



Stanisław Siedlecki
Horsund, summer 1982
photo by R.Z. Klekowski

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF PROFESSOR STANISŁAW SIEDLECKI

Two anniversaries in 1992 are important for the Polish Polar sciences: the 60th Anniversary of the first Polish expedition to Bjørnøya, Svalbard, during the IIInd Polar Year (1932/3), and the 80th Anniversary of its member Professor Dr Stanisław Siedlecki, an outstanding Polish Polar explorer and scientist, founder of the Polish Scientific Station at Hornsund, Spitsbergen.

Stanisław Siedlecki was born in Cracow, southern Poland, on 17 October 1912 as the second son of an eminent Polish biologist Michał Siedlecki who, after many years spent in Java, came back home to soon become an international authority in marine biology, including whale protection. When Poland regained her independence in 1918, Michał Siedlecki became a professor in zoology and president of the King Stefan Batory University in Wilno; later, he returned to Cracow where he was offered professorship in zoology at the Jagiellonian University. After the German invasion of Poland, Professor Michał Siedlecki was arrested by the Nazi on 6 November 1939 and sent together with other staff members of the university to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he died of maltreatment in January 1940.

Raised in excellent intellectual milieu of his father's home and among friends and colleagues enthusiasts of mountain climbing, young Stanisław Siedlecki first became a mountaineer with a very good climbing record, then a student of physics and mathematics at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (1931–1933).

A life chance for a young student, already an acknowledged mountaineer, soon came on the occasion of the IIInd Polar Year (1932/33): he was approved as a member of the first Polish Polar expedition to Bjørnøya (Bear Island), the Svalbard archipelago in the Arctic. The expedition was organized by Dr Jean Lugeon, at that time director of the Polish Meteorological Survey in Warsaw. The three-man party, consisting of C. Centkiewicz (party leader), W. Łysakowski and S. Siedlecki spent the whole year on Bjørnøya conducting meteorological observations and geophysical research, learning about challenges of an Arctic milieu.

The wintering on Bjørnøya had determined Stanisław Siedlecki's curriculum for years to come. Already a year later, in 1934, he co-organized the first Polish Spitsbergen expedition to NW Torell Land, led by his good friend and famous mountaineer Stefan Bernadzikiewicz. Other Polar expeditions followed in a row: in 1936 S. Siedlecki together with S. Bernadzikiewicz and K. Jodko-Narkiewicz made the first crossing on skis with pull-sledge of the whole Spitsbergen island, from south to north; in 1937 he joined the first Polish West Greenland expedition to Arfersiorfik under the leadership of Aleksander Kosiba.

Meanwhile, with good field experience gained in Torell Land in 1934, S. Siedlecki changed his interests from physics and mathematics to geology and

palaeontology. He started to study these subjects at the Warsaw University in 1934, and got his M.Sc. degree in geology and palaeontology in 1944 on secret university courses, while still under the Nazi occupation of Poland.

Geology became S. Siedlecki's profession after World War 2nd, starting with the Department of Geology of the Jagiellonian University where, from 1945 to 1951, he taught students in this subject first as an Assistant and, after obtaining his Ph.D. degree in geology (in 1949), as an Adjunct (Reader). At that time, his scientific research included geological mapping, stratigraphic and tectonic studies of the eastern border of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin. And, besides scientific research, and supplementary studies (at the Sorbonne in 1949), he found enough time to continue his mountaineering in the Tatra Mountains and in the Alps, climbing new rock routes and organizing climbing expeditions.

Time passed, and Dr S. Siedlecki, now with the scientific title of Docent (Assistant Professor), moved to the Cracow branch of the Museum of the Earth (1951–53). Shortly afterwards, he was obliged to take over directorship of the Upper Silesian Branch of the Geological Survey in Poland (1953–56). These were the years of intense scientific research and achievement, however leaving little time for his beloved mountaineering.

A new situation arose in 1956 when the IIIrd International Geophysical Year (1957–58) was launched, and S. Siedlecki was appointed leader of a Polish national expedition to Spitsbergen. Having moved to the Polish Academy of Sciences, the sponsor of the Polish IIIrd I.G.Y. programme, S. Siedlecki put all his efforts to organize a multidiscipline 2-year expedition, including one wintering season in a specially built Polish Scientific Station at Hornsund, south Spitsbergen.

Looking back from a perspective of 35 years, we consider the IIIrd I.G.Y. Polish Spitsbergen Expeditions as a milestone in Polish Polar research and exploration. S. Siedlecki's role in this scientific enterprise was dominant. Tutored by this experienced Polar explorer during the reconnaissance trip to Spitsbergen in 1956, the summer and winter seasons of 1957 and 1958, and the International Geophysical Co-operation expeditions of 1959 and 1960, the scientific team of earth scientists and biologists soon matured to become experienced Polar researches and explorers themselves, able to initiate their own Polar expeditions.

While working for the Polish Academy of Sciences (1956–1966), S. Siedlecki continued his scientific research in Poland on geology of the eastern and northern margins of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin. In 1966 he received the title of Associate Professor at the Institute of Geological Sciences of the Academy. Siedlecki's geological studies in Spitsbergen during five expeditions led by him from 1956 to 1962, included mainly Upper Carboniferous and Permian stratigraphy.

In 1966, S. Siedlecki moved with his family to Oslo as a Fellow of the Royal Norwegian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, with a programme of furthering research in Upper Palaeozoic rocks and faunas of Bjørnøya and

central Spitsbergen (Bellsund). He led two geological field parties organized by the Norwegian Polar Research Institute to these areas in 1964 and 1965.

For the next fifteen years, until his retirement in 1980, S. Siedlecki worked together with his wife, also a geologist, Dr Anna Siedlecka, in Finnmark, north Norway, geologically mapping a large area of Precambrian rocks between Varanger fjord and Porsanger fjord, for the Norwegian Geological Survey (Trondheim). Though, as a state geologist in Norway, he no longer was formally linked with the Polish science, S. Siedlecki retained his keen interest in the Polish Polar activities in Spitsbergen which, meanwhile, continued either on a basis of participation of Polish geologists and geomorphologists in expeditions organized by the Norwegian Polar Research Institute, or as mountaineering expeditions organized by the Polish Mountaineering Club. His new home in Trondheim was frequented by Polish Polar explorers while on the way to, or from, Svalbard. These contacts intensified since 1970 when the Wrocław University and the Polish Academy of Sciences resumed scientific research at Hornsund and elsewhere in Spitsbergen. With renovation of the Polish Station in 1978, functioning now as a permanent, year-round scientific station of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Professor Stanisław Siedlecki became an honorary guest of our expeditions for many a season since 1979. And, as a member of the Polish Polar Club, he is a frequent participant of yearly meetings of the club in Poland.

On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Polish Polar Research (1932–1982), the National Committee on Polar Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the older members of which are Siedlecki's colleagues and friends from the IIIrd I.G.Y.–I.G.C. expeditions (1956–1960), or even from the pre-war ones, awarded its Senior in Polar research with the Honorary Fellowship. On our proposal, the Presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences also decorated S. Siedlecki with its highest award, the Copernicus Medal. The Geographical Society of Poland elected him Honorary Fellow. He is also a Fellow of Arktisk Forening in Tromsø (Norway), Isbjørn-Klubben in Hammerfest (Norway), and Explorers Club in New York.

Taking this nice and unique opportunity to honour our Dear Colleague and Friend active in Polar research for most of his life, already 60 years (1932–1992), and celebrating his 80th Anniversary (1912–1992), the Polish National Committee on Polar Research is presenting to Professor Stanisław Siedlecki a collection of scientific papers on the Arctic and the Antarctic included in this volume. May He Live Long, enjoying good health and a good friendship of us all!

Polish National Committee on Polar Research

Alfred JAHN (Honorary Chairman)

Krzysztof BIRKENMAJER (Chairman)