Zygmunt Zahorski – An Obituary

Professor Zygmunt Zahorski passed away on 8 May, 1998 in Gliwice (Silesia, Poland) after a long illness. He is survived by his wife, Janina, daughter, Elżbieta and son Jan.

Zygmunt Zahorski was born on 30 April, 1914 in the small village of Szubina (about 40 miles north of Łódź). His father died when he was only 7 years old and from that time forward the entire family (mother, younger sister and he) suffered from the lack of basic necessities. In spite of this fact, Zygmunt Zahorski finished secondary school in 1932 and started his studies in Warsaw. At first he worked at the aeronautic faculty of the Warsaw Technical University (because he knew that these studies were close to mathematics) where he studied for about two years. Next he studied at the mathematical faculty of the University of Warsaw. During that time he even spent six weeks in a shelter for the poor and unemployed, because he didn't have enough money to pay for dormitory space. He finished his mathematical studies in 1938. Beginning in 1937 he was employed as an assistant at the Military College of Aeronautics in Warsaw. At that time he worked on a doctoral dissertation under the direction of Professor S. Mazurkiewicz. But when the Second World War broke out his position at the college and the possibility of earning a doctorate vanished. In September 1939 Zygmunt Zahorski moved to Lwów, where the University was still functioning (as a Polish University before 17th of September and as Soviet one thereafter) and he became an assistant to S. Banach. At the outbreak of the German - Soviet war in 1941 he worked at the Philips radio engineering factory. In 1942 he contracted a very severe case of tuberculosis. He underwent a serious surgery which, at that time, was the only medical treatment for tuberculosis and, according to the surgeons, his chances of survival were almost zero. However, he improved very slowly and even managed to work on mathematical problems during his hospitalization. His scientific work in the period 1939-45 was so important that, soon after the war (February 1946), he earned a doctorate in mathematics under Professor T. Ważewski at Jagiellonian University in Cracow presenting a different thesis than the one he wrote before the war, and in December 1947 he finished his habilitation. (Unfortunately, this dissertation was not published in its entirety.) In 1948 Zygmunt Zahorski received the title of an extraordinary professor and moved to Łódź, where he worked until 1970. He became a full professor in 1960 after proving the Kolmogorov hypothesis on permutation of trigonometric series (although the authorities of University of Łódź had recommended him for this title six years earlier). In 1970 he moved to Gliwice as professor at the Silesian Technical University. He retired in 1984.