

Professor Andrzej Waksmundzki (1910–1998)

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Professor Andrzej Waksmundzki (1910–1998), a photo by Mr. Piotr Maciuk. From archives of Maria-Curie Skłodowska University

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There is an analogy between the scientific success and the reproductive success in living species: it is not sufficient to produce offspring, but it is crucial to produce offspring capable of further reproducing (Kosmulski 2010). In this respect, Professor Andrzej Waksmundzki (1910–1998) has extraordinary achievements, and his spirit dwells in the scientific work of an army of his followers. His former students have successfully developed his scientific ideas and we still experience the self-supporting chain reaction initiated by Professor Waksmundzki.

The present special issue is dedicated to the memory of Professor Waksmundzki on his 100th birthday, and it includes the collection of papers written by his former students, their students, and their scientific co-workers. Their current scientific interests are often far away from the topics originally studied by Professor Waksmundzki, but the new attractive topics are certainly a consequence of the research work of their scientific mentor.

Professor Andrzej Waksmundzki was born in Waksmund (now Poland, then Austro-Hungarian Empire) on October 3, 1910 in a farmer's family (Wróbel and Kotulska 2001). He studied chemistry at Jagiellonian University in Cracow, the oldest university in Poland and obtained his Master (1936) and Ph.D. (1939) titles under supervision of Professor Bogdan Kamieński (1897–1973). The University was closed by the German invaders just after the outbreak of World War II in 1939, and the newly graduated D.Sc. decided to move back to the family village and became a farmer. In 1942 he was arrested by the Nazis for his activity in the Polish Resistance Movement, and spent the time till the end of the war in German concentration camps including the infamous Auschwitz. He was forced to work in a quarry under terrible conditions for three years.

In 1945 Dr. Andrzej Waksmundzki moved to Lublin and joined the faculty of the newly opened Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. At that time Lublin did not have any academic tradition in natural sciences, and his laboratory of physical chemistry had to be built from scratch. The university did not have its own campus, and the laboratory

was moved several times from one provisory location to another. It was very difficult to buy chemical reagents, laboratory equipment, and books in post-war Poland, which was ruined by the war and isolated from the West behind the Iron Curtain. There are many anecdotes about the problems with the basic supplies (e.g., a typewriter) and how Dr. Andrzej Waksmundzki managed to get them, yet it is difficult to assess which of them are true stories. Anyway, a few decades later he and the other pioneers became living legends.

It was not until 1953 that the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences moved into its own building. In the meantime, the original Maria Curie-Skłodowska University split into three independent universities, and Professor Waksmundzki devoted his time between the laboratory of physical chemistry at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University and the pharmaceutical department of Medical University of Lublin. He became the Dean of that department (1957–1961). His teaching activities covered various aspects of chemistry, and his research work was focused on surface chemistry—the branch inherited after his famous Ph.D. supervisor. His research group at Medical University of Lublin specialized in chromatography whereas the research at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University included chromatography, mineral processing, and optical fibers.

According to the bibliography by Wróbel and Kotulska (2001) Professor Waksmundzki published at least 353 scientific papers, and the ISI Web of Knowledge database reports 142 publications. This discrepancy is due to the fact that Professor Waksmundzki published chiefly in Polish journals (*Przemysł chemiczny*, *Chemia analityczna*, *Roczniki chemii*), which were not included in the ISI Web of Knowledge database until mid-1960s. The publications in Western scientific journals by Polish scientists were rare in the Cold War times. However, Professor Waksmundzki published a scientific paper in *Nature*, which is one of the most-prestigious scientific journals. On top of scientific publications and patents, Professor Waksmundzki was a head or a

member of numerous scientific committees and a head of scientific and professional societies. We especially remember his activity as the Head of Doctoral Committee in the Institute of Chemistry of Maria-Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin, and his questions and comments (also for PhD dissertations which were far away from his fields of expertise) which attracted our attention to important problems, and helped understand the significance of our research work in broader context. He was awarded numerous honors, medals and prizes, including three Honoris Causa Doctorates.

Professor Waksmundzki supervised 42 doctoral dissertations in chemistry over the period 1954–1986. At least 16 of his former Ph.D. students became full professors. These professors supervised several (up to 13) doctorates each, and many of the scientific grandchildren of Professor Waksmundzki also became full professors and supervised Ph.D. students of their own. His former students and his scientific grand- and great-grand- children populated chemical departments in several countries, and have been rectors, and vice-rectors of universities, heads of scientific and professional societies, and members of editorial boards of main colloidal journals.

We would like to express our gratitude to the contributors to this special issue of *Adsorption*, especially to the anonymous referees.

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