

*The departed live eternally for
as long as we remember them.*

Wisława Szymborska



In memoriam

A reminiscence of dr inż. (Ph.D. Eng.) Andrzej Żurkowski, Director of the Railway Research Institute

Death is always uncalled-for and always not well-timed. On 3 January 2022, after a serious disease, Ph.D. Eng., Andrzej Żurkowski – the long-time Director of the Railway Research Institute, a person distinguished for the Polish railways, died. His death is an irreparable loss to his family, friends, colleagues and research community.

He was born on 29 November 1956 in Warsaw. His mother was a biologist, and his father was an engineer. He and his younger brother grew up in Śródmieście district, and later in Żoliborz district. A graduate of the Institute of Transport at the Warsaw University of Technology. In 1980 he defended his thesis entitled “Analysis of the operation technology of the Warszawa Grochów maintenance station and proposals for its improvement”, obtaining the title of magister inżynier [Master of Science in Engineering]. A year later, he received an award from the Minister of Transport for his thesis. He was conferred with the degree of doktor nauk technicznych [Doctor of Technical Sciences] in 2008 at the Faculty of Transport of the Warsaw University of Technology on the basis of a dissertation “Method of study on the impact of service purchasers’ preferences on the distribution of passenger traffic flow in a transport corridor”.

Since he graduated, he was associated with PKP [Polish State Railways]. The railway was his professional and life passion. Between 1980 and 1991 he worked in the Railway Scientific and Technical Centre, initially as an engineer, and since 1990 as manager of the Railway Traffic Department. In the years 1991–1998 he was the head of department in the General Directorate of PKP, and from 1998 to 2001 he was the director of the marketing department of qualified transport and the spokesman of the Passenger Transport Directorate of PKP. Founder and first president of the management board of PKP Intercity in the years 2001-2005. Then the director of the marketing and social communication department and board representative for international relations at PKP.

In 2006 Andrzej Żurkowski became director of the Railway Scientific and Technical Centre, transformed in 2010 into the Railway Research Institute. He performed this function until 2021. Innovation, improvement of transport safety and high-speed rail are the quintessence of the actions undertaken by director Andrzej Żurkowski to develop the activities of the Railway Research Institute and rail transport. His vast experience and commitment contributed to raising the Institute's prominence both in Poland and in the international arena.

Throughout his professional activity, Andrzej Żurkowski was very active in working groups, committees and subcommittees of the International Union of Railways (UIC). He represented PKP in many committees, subcommittees and working groups of the UIC and the Ministry of Transport in the working group on persons with disabilities of the ECMT (at the OECD). Vice-Chairman of the UIC Passenger Forum from 2003 to 2006. In the years 2008–2012 he was also a member of the Committee on Transport of the Polish Academy of Sciences, later the chairman of the Logistics and Transport Processes Subcommittee. For many years he was a member of the Main Council of the Research Institutes, he also held the position of chairman of the Council of the Foundation “Pomoc Transportowcom” [Help for transporters]. He was eager to share his theoretical and practical knowledge. In the period from 2007 to 2011, he was a lecturer at the Military University of Technology, Warsaw University of Technology and the Warsaw School of Economics. He participated in many national and international scientific and technical conferences and seminars, during which he delivered speeches on passenger transport.

He left a rich legacy in the field of science and research. He was the author of numerous publications in professional journals on planning and organisation of passenger transport, application of mathematics and computer science in transport, rail operation, road transport, high-speed rail systems, transport systems, marketing and distribution of services. He was a co-author of many books on rail transport. In recognition of his position and scientific authority, he was elected a member of the International Railway Research Board operating at UIC. He was also a member of the UIC High-Speed Rail Steering Committee.

In the memory of the employees of the Institute, Director Andrzej Żurkowski will remain an open-minded manager, who respected his subordinates. He was a righteous man of great knowledge and faith. He was cheerful and kind-hearted. He was of gentle and peaceful nature. He was not only a high-class professional but also a warm-hearted person, a social activist, and a man of dialogue; a loving husband, a proud father of two daughters and four grandchildren. He liked cats, theatre, swimming and collected miniature buses.

The late Director Andrzej Żurkowski was buried at the cemetery in Rembertów, Warsaw. He was posthumously awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta.

Sit ei terra levis.

Renata Barcikowska