematician, Jan Brożek. Fourteen mathematicians wrote PhD dissertations under Pelczar's supervision.

He authored more than 80 scientific papers, several books (in particular, the two volumes of the monograph on differential equations, the first part written with Jacek Szarski), a popular book *Time and dynamics* and many articles about mathematics and academic problems for a general academic audience.

He was a very active teacher. At the Jagiellonian University, he gave lectures and classes on a wide range of topics. His lectures ranged from very advanced topics to elementary courses, including those for first-year students.

We must also mention the seminar he led for more than 35 years. During this seminar he was always a most careful listener and his accurate questions and comments gave new ideas on the results presented and inspired further research. He skilfully encouraged young researchers to pursue further work. His ability to find the true centre of a problem was admirable.

During the 1970s, Kraków lost several leading figures from its differential equations group. Ważewski, Opial and Szarski died, while Olech and Lasota moved to other cities. Andrzej Pelczar was the only person who could undertake the duty of leading the group and may now be considered as the creator of the Kraków group of dynamical systems.

Secondly, we write about his work for the Jagiellonian University and the entire Polish academic community.



Andrzej Pelczar with some of his former PhD students. From the left: M.Sobański, J. Tabor, A. Pelczar, J. Kłapyta, A. Marciński, R. Szrednicki, K. Ciesielski, J. Ombach.

From 1981 to 1984 he was Chairman of the Mathematical Institute at the Jagiellonian University and from 1984 to 1987 he was Vice-Rector, responsible for teaching and student problems. In 1987, he was elected Rector of the University. At that time Poland was ruled by the communist regime and the Rector's election had to be approved by the Government. Andrzej Pelczar was known to be an independent person and the Minister did not agree. In 1989, after the political changes, the universities were free to elect their Rectors. Pelczar was elected Rector in 1990 and held this position from 1990 to 1993. It was a difficult period for the university since after independence several new problems appeared.

Later on, from 1993 to 1996, he was Vice-Head of the Polish Council for Higher Education, and from 1996 to 2002 he was Head of this council. In those years the council perfectly represented the academic community in Poland and many enterprises were undertaken.

Several years ago he was elected a member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and took part in many of its activities.

In April 2010, he was awarded the title of Honorary Professor of the Jagiellonian University. This was a great honour, awarded to very few scientists.

Finally, we emphasise his work for the mathematical community in general. He played a great role in the Polish Mathematical Society. From 1975 to 1977 he was President of the Kraków Branch of the Society. In 1985, he was elected Vice-President of the parent society and from 1987 to 1991 he was President. From then until his death he was elected a member of the council of the society, being re-elected continuously year after year.

Andrzej Pelczar was also actively involved in the creation of the European Mathematical Society in the early 1990s. In 1996 he was the main organiser of the International Conference 'Topological Methods in Differential Equations and Dynamical Systems', a satellite

conference of the Second European Congress of Mathematics in Budapest, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Tadeusz Ważewski. From 1997 to 2000 he was Vice-President of the society and he was the main organiser of the Kraków EMS Diderot Forum in 1998.

His wife Janina was also a mathematician. They studied together and Andrzej asserted several times that his wife was a better student than he was. She decided to devote her abilities to teaching at school. She died tragically in the Tatra mountains in 1995. They had two daughters; the younger one, Anna, is also a mathematician and works at the Jagiellonian University, specialising in functional analysis.

Andrzej Pelczar had a great personality. He was a man with a deep mathematical and general knowledge. He had a great sense of humour. He told stories in a very interesting way and many people enjoyed these stories. He was a fascinating companion, both at meetings and in private conversations. He had the ability to deliver speeches at important occasions but he was also an extremely good, helpful and honest person. One could always count on his help and support when this support was needed but it was also possible to differ with him on a topic and to discuss it without quarrelling.

All three of us were his pupils, writing our PhD theses under his supervision. As the years passed, our contact with him moved to another level, as he became not only our teacher but also a colleague and an older friend. Nevertheless, all this time we continued to have a great respect for him.

We still cannot believe that Andrzej has passed away and that we will have no opportunity to talk to him and work with him in the future.

Krzysztof Ciesielski
Jerzy Ombach
Roman Szrednicki

Letter of condolence

On behalf of the European Mathematical Society we would like to express our deep sadness on learning of the death of Professor Andrzej Pelczar. It is not only a tragic loss for his family and friends but also for the mathematical community. We all remember Andrzej for his generosity of spirit, human warmth and his unfailing interest in promoting the EMS. He was a remarkable person and a truly devoted member of the European Mathematical Society.

The EMS was founded in Mądralin, Poland, in 1990 and, as the President of the Polish Mathematical Society, Andrzej was actively involved in its creation. For many years Andrzej worked enthusiastically for the EMS, bringing his experience and balanced views to the service of the society. He was elected as an ordinary member of the EMS Executive Committee for the period 1993-1996 and from 1997 until 2000 Andrzej held the post of EMS Vice-President.

At the last EMS Council meeting in Amsterdam, the Council approved Professor Pelczar's proposal to organise the 6th European Congress of Mathematics in Kraków in 2012. The EMS congress in Krakow was his dream and he has worked passionately to ensure its success. We now all share the responsibility of making Andrzej's dream come true.

Andrzej will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him, particularly those who, like us, had the good fortune to work with him.

With our deepest sympathy,

Jean-Pierre Bourguignon	EMS President 1995–1998
Rolf Jeltsch	EMS President 1999–2002
John Kingman	EMS President 2003–2006
Ari Laptev	EMS President 2007–2010