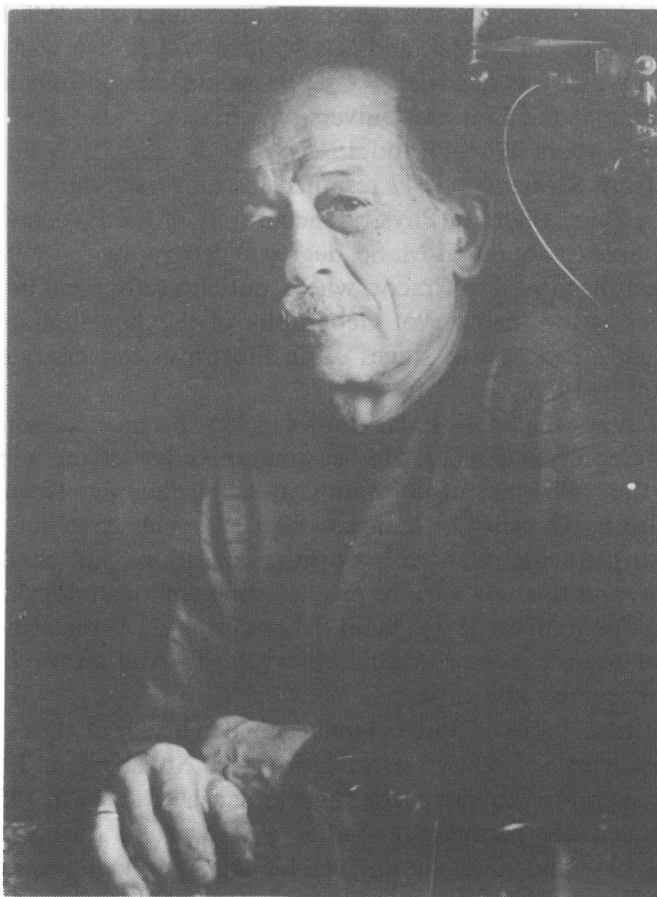


*IN MEMORIAM***ZDZISŁAW CZEPE**

(1917–1991)

A POLISH ARCTIC GEOMORPHOLOGIST

Professor Zdzisław Czeppe at Pálffyodden, Sørkapp Land, in 1981 (photo by A. Krawczyk)

It is a sad duty for a colleague of 35 years in Polish Polar research to commemorate his longtime friend Professor Dr Zdzisław Czeppe who unexpectedly passed away on 19 August 1991. And a good friend like him, always ready to help others in need, unselfishly devoted to scientific research in the Arctic.

Zdzisław Czeppe was born on 22 November 1917 at Limanowa, Polish Carpathians. On completing his education in the Jasło Gymnasium in 1936, he started his studies in geography at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. After the outbreak of World War II, he joined the Polish Army fighting against the enemy in southern Poland. Avoiding possible imprisonment by the Nazi, he crossed the Rumanian border, and via Hungary and Italy arrived in France where he enlisted in the Polish Forces in exile. With the IIIrd Polish Infantry Division leaving defeated France in 1940, he arrived in England where he was soon transferred to the Polish Air Forces operating under British command. As a navigator in the Polish Bombing Squadron No 300, he flew several missions over Germany until May 1944. For his bravery, he was decorated three times with Polish War Cross and three times with Air Medal, and also with several British war distinctions.

The World War II over, Zdzisław Czeppe decided to continue his university studies, this time at the London University, where he completed two courses during academic years 1944/45 and 1945/46. In Spring 1947, he returned to Poland, and from September 1947 resumed his university career, firstly as an assistant at the Department of Physical Geography of the Wrocław University. There, he was able to obtain his M. Sc. degree in geography in 1949. In Autumn of the same year, he moved to Cracow where, until his retirement in 1987, he was a staff member at the Institute of Geography of the Jagiellonian University, passing through all successive stages of an illustrious university career up to a professorship in 1978.

Zdzisław Czeppe began his Polar studies in 1957 on the occasion of the IIIrd International Geophysical Year. He became a member of the wintering team (1957–58) at the Polish Scientific Station at Isbjørnhamna, Hornsund, south Spitsbergen, led by Docent Dr Stanisław Siedlecki. This gave him an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with working conditions and challenges of an Arctic country, and to study various problems in geomorphology of periglacial zone, including permafrost — his main field of interest, at the same time being responsible for routine meteorological observations. And on top of all this, he was also an alternate radio officer.

The permafrost studies in Spitsbergen resulted in his Ph.D. thesis on “Annual course of frost heave of soil cover at Hornsund, Spitsbergen, 1957–58”, the scientific degree granted to him at the Jagiellonian University in 1959. Zdzisław Czeppe continued his permafrost studies at Hornsund during the summer expeditions of 1959 and 1960, and in 1960 he had a good chance to present the results of his research to the members of the Svalbard excursions of the International Geological Congress (Copenhagen, 1960) and the International Geographical Congress (Stockholm, 1960).



Professor Zdzisław Czeppe (in foreground) at Pálffyodden, Sørkapp Land, in 1981
(photo by A. Krawczyk)

From 1960 to 1990, Professor Czeppe presented results of his periglacial Polar studies in many scientific centres in Europe and United States of America, and at scientific congresses, at the same time carrying out extensive geomorphological studies in Poland. In 1979, he created a Polar Research Data Facility at the Institute of Geography, Jagiellonian University, to serve the Polish and international Polar community.

In 1980, Prof. Czeppe resumed his Spitsbergen studies. For his five-years summer expeditions plan he selected the western part of Sørkapp Land, a relatively little known area from geomorphological viewpoint, which had played the role of an Arctic “oasis” during the last glaciations. A variety of studies carried out by himself (in 1980 and 1981), and by his disciples and collaborators, contributed a great deal to the present knowledge of the area. His successors continue now along well-established lines of research which Professor Czeppe helped to put in operation, but also open new fields of scientific study aimed at understanding evolution of a terrestrial Arctic environment, and the role played in it by the man.



Jagiellonian University Expedition to Sørkapp Land in 1981. In front of Pálffyodden hut, Professor Zdzisław Czeppe second from right (*photo by A. Krawczyk*)

As the chairman of the Polish Committee on Polar Research since 1984, I recall with great pleasure my good co-operation with Professor Czeppe who had been the chairman of the Commission on History and Documentation of Polish Polar Research and a member of the Committee Presidium as well. The Polish Polar community will greatly miss him.

Krzysztof BIRKENMAJER

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