In Memory of Professor Jerzy Radecki

I have known prof. Jerzy Radecki since his undergraduate studies of chemistry at Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun. He worked under my direction on M.Sc. thesis in organic synthesis. During that time I noticed his accuracy, invention, and high interest in the research work. Consequently, it was not surprising that after graduation he decided to work in organic chemistry for the Ph. D. degree, which he obtained in 1980. At that time only a few openings in chemistry were available at higher education institutions in the country, but he found a permanent position, and was employed at the Academy of Agriculture and Technology, Olsztyn.

Agricultural profile of the new place required a new direction of his research. Although environmental protection was in its beginnings, he decided to work in this field. It was a fundamental decision requiring considerable extension of analytical methods as compared to the methods used in organic synthesis, and cooperation with biologists in practical application of research results. Beside research he was also involved in teaching chemistry to students of various fields of study.

The beginning of the eighties was the time of "Solidarity" in Poland, and the academic community was highly active in this movement. Dr Radecki as a young energetic man, popular among students and faculty, participated in the academic Solidarity structures. This activity was brutally interrupted on December 13, 1981, when he was imprisoned with other Solidarity activists under the martial law. He had a strong feeling of democracy, human rights and academic freedom of research and teaching, which he constantly expressed, and executed in his life and professional activities.

One year (1990) of post-doctoral stay with prof. Jaim Lichtig at the Institute of Chemistry, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and a half-year (1992) fellowship with dr. Mitsuyuki Soma at National Institute for Environmental Studies, Tsukuba, Japan, were helpful both professionally (modern electrochemical methods), and personally due to friendly environment in the working places.

Back in Olsztyn, after some time he decided to move from the Academia to a nearby located research institution, the Institute of Animal Reproduction and Food Research, Polish Academy of Sciences, where he was employed with his wife Hanna (Ph.D. in chemistry, later Professor). They decided to concentrate on new electroanalytical methods, and it was a lucky time for his research. In 2004 Poland joined the European Union, and European grants were available. Prof. Radecki was able to equip his research group with modern instrumentation, and they intensively worked on the development of new potentiometric sensors based on polymeric liquid membranes, destined for the recognition of the neutral and polyanionic species. Electrochemical immuno- and genosensors based on gold electrodes modified with redox active layers were developed for the determination of Avian influenza H5N1 and Plum pox viruses. Extensive international cooperation attracted foreign co-workers, and made possible organization of international conferences and summer schools.

Another aspect of his scientific activity was the creation of a new scientific journal, Polish Journal of Environmental Studies. In 1991 when the first issue was published, it was like phoenix rising from the ashes. At that time, it was difficult to imagine that one person can start editing a new journal. And yet! It was the right time (increasing importance of environment protection), and the right man. The journal is 30 years old now, papers of Polish and foreign authors are published, and its edition can continue for many more years.

Beside chemistry, prof. Radecki was an open minded person, cooperative and contributing to the society, friendly and optimistic colleague, curious about the world. He liked to travel with a group of friends to interesting places in the world. These expeditions were an occasion for long talks on science, life, the past and the future.

It is very difficult for me to comprehend the absence of my bright student, accomplished scientist, a long-time friend, and a good man. I shall treasure my memories of him for ever.

Marek Zaidlewicz
Emeritus professor of chemistry
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń