



**Professor Jan Piechura – In Memoriam  
(8 December 1936–12 November 2013)**

It is with great sadness that we report the passing away on 12 November 2012 of the outstanding European oceanographer, Professor Jan Piechura. A Polish hydrologist familiar with all the world's large water basins, he had the most intimate knowledge of the Baltic Sea's hydrology. His research work made an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the complexities of the Baltic's water circulation and its exchange with the North Sea. The frequency with which the Baltic was replenished with warm, saline water from the North Sea, as well as the structure of its transport, were problems which Professor Piechura had been addressing over the last ten years.

He also devoted much time and attention to investigating the processes by which the Arctic Ocean receives water from the Atlantic Ocean. He undertook this particular research topic in connection with the warming of the Earth's climate and the danger that the North Atlantic Current might no longer supply the Arctic with water, that the large-scale thermohaline circulation in the World Ocean might come to a standstill. His work in this respect raised Polish Oceanography to the highest standards in the world, and enabled the Institute of Oceanology PAN to cooperate with the international team of specialists investigating the oceanographic part of the programme for climate change in the northern hemisphere.

Professor Piechura was born in the village of Witów near the central Polish town of Piotrków Trybunalski on 8th December 1936. He studied oceanography at the Lomonosov State University in Moscow, receiving his diploma in 1965. Right from the beginning of his scientific career, he specialized in the hydrology of large water basins. Up to 1990 he

The complete text of the paper is available at <http://www.iopan.gda.pl/oceanologia/>

worked at the Sea Fisheries Institute in Gdynia, where he headed the Physics Laboratory and the Department of Oceanography, and was the Institute's Director of Scientific Matters. In 1991 he moved to the Institute of Oceanology PAN in Sopot, where he became Head of the Department of Marine Dynamics. He was awarded his habilitation by the Agricultural Academy of Szczecin and received his professorship from the President of Poland in 1991. For many years he was involved in international research projects, including: the Programme for a Baltic network to assess and upgrade an operational observing and forecasting system in the region (PAPA), (2002–2005, project manager); Arctic Subarctic Ocean Flux Array for European Climate (ASOF-N) (2003–2006); Developing Arctic Modelling and Observing Capabilities for Long-term Environment Studies (DAMOCLES) (2005–2009); Climate of the Arctic and its Role for Europe (CARE) – a European component of the International Polar Year (IPY-CARE) (2005–2007); Western Arctic Shelf – Basin Interactions, Phase II (SBI) (2002–2007); Quantification of Water Mass Transformations in the Arkona Sea – Natural Processes (QUANTAS) (2004–2008).

In 1968–1970 he held the post of lecturer at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography (Canada), and in 1983–1986 he was a UNESCO expert in Physical Oceanography. The Institute of Oceanology entrusted Professor Piechura with the task of developing the Department of Marine Dynamics – for this it could not have found a better person. He was above all a highly efficient organizer of the research cruises on IO PAN's r/v 'Oceania', both in the Baltic Sea, and also in Arctic regions, where after 1985 Polish teams of oceanographers regularly surveyed a number of basins. Professor Piechura very significantly raised the technical level of these cruises, and the high standard of his scientific reports brought the results of Polish research to journals on the ISI master list.

What was Professor Jan Piechura like as a colleague and a person? I have to admit that I met him only as a reviewer of his papers and during annual meetings to discuss research results. I was never a member of his research teams. In my humble view he was not a controversial personality. He was always willing to listen to other peoples' opinions, even when they were not very complementary towards him, and he was capable of changing his mind, so long as there were cast-iron arguments for doing so. But in no way was he indecisive. He was always firmly rooted in his convictions, even though he subsequently had to bear the consequences of some of them in his professional life. As a result a number of people were not happy with the way he went about his work. Those of his colleagues who were determined to have their own way became his adversaries, but he was capable of cooperating with them nonetheless. There was undoubtedly a stubborn

streak in his otherwise good nature, which allowed him to give way if the research effort was to benefit by doing so. That said, all of us, friends and 'foes', are acutely aware of the gap he has left behind, especially as we all recognise and appreciate his great achievements in science, esteemed by specialists both at home and abroad.

In bringing these reminiscences to a close I would like to say: 'My dear Jan, you remain among us, just as it used to be on every Tuesday of the week, and bless you for everything you did for Oceanography and IO PAN'.

*Czesław Druet*