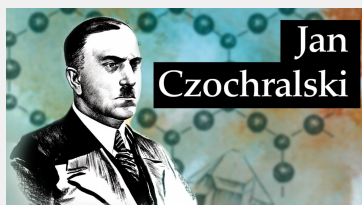


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Giants of Polish Science - Jan Czochralski



Jan Czochralski

graphic image

Jan Czochralski (born 23 October 1885, died 22 April 1953)

Jan Czochralski was born in the Prussian Partition in Kcynia, near Bydgoszcz to a family of craftsmen. He graduated from a teacher's college but he destroyed his secondary school certificate because he was not satisfied with his grades. As a result, he was unable to find employment in his learned profession. He found work in a pharmacy, first in Krotoszyn and from 1904 – in Berlin. He obtained his diploma as a chemical engineer in 1910 at Charlottenburg Polytechnic. His scientific work, however, had started in 1906. His first published work

concerned metal crystallography. In 1916, Jan Czochralski developed a method of measuring the rate of crystallization of metals, which consolidated his position in the scientific world. His other invention, a tin-free bearing alloy (1924), was successfully used in the railway industry.

In 1928, Czochralski returned to Poland and became a professor at the Faculty of Chemistry at the Warsaw Polytechnic. He became the head of the Chair of Metallurgy and Metal Science, which opened especially for Czochralski. His work at the polytechnic was mainly done for the army. Apart from his scientific work, Czochralski was involved in extensive social activities, such as donating funds for excavations in Biskupin.

Following the September 1939 campaign, Czochralski obtained permission from the Germans to set up the Material Research Enterprise; it was approved by the Polish Underground State. The Enterprise used resources of the Polytechnic. This way he managed to protect the pre-war assets of the Polytechnic and legally employ Home Army soldiers. Czochralski cooperated closely with Home Army intelligence, and his enterprise worked for the underground resistance movement (including research of acquired parts of V1 and V2 rockets). Using his personal contacts with the Germans, Czochralski protected people against being sent to German prisons and camps.

After the war, Czochralski was charged with “cooperation with the German occupation authorities to the detriment of civilians or the Polish State” and arrested. He was acquitted in August 1945, but the Senate of the Warsaw Polytechnic did not agree to restore him to his former post. He spent the rest of his life in Kcynia, where he

manufactured cosmetic and drugstore products. He died of a heart attack after a search conducted by the communist Department of Security. It was only in June 2011 that he was finally rehabilitated by the Senate of the Warsaw Polytechnic.

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