

Czechoslovak Mathematical Journal

Zdeněk Jankovský

In memoriam Professor Zdeněk Pírko

Czechoslovak Mathematical Journal, Vol. 34 (1984), No. 1, 163–164

Persistent URL: <http://dml.cz/dmlcz/101936>

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IN MEMORIAM PROFESSOR ZDENĚK PÍRKO

ZDENĚK JANKOVSKÝ, Praha

On May 15, 1983, the sudden death ended the life and work of RNDr. Zdeněk Pírko, DrSc., Professor Emeritus of Mathematics of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Czech Technical University.



Z. Pírko was born on December 12, 1909 at Pacov, but his parents moved to Prague shortly after his birth. His interest in Mathematics was aroused by his teacher already at the secondary school, and resulted in his entering the Faculty of Science of Charles University in Prague. Parallely with Mathematics and Physics he studied actuarial sciences. The teachers who influenced most his further career were B. Bydžovský and K. Závíška: through all his life, Z. Pírko's interest was centered on geometry and theoretical mechanics. In 1934 Pírko obtained his doctor's degree (RNDr). After some time at a military research institute he worked as teacher at secondary schools, and after the World War II he joined the Czech Technical University in Prague. In 1947 he was appointed Reader and in 1950 Professor, and in 1957 he took his DrSc. degree. Pírko was the first dean of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering when it was founded in 1950; he was Head of the Department of Mathematics of the Faculty since 1952 till 1970.

Professor Pírko held a number of important offices even beyond the frame of the University – let us mention at least that of the Vice-Minister of education and culture (1955–1957). He was also member of various committees, editorial boards etc. For his merits he was awarded several medals and other honours.

In 1957, Pírko founded a seminar on kinematic geometry. He led it successfully for more than twenty years and took active part in its work till his death. This seminar has been closely connected with the research project “Methods of kinematic analysis and synthesis”, whose leader Pírko was till 1978. Many of the results of the seminar are comparable with those of world's prominent specialists in the field, and it had a favourable affect on numerous Czechoslovak specialists in geometry and theoretical mechanics.

In addition to the problems mentioned, Professor Pírko worked in applications of Mathematics in electrical engineering, as for instance integral transformations, functions of a complex variable etc.

Professor Z. Pírko was a man fully devoted to his work, with deep understanding for the needs of our society, and with a remarkable ability of harmonically jointing together the tasks of teacher, researcher and organizer of science. He will be missed for a long time by the Czechoslovak mathematical community, and in particular by his friends, colleagues and students.