

IN MEMORY

Prof. Dr. Wojciech Grocholski

February 20, 1920 – December 25, 2000



There are no great achievements without great work, and only via difficult paths are high ends reached. An example of the truth in these old sayings is the life of Wojciech Grocholski.

He was born on the 20th of February, 1920, in Czechowice, Śląsk Cieszyński. The period till the outbreak of World War II in 1939, was spent by him in the relaxed atmosphere of his parents' home. In secondary school, he met Edward Passendorfer – future Professor of Warsaw University, who then taught geology and geography there. The influence of his parents' interests on the mind of Wojciech Grocholski can be seen in the whole of his later professional career. His father was a mining engineer, his grandfather an outstanding specialist of the petroleum industry and a professor of Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza (AGH, Academy of Mining and Metallurgy). His mother, Wanda from Bielski, was the daughter of a professor of the AGH in Kraków. She was the rock upon which the whole family and especially Wojciech depended. After his matriculation exam in 1938, in accordance with the family tradition, Wojciech went to the Department of Mining of the AGH in Kraków.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the Grocholski family was evicted by the Germans and moved to Kraków as well. Young Wojciech took on a range of jobs, trying to earn enough to survive. He was involved in the Resistance, the Polish Western Alliance. Arrested by the Gestapo (German secret police), he was harshly interrogated, then sent to Oświęcim (Auschwitz), and from there to Buchenwald.

In the period from 1945 to 1948, Wojciech was able to commence studying geology in Wrocław, simultaneously aiding with the reconstruction of the buildings of the Wrocław University Faculty of Geology. He also took part in the work of "Bratniak", the student union of the time, and set up the Scientific Society of Geologists and Geographers, of which he was the president. In addition,

he was a member of the board of editors of "Akademik Wrocławski". This brief time, filled with useful and creative work, was interrupted on the 15th of July, 1948, when Wojciech was arrested by the National Security Agency (UBP), which had taken on the activity that the Gestapo had begun during the occupation, namely the persecution of Polish patriots. Wojciech Grocholski was thrown into prison in Wrocław, then transferred to Katowice, and finally landed ill in hospital in Cieszyn. He was released on the 11th of March, 1953.

The next stage of his life, 1953 till 1969, was characterized by his efforts to rationally use his time and energy, so much of which had been wasted during those difficult years. In 1953, he was employed in the Polish Geological Institute in Wrocław as a mapping geologist. Then, he became the head of the geological division in the Wrocław Geological Drilling – Industrial Coal Prospecting Enterprise. He also worked as a teacher in a geological technical secondary school during the same period. His creativity as a managing director improved approach to technical problems he encountered in the drilling industry. The outcome document "A Graphic Representation of some Drilling Procedures Related to the Geology of the Drilling Region" was accepted by the patents office in 1955.

In 1955, after passing his Magister's (Master's) Examination, he became a tutor under Professor Henryk Teisseyre, in the General Geology Department of Wrocław University. On the 17th of December, 1959, he did the dissertation of his PhD work. The subject was "The Tectonic Character of the SW Edge of the Góry Sowie Mts Gneisses", and it was published in the "Studia Geologica Polonica". In this thesis, he revealed his above-average capacity to observe and deduce, as he excellently and innovatively interpreted the data he had collected on polyphase mylonitic and cataclastic processes.

In the following years, Grocholski broadened his studies to include the whole of the Góry Sowie Mts region. In a vast piece of work titled "The Tectonic Character of the Góry Sowie Mts", published in the third volume of "Geologica Sudetica", he summarized the results of his highly praised work by postulating the existence of at least four phases of deformation and recrystallization of the gneisses, each characterised by its own sets of linear and planar structures.

The geological community was to see two significant publications by Grocholski, in 1967 and in 1969. In the former year, "The Sudetes" (part of the series "The Geological Sections of Poland") was published, and in the latter "A Geological Guide to the Sudetes". Wojciech was also the main editor of both. They are books which were and are still used by many students of geology, and which were responsible for many earth scientists taking an interest in the topic of sudetic geology. Wojciech Grocholski contributed much to the Polish Dictionary of Geology

and promoted publishing a set of instructions for the tectonic analysis of drill core, which is still in use today.

In 1969, Wojciech Grocholski's took over the Faculty of Geology of the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań. At the time, knowledge of the bedrock of the Wielkopolska region was fragmentary, and in actual fact only the Tertiary and Quaternary were well described. This was a great challenge for the excellent researcher. He set up co-operation with the oil prospecting centre in Piła city, and Geophysical Enterprise in Toruń city, which gave him access to deep drill core samples. It should be remembered that at that time, a lot of drilling was done in search of hydrocarbons, but analysis of the drill cores was limited to determining the lithology and stratigraphic position of the beds. Adding the input of an experienced tectonic specialist was extremely sensible. His involvement in this area of research led to the systematic reduction of the *terra incognita* of the Polish Lowland basement and led to the recognition of the main characteristics of the evolution of the Early Palaeozoic Basin. He worked with his wife, Halina Krawczyńska-Grocholska, whom he married in 1955, and their efforts allowed the Wielkopolska region to be counted as part of the Reno-Hercynian zone of the European Variscides.

In 1979, Wojciech Grocholski became a professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań.

The high scientific standard of Wojciech's work was honoured with him being sent to take part in work with an international group of co-operation between Academies of Sciences of the socialist countries, in existence from 1976 to 1990. Being part of this group allowed him to go on scientific meetings in Bulgaria, Karelia, the Kola Peninsula, the Kandalakhsa Archipelago, Estonia, the

Ukraine, Finland, Czechoslovakia and Germany. These meetings were a source of discussion and mental stimulation for the participants, and were mainly devoted to tectonics and crystalline rock petrology.

His organizational work is just as rich and fruitful as his academic activities, although the two are difficult to separate. In 1972, he founded the Poznań branch of the PTG (Polish Geological Society), and acted as its president for two terms. In 1983, he organized the 55th Conference of the PTG in Szczecin city, and edited the conference materials. In 1984, he organized the conference "Raw Material Prospects in the Wielkopolska Part of the Central European Basin", bringing great prestige to Geological Division of Poznań University. Thanks to him, Poznań University Faculty of Geology became an institution where a Master's Degree in Geology could be obtained. He himself was to oversee the PhDs of three people (J. Skoczylas, F. Stolarczyk and J. Trzepierczyński), and several MScs. He was also a fair reviewer and offered his opinions on many pieces of work until his death on 24th of Decemeber, 2000.

Due to his superior work, in 1966 he was awarded the Polish Millennium Decoration, in 1976 the Golden Cross, and in 1980 the Golden Decoration "For Services to Polish Geology", and in 1981 the Cross of the Order of Polish Rebirth (Polonia Resituta).

These memories of Professor Wojciech Grocholski are not the story of the life of an ordinary man. His life was about the respect which a great man deserves; it was a symbol of the misfortune that hit our country, and a symbol of the spirit of a true Pole, who, despite hardship, made the very most out of the time he had. Let him remain in our memories forever.

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