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***IN MEMORIAM***

**ALFRED JAHN**  
(1915–1999)



It is a sad duty to commemorate an old fellow in Polar research, Professor Dr Alfred Jahn, Honorary Chairman of the Committee on Polar Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, who unexpectedly passed away on April 1st, 1999, in Wrocław, Poland.

Born on April 22nd, 1915, in Lwów, he studied at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów, where he got his M.Sc. degree in geography in 1937. As a young scientist, he joined the First Polish West Greenland Expedition (1937), organized and led by Dr Aleksander Kosiba, a climatologist-glaciologist experienced in scientific work on Greenland ice-cap. A. Kosiba was a disciple and co-worker of Professor Henryk Arctowski who, in 1897–1899, was the member and scientific leader of the famous Belgian Antarctic Expedition in *Belgica* under command of Adrien de Gerlache de Gomery.

A. Jahn's Ph.D. thesis on *Investigations on the structure and temperature of soils in West Greenland* (1939), based on his own studies in 1937, initiated his life-long fascination with geomorphology and permafrost of the Arctic that resulted in more than 200 scientific publications in this field alone. Besides, he became an authority in geomorphological processes of the temperate climate zone.

Though his scientific career was temporarily interrupted as a result of the World War II, A. Jahn returned to academic teaching as soon as it became possible after the war's end. His curriculum included a *veniam legendi* at the A. Mickiewicz University in Poznań (1946), a position of Docent and Professor (1949) at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, then Professor and Director of the Institute of Physical Geography/Geomorphology (1958–1968) and the President of the Wrocław University for many years. After his long illustrious academic career, he retired from this university in 1985.

A. Jahn's devotion to morals earned him great esteem when, in March 1968, as the President of the Wrocław University, he defended his students – who demanded more freedom of thought in Poland – against repressions by the communist regime. Sadly, it cost him his position as the President of the University. And again, in 1982, during the martial law imposed on the country by the communist regime, he stood fast in his beliefs in truth and science when addressing the meeting held on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Polish Polar research. This address, critical of the political situation in his country, had cost him the chairmanship of the Committee on Polar Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences. However, his friends – fellows in Polar research, did their best to elect him the life-long Honorary Chairman of the Committee (in 1984).

When Poland joined the scientific programme of the IIIrd International Geophysical Year (1957–58), A. Jahn, already well established at the Wrocław University, became one of the most scientifically productive members, and a good organizer of team-work during the Polish expeditions to Hornsund, south Spitsbergen, led from 1957 to 1960 by Dr Stanisław Siedlecki – a famous Polish explorer of Spitsbergen and Greenland. Since then, A. Jahn took also part in several other Polish scientific expeditions to Spitsbergen, and extended his geomorphological research to Northern Norway, Alaska, Canadian and Russian Arctic. His publications in the field of Polar geomorphology and periglacial processes earned him a worldwide acclaim.

Prof. A. Jahn's scientific achievements were recognized by awarding him the memberships of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Academia Leopoldina (Halle), and the Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters, moreover honorary fellowships of many scientific societies, committees and unions in Poland and abroad. He was honoured three times with the Doctorate Honoris Causa: by the Wrocław University, the M. Curie-Skłodowska University (Lublin), and the A. Mickiewicz University (Poznań). He was given the highest Polish State and regional decorations. His monograph on *Cryoturbation phenomena of the Recent and Pleistocene Periglacial Zone* was awarded the Polish State Prize (1952).

Professor A. Jahn was one of the founders of the Polar Club of the Geographical Society of Poland, and its first President (1972–1982). In the Committee on Polar Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, he was the Chairman (1981–1984) and the Honorary Chairman (since 1984). He was regarded as one of the pillars of the Polish Polar research. His fellows in Polar expeditions, his numerous disciples and friends join me in expressing our gratitude to our late Senior Colleague for his great scientific achievements and guidance in Polar matters. Professor Alfred Jahn will live long in our memory.

Krzysztof BIRKENMAJER  
Honorary Chairman  
Committee on Polar Research, Polish Academy of Sciences