



IN MEMORIAM

STANISŁAW SIEDLECKI

(1912–2002)



Professor Stanisław Siedlecki (about 1985).

On March, 18, 2002, we bade farewell to Professor Stanisław Siedlecki, Honorary Fellow of the Committee on Polar Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, who passed away on March, 8th, in Łódź (Poland), at the age of nearly 90 years. The Polish Polar society has lost their most distinguished Arctic explorer, participant and/or organizer of the Polish expeditions to Svalbard and Greenland from 1932 to 1962. We greatly miss him as a good friend with whom many of us shared experience and joy of achievement during common Polar expeditions.

Stanisław Siedlecki was born in Cracow on October 18th, 1912, as the second son of Michał Siedlecki, a distinguished Professor in zoology at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland. Intellectual milieu at home, and the family's love for the Tatra Mountains, have deeply influenced young Stanisław. While still at school, he already achieved recognition as a mountaineer with a very good rock-climbing record.

After graduating from secondary school, he began to study physics and mathematics, first at his father's university in Cracow, then at the university in Warsaw, while maintaining an intimate contact with his beloved Tatra Mountains.

Still a university student aged 20, he had got a life-chance to become member of the Polish Expedition to Bjørnøya (Bear Island) during the IIInd Polar Year, 1932–1933. A scientific expedition of five men was then being organized by Dr Jean Lugeon, Director of the Polish State Meteorological Survey in Warsaw. Together with C. Centkiewicz (party leader) and W. Łysakowski, given the task of meteorological observations, S. Siedlecki spent 15 months, including Arctic winter (1932/1933), at Bjørnøya.

That expedition, the first one sent under the Polish flag since Poland regained her independence in 1918, has continued the long history of exploration and scientific achievement in Polar countries by Polish nationals in the second half of the 19th century. Aleksander Czekanowski (1833–1876) and Jan Czernski (1845–1892), deported to Siberia after unsuccessful Polish uprising against czar's regime in 1863, should be mentioned here as the most famous ones. Also in the southern hemisphere, research activities by two Polish scientists, Henryk Arctowski and Antoni B. Dobrowolski, members of the famous 1897–1899 Belgian Expedition in *Belgica* under Adrien de Gerlache de Gomery to West Antarctica, have greatly contributed to scientific success of this international enterprise. It was very fortunate that both Arctowski and Dobrowolski, who had returned to Poland after the IIInd World War, took active part in preparations for the Polish participation in the IIInd Polar Year. Being a link between the 19th and the 20th centuries of geographic discovery and scientific research in the Arctic and the Antarctic, with their excellent example of good work, experience and patriotism, they stimulated young Polish enthusiasts – such as Stanisław Siedlecki.

Still under spell of *Aurora borealis*, already experienced in Polar matters, Siedlecki, together with his good friend-mountaineer Stefan Bernadzikiewicz, at that time President of the Mountaineering Club of the Polish Tatra Society, began to organize the first Polish expedition to Spitsbergen. The expedition had materialized in 1934 when a party of seven men under leadership of S. Bernadzikiewicz arrived in Van Keulenfjorden to work for about two months in NW Torell Land. Their task was to prepare topographic and geological maps of that area to a 1:50,000 scale, to carry out meteorological, botanical and zoological observations. Siedlecki and three other mountaineers (S. Bernadzikiewicz, W. Biernawski and H. Mogilnicki), while helping the topographic and geologic parties in their work on glaciers, have also made numerous first ascents of virgin peaks in Torell Land.

It was during the Torell Land expedition that Siedlecki and Bernadzikiewicz outlined their plans for a new one. In 1936, together with K. Jodko-Narkiewicz, they set for an over 800 km long crossing of Spitsbergen from south to north, the expedition lasting for about six weeks.

Already next year, Siedlecki became a member of the first Polish West Greenland Expedition (1937) to Arfersiorfik, led by Dr Aleksander Kosiba, a climatologist/glaciologist with experience from two Danish expeditions to Greenland, who worked under Professor H. Arctowski at the Geophysics Department of the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów. Meteorological observations were the main field of Siedlecki's work in that expedition.

During the World War II, while no scientific research and higher education were allowed under the Nazi occupation of Poland (1939–1945), Siedlecki was fortunate enough to attend



S. Siedlecki (second from left, first row) with wintering team at the Polish Scientific Station, Isbjørnhamna, Hornsund, Spitsbergen (winter 1984/1985).



S. Siedlecki at Hornsund, Spitsbergen (1984/1985).



S. Siedlecki's last visit (1988) to Hornsund, Spitsbergen. Fuglebergsletta in the foreground, Rotjesfjellet (left) and Ariekammen (right) in the background.



S. Siedlecki in his working room at home in Łódź, Poland (1996).
Photo by A. Siedlecka.

courses at the secret Warsaw University, and to gain his M.Sc. degree in geology and palaeontology in 1944. This gave him a new start in 1945 when he was offered a position of senior assistant at the Department of Geology of the Jagiellonian University. There, after completing in 1949 his Ph.D. thesis on geology of the area west of Cracow, he became Adjunct (Reader) and, finally, Docent (Assistant Professor).

Siedlecki's scientific work, while at the Jagiellonian University (1945–1951), included geological mapping and stratigraphic and tectonic studies on Palaeozoic and Mesozoic rocks along the eastern border of the Upper Silesia Coal Basin. A gifted teacher, he was eager to show to his students the beauties and scientific problems awaiting to be solved in the field of geology. His disciples, myself included, are deeply grateful to him for this.

On leaving the Geology Department of the Jagiellonian University in 1951, he moved to the Cracow Branch of the Museum of the Earth where he enjoyed simple but good conditions for scientific work for two more years. The good time ended, however, in 1953 when – against his will – he was obliged to take a new job as director of the Upper Silesia Branch of the State Geological Survey. Spending now most of his time to organize working conditions for its young scientific and technical staff, and being responsible for financial matters and science planning, he missed the freedom of research he had enjoyed before, and yearned for the white wide expanses of glaciers and perennial snows of Svalbard and Greenland he knew so well. No surprise, therefore, that when in 1956 he was offered a possibility to return to the Arctic, he had accepted it at once.

In 1956, the Polish Academy of Sciences joined scientific programme of the IIIrd International Geophysical Year, 1957–1958. It was obvious, there was no better candidate for leadership of the Polish Polar IGY expedition than Docent Stanisław Siedlecki, already an accomplished Earth scientist, the most experienced Polar explorer in this country, in his 44 years of age still an active mountaineer with an excellent climbing record from the Tatras and the Alps. He then became our wise mentor when, with fresh enthusiasm, he began full-speed preparations for our national participation in this ambitious scientific enterprise.

The expeditions under leadership of Stanisław Siedlecki had started with a reconnaissance of five men to Spitsbergen in 1956. During that expedition, a site for the future Polish III. IGY Scientific Station was surveyed at Hornsund, south Spitsbergen, and found at Isbjørnhamna. There followed scientific expeditions of about 30 participants each in the summers of 1957 and 1958, with a party of 10 men wintering (1957/1958) in the newly built base hut, then summer expeditions in 1959 and 1960 of again about 30 participants each organized within the framework of the International Geophysical Co-operation programme, finally a supplementary expedition of 3 men in 1962.

In these expeditions, Siedlecki played a dominant role as their leader responsible for both scientific programme and logistics. With his busy schedule, while helping others in their scientific tasks, he could not devote much time to his own geological research on Carboniferous and Permian rocks and fossil faunas of Sørkapp Land. It should be strongly emphasized that thanks to his unselfish efforts, the expeditions became a great success. We were able to present results of our research in Earth-sciences to international scientific community already in 1960, during visits to the Polish Station at Hornsund by the International Geological Congress (Copenhagen) and the International Geographical Congress (Stockholm).

The IGY-IGC (1956–1962) expeditions completed, Siedlecki returned to Cracow where he became employed by the Institute of Geological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences as Assistant Professor, promoted in 1966 to Associate Professor. There, he was offered a good chance to continue his studies on geological structure of southern Poland, mainly in the area of the northern and eastern borders of the Upper Silesia Coal Basin. In 1964 and 1965, he was invited by the Norwegian Polar Research Institute (Norsk Polarinstitutt) to lead summer geologi-

cal field parties to Bjørnøya and to Bellsund in central Spitsbergen, respectively. There, he studied Carboniferous and Permian rocks and fossils.

In 1966, as a post-doctorate Fellow of the Royal Norwegian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (Norges Teknisk-vitenskapelige Forskningsråd, NTNF), Siedlecki moved his family to Oslo. From 1966 to 1968, while working at Norsk Polarinstitutt, he elaborated his geological collections from Bellsund and Bjørnøya. In 1969, the family moved again, this time from Oslo to Trondheim. Siedlecki and his wife Anna, also a geologist, soon had started their new scientific career as state-geologists at the Norwegian Geological Survey. Their curriculum included, *inter alia*, sedimentological studies in Devonian inliers within metamorphic belt of the Norwegian Caledonides and, for about fifteen years – until Siedlecki's retirement in 1980 – geological mapping and petrographic and sedimentological studies of the Precambrian rocks exposed in Finnmark (northern Norway), between Varanger and Porsanger fjords.

While in Trondheim, though not anymore directly linked with the Polish science, Siedlecki and his wife retained their keen interest in the Polish activities in Svalbard, their new home at Trondheim being always open to all of us. Such personal contacts intensified when, in 1970, the Wrocław University together with the Institute of Geophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences, resumed scientific summer expeditions to Spitsbergen. With the Polish Scientific Station at Hornsund renovated in 1978, becoming operative on a yearly basis, Professor Siedlecki became a honorary guest of our expeditions for many a season since 1979. And, as a member of the Polar Club of the Polish Geographic Society of which he was a Honorary Fellow, he also became frequent participant in its annual meetings and scientific symposia in Poland.

On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Polish Polar Research (1932–1982), Stanisław Siedlecki, together with his colleagues – veterans of the pre-World War II Polish Polar expeditions, has been awarded the Honorary Fellowship of the Polish Committee on Polar Research. Moreover, on our proposal, the Presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences has awarded him with the Academy's highest distinction – the Copernicus Medal. Siedlecki was also a Fellow of Arktisk Forening in Tromsø (Norway), of Isbjørn-Klubben in Hammerfest (Norway), and the Explorers Club in New York (USA).

With the death of Professor Siedlecki – the last witness to the pre-World War II Polish expeditions to Svalbard and Greenland, we close an epoch in our Polar research. It is due to his excellent leadership of the IIIrd IGY-IGC Polish Spitsbergen Expeditions that the ideas of scientific research in Polar regions are alive in this country despite generally poor funding of science, and that so many young people enthusiastically join Polish expeditions to the Arctic and the Antarctic every year. We all – his friends, colleagues and disciples, owe much to the late Professor Stanisław Siedlecki. May he live long in our memory.

Krzysztof BIRKENMAJER
Honorary Chairman of the Polish
Committee on Polar Research