In Memoriam

Professor

Wojciech Przetakiewicz

Colonel (ret.) of the Polish Armed Forces

19 July 1950, Serock – 6 December 2025, Marianów

On 6 December 2025, Professor Wojciech Przetakiewicz passed away. He was a long-standing academic teacher and researcher at the Military University of Technology in Warsaw, the Maritime University of Szczecin (formerly the Higher Maritime School), and the Motor Transport Institute in Warsaw. He was a scholar who made a significant contribution to the dissemination of knowledge in materials science and technology, as well as to the consolidation of the materials engineering and mechanical engineering communities in Poland.

Wojciech Przetakiewicz was born on 19 July 1950 in Serock. He began his early education at a small (at that time four-grade) school in Otrębusy-Karolin near Warsaw, where his father, Antoni Przetakiewicz, served in the 1950s as the director of the famous State Folk Song and Dance Ensemble "Mazowsze". He continued his secondary education at the prestigious Władysław IV High School in Warsaw.

Immediately after completing his secondary education, in the summer of 1969, Wojciech Przetakiewicz successfully passed the very competitive entrance examinations and became a student (then referred to as a cadet) at the Military University of Technology (MUT). He completed his unified Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of MUT in 1973. Between 1973 and 1976, he developed his military career, holding a number of command and technical positions – varying both in location and scope of responsibilities – in maintenance and transport units of the Polish Armed Forces.

Following his reassignment to the Military University of Technology in 1976, he began a long period of intensive academic and teaching activity, marked by numerous professional achievements. His scientific mentor was Professor Bohdan Ciszewski, one of the co-founders of Polish materials science and engineering. Under his supervision, Wojciech Przetakiewicz prepared and defended his doctoral dissertation entitled *Analysis of Thermally Activated Phenomena in Critically Cold-Worked Copper and Nickel*, obtaining his PhD in technical sciences in 1980.

The effective continuation and deepening of research on critical cold deformation, including collaboration with the research group of Professor M. W. Grabski at the Warsaw University of Technology, culminated in a scientific monograph entitled *The Phenomenon of Critical Deformation in FCC Metals with Different Stacking Fault Energy.* On the basis of this work, he obtained his bhabilitation in 1986. In 1993, he received the title of Professor of Technical Sciences from the President of Poland, Lech Wałęsa.

Professor Wojciech Przetakiewicz's dynamically developing and highly regarded scientific achievements were also reflected in his successive promotions within the organizational structure of his home institution. Over the course of his academic career at the Military University of Technology, he held the positions of research assistant (1976-1980), assistant professor (1980-1986), associate professor (1986-1993), professor of MUT (1993-1997), and full professor (1997-2007 and 2010-2013). For most of his tenure at MUT, he simultaneously held a number of increasingly senior managerial roles – from leading a laboratory and research unit, through heading the Department of Materials Science, to serving as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering for academic affairs (1990-1991), Dean of the Faculty (1991-1992), and Vice-Rector of MUT for education (1992-1997).

Despite his high standing within the military hierarchy (the roles of dean and vice-rector at MUT offered the prospect of promotion to the rank of general), Colonel Prof. Wojciech Przetakiewicz chose in 1998 to retire from active military service. Becoming a civilian enabled him to broaden the scope of his academic and organizational activities and to pursue his long-standing interest in maritime issues. From 1998 onward, he became professionally associated with the Higher Maritime School (later the Maritime University of Szczecin), beginning over two decades of service there as a full professor, while also acting as the Rector's plenipotentiary for scientific affairs.

His solid engineering background in the field of machine design and operation, further strengthened by a rigorous methodological and analytical foundation in materials engineering, also formed the basis of nearly nine years (2007-2015) of professional engagement with the Motor Transport Institute in Warsaw, where he served as a professor and advisor to the Institute's Director.

Initially focused on fundamental issues in physical metallurgy, Professor Przetakiewicz's scientific output gradually expanded to encompass broader areas of materials engineering and modern manufacturing technologies. His research included thermally activated microstructural transformations in metallic materials, superplasticity and other phase transformations in advanced alloys, as well as relationships between microstructure and material properties. At the national level, he led a large multi-institutional consortium implementing a high-budget commissioned research project devoted to the structure, and properties of intermetallic-based alloys.

His research interests also included advanced processing techniques for engineering materials, such as glow discharge nitriding, plasma spraying of protective coatings, contactless laser bending, and, in particular, laser-based techniques for surface modification of machine components. He played a significant role in the substantive and organizational support of the concept of concurrent design and laser-based additive manufacturing of structural elements made of advanced metallic alloys, metal-matrix composites, and cermets. This concept was realized at the Military University of Technology in the form of a pilot laboratory for additive manufacturing using the LENS (Laser Engineered Net Shaping) technology – at the time unique on a European scale. The results of many research projects in which he participated found practical applications in industry.

Professor Wojciech Przetakiewicz was the author and co-author of nine monographs and textbooks, as well as numerous scientific publications. He published 168 papers in scientific peer-reviewed journals and over 100 conference communications. He placed special emphasis on the education of young researchers – his exceptional rigor in formulating evaluations, combined with kindness and openness in scientific discussions, made him not only an outstanding professor but also a highly respected mentor of the younger generation of scientists.

He supervised 42 MSc and BSc engineers, 10 PhD graduates, of whom four later obtained habilitation degrees and two were awarded professorial titles. His extensive and highly valued reviewing activity had a significant impact on the academic standards of research and publications in materials engineering and mechanical engineering. He served as a reviewer in 35 doctoral dissertations, 98 habilitation procedures, and 85 procedures for the conferment of the title of the full professor. He also reviewed numerous monographs, textbooks, scientific papers, conference contributions, research funding applications, and nominations for scientific awards and scholarships granted by bodies such as the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the Foundation for Polish Science. He was also frequently a member of scientific committees of national and international conferences.

Professor Wojciech Przetakiewicz's activity in organizing scientific life and consolidating the materials and technology research community was exceptionally intensive, impactful, and widely recognized, extending far beyond his home institution and other places of employment. He was an elected member of numerous distinguished bodies, including the Committee on Materials Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences (since 1996), the Central Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles (2000-2019), the Warsaw Scientific Society (since 2004), and the Committee for Research for the Development of Science within the Science Council of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2008-2011).

He was actively involved in problem-oriented teams within the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS), including the Surface Engineering Section of the Committee for Mechanical Engineering, as well as committees operating within the Poznań branch of PAS in the areas of mechanical engineering and materials science, and the Szczecin Scientific Society. He was also a member of numerous Scientific Councils, including those of the Institute of Precision Mechanics in Warsaw (1999-2014), the Institute of Ferrous Metallurgy in Gliwice (2004-2014), the Military Institute of Armoured and Automotive Technology (2007-2009), the Military Institute of Armament Technology (2008-2014), and the Motor Transport Institute (2008-2020).

He also played an active role in advisory and expert bodies of state administration, including as a member of the Science Council of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2005-2011), and in teams focused on research for economic development (2005-2008) and for national defense and security (2005-2009). He was also a member of the Prime Minister's Scientific Awards Committee (2007-2013) and the Scientific Awards Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2007-2013). Furthermore, he was an important figure in the scientific association movement, being a founding member of the Polish Materials Science Society (since 1995), the Polish Stereological Society (since 1992), the Intelligent Transportation Systems Association ITS Poland (since 2007), and the Polish Scientific Society of Recycling (since 2008). He also held certification as an expert of the Association of Polish Engineers and Technicians (SIMP) in the field of physical metallurgy and heat treatment (since 1971).

Particularly noteworthy in the area of scientific governance and the coordination of academic standards was Professor Przetakiewicz's long-standing service in the Central Commission for

Academic Degrees and Titles. Proudly following in the footsteps of his mentor, Professor Bohdan Ciszewski (the longest-serving member in the history of the Commission) he served from 2000 to 2019 (across six consecutive terms). He was a member of Section VI (Technical Sciences), and during his final two terms served as its Vice-Chair.

Having comprehensive, long-term insight into the documentation and procedures of academic promotions, and later also influence over the composition and competencies of evaluation bodies, he made persistent efforts to uphold the principles of integrity and honesty in science. He was uncompromising in defending these principles and did not shy away from delivering strict assessments, while maintaining the highest possible level of objectivity. Above all, he remained faithful to his personal maxim: "In scientific activity, I value honesty more highly than loyalty to unreliable colleagues."

He devoted considerable effort to promoting good practices and ethical conduct among researchers, publishing numerous essays and giving interviews, primarily in *Forum Akademickie* and *Głos Akademicki* (MUT). He repeatedly emphasized – using his own words – that "the attainment of the habilitation degree should signify that a scientist has achieved the status of an independent researcher, capable of formulating significant research problems and possessing the knowledge and predispositions necessary to properly fulfill the role of an academic mentor." He also warned against overestimating the role of scientometric indicators, which, in his view, often fail to reflect the competencies required of independent researchers.

He pursued similar efforts to promote ethical standards and best practices within the more discipline-specific context of materials engineering, particularly within the Polish Materials Science Society, of which he was a founding member, long-standing board member, and Vice-President. Historical facts remain unequivocal: as he approached retirement upon reaching the age of 70, Professor Przetakiewicz – feeling that his influence had become insufficient and that he lacked adequate institutional support – resigned, in December 2019 (shortly after the beginning of his sixth term), from his elected membership in the Central Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles, and half a year later also from the Polish Materials Science Society. As was characteristic of his methodical approach, he thoroughly explained the motivations behind these decisions in formal statements addressed to the academic communities of materials science and metallurgy that had supported his candidacy.

Professor Wojciech Przetakiewicz's scientific, teaching, and organizational activities were recognized with numerous awards, including distinctions from the Secretary of Division IV (Technical Sciences) of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, and repeatedly from the Rectors of the Military University of Technology and the Maritime University of Szczecin. He was also awarded high state, ministerial, and professional honors, including the Officer's Cross and Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, the Silver Cross of Merit, the Medal of the National Education Commission, as well as medals: "For Merit to MUT," "For Long Service," "Meritorious Employee of the Maritime Economy," the Honorary Medal of the Association of Polish Metallurgists named after Tadeusz Sendzimir, and ministerial medals "Armed Forces in the Service of the Homeland" and "For Merit to National Defense." He was also honored with an entry in the "Golden Book of Achievements of MUT" and awarded the title of "Honorary Professor of the Faculty of Advanced Technologies and Chemistry at MUT."

Professor Wojciech Przetakiewicz was a man of great personal culture – calm, kind, exceptionally diligent, and methodical in his work, yet also understanding of human shortcomings and loyal to his colleagues. He supported young researchers, inspired them, and explained complex issues with patience and passion. Despite his immense scientific and life achievements, he remained modest, optimistic, and approachable.

His extensive professional legacy and his remarkable personal qualities, which earned him widespread recognition during his lifetime, ensure that Professor Wojciech Przetakiewicz leaves behind a particularly enduring memory. While remembrance itself is important, what would have mattered even more to him – something he consistently demonstrated through his life and work – is the realization of the hopes and expectations he expressed regarding the condition of science and the ethical and intellectual standards shaping the ethos of the academic profession. These hopes and expectations, articulated in numerous speeches and recorded in essays and publications promoting scientific integrity – including the co-authored collection of selected essays *Academia Without Make-Up: Between Creativity and Morality* (with Prof. Leszek Chybowski, © 2026 by Kaleidoscope) – constitute a kind of testament of an experienced and distinguished scientist left to all of us, particularly to the materials science community.

An outstanding scholar, devoted teacher and mentor has passed away – a man whose knowledge, integrity, kindness, and goodwill have left a lasting mark on the history of Polish science and in the memory of all who had the honor of working with him or being his students.

Honored with a military funeral and accompanied by numerous friends, colleagues, students, and acquaintances, Professor Wojciech Przetakiewicz was laid to rest beside his wife, Elżbieta, at the small Mariavite cemetery in Leszno-Grądy on 19 December 2025.

Zbigniew Bojar