

A painful leave-taking

Franciszek Kokot

Department of Nephrology, Endocrinology and Metabolic Diseases, Medical University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland

It was an icy February day. I was sitting in my office preparing my presentation for the forthcoming 37th Congress of the Polish Society of Internal Medicine, which was scheduled for April 12–14, 2012. Suddenly, the telephone rang and I immediately recognized the voice of my friend, Peter Gajewski, the nearest collaborator of Professor Andrew Szczeklik. „What happened? How can I help you?” I asked Peter. After a while of complete silence Peter said: „Francis, I have a very bad message for you – Andrew died this morning”. There were no more questions and answers. This message completely paralyzed my voice. I was sitting immobilized at my desk while 50 years of friendship with Andrew flashed through my brain. This friendship started in the early 1970s, when Andrew, a young doctor, worked on the diagnostic value of gamma-glutamyl-transpeptidase and cobalt activated acylase together with Dr M. Orłowski and A. Szewczuk. As I too was interested in clinical enzymology, our friendship strengthened from

year to year. Beginning with 1979, he became the author of a chapter in the textbook of internal medicine, which was edited by me during the next 25 years, and which, after 8 editions, was replaced by a large textbook – *Internal Medicine* under the editorship of Andrew, and which in an updated version appears every year since 2005. His medical textbook is complemented by two literary masterpieces – *Catharsis: on the Art of Medicine* and *Kore: on sickness, the sick, and the search for the soul of medicine*, which were already published in several foreign languages.

Andrew was not only an experienced teacher but also a leading scientist in the field of aspirin asthma, well known all over the world. He was awarded the degree of doctor *honoris causa* by five universities, the honorary membership of more than ten international scientific societies, and numerous esteemed international honours and distinctions.

His sudden heart arrest left thousands of bereaved patients, for whom he always was the



FIGURE X. Doctor honoris causa in Warsaw, 2002. Professor Szczeklik receives the honorary degree; on the left – Professor Franciszek Kokot

Correspondence to:
Prof. Franciszek Kokot, MD, PhD,
Katedra i Klinika Nefrologii,
Endokrynologii i Chorób Przemiany
Materii, Śląski Uniwersytet Medyczny,
ul. Francuska 20/24, 40-015 Katowice
e-mail: fkokot@spskm.katowice.pl
Received: February 29, 2012.
Accepted: February 29, 2012.
Pol Arch Med Wewn. 2012; 122
(Special Issue): 29-30
Copyright by Medycyna Praktyczna,
Kraków 2012

source of hope. Countless doctors, scientific workers and internists lost their teacher, who, by his personal example, showed, how to fight on behalf of common welfare, beauty, and truth in the increasingly deceitful world. Andrew was the icon and conscience of Polish medicine and especially internal medicine, which he covered with glory all over the world.

Andrew bereaved so many of his dedicated co-workers and friends. They will remain in grief for a long time because they have lost an unattainable teacher, brilliant physician, and scientist, philosopher, and writer. We do well know how difficult it was for him to follow consequently selected paths of his life. Also for these reasons, we had great respect, esteem, and opinion for him.

Medicine became the love of his life. Although this love was sometimes a hard-fought victory or was followed by a Good Friday, he was never in doubt that every Good Friday is followed by a festive Resurrection.

Peace to your memory.