From 3 to 7 September 2019 the Polish Mathematical Society celebrated its 100th anniversary with a Jubilee Congress in Kraków (Cracow), Poland. This is a short account of this congress by Krzysztof R. Apt and Einar Fredriksson.

The Polish Mathematical Society (Polskie Towarzystwo Matematyczne, in short PTM) was founded in Kraków (Cracow), 2 April 1919, less than half a year after Poland regained independence at the end of the First World War. (Between 1795 and 1918 the country was divided between Germany, Austria and Russia.) The founding group consisted of 16 mathematicians, among them Stefan Banach and Otto Nikodym. The society was first a local organization, but soon became a countrywide one. In particular, in November 1919 some Warsaw mathematicians, including Samuel Dickstein and Waclaw Sierpiński, became its members.

In 1920 the PTM founded the Fundamenta Mathematicae journal that exists up to the present day. The journal and its name were conceived by Zygmunt Janiszewski. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the first issue since he succumbed soon after to the influenza pandemic at the age of 31. Waclaw Sierpiński and Stefan Mazurkiewicz took over as Editors-in-Chief. The first issue consisted of articles exclusively written by Polish mathematicians, but as a gesture towards the international community they were all written in French (except one written in Italian).


The decade preceding the WWII was a period of glory of Polish mathematics, especially flourishing in Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine). A group of prominent mathematicians, including Stefan Banach, Mark Kac, Stanislaw Mazur, Hugo Steinhaus, and Stanislaw Ulam, worked at the Lwów School of Mathematics, notably in functional analysis, set theory, topology and probability theory.

So, not surprisingly, the first congress of the PTM took place in Lwów in 1927 and gathered about 200 participants. Ten arrived from abroad, among them John von Neumann from Budapest and Witold Hurewicz from Amsterdam.

Throughout its existence several famous mathematicians were presidents of the PTM. Perhaps the best known are (chronologically): Samuel Dickstein, Stefan Banach, Kazimierz Kuratowski, and Waclaw Sierpiński.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the PTM a Jubilee Congress took place in Kraków from 3 to 7 September 2019. It was an impressive event that attracted 852 participants and led to no less than 508 lectures. The list of participants read as a ‘Who is Who in Polish mathematics’, with only few exceptions, such as Jan Mycielski and Andrzej Ehrenfeucht from the University of Boulder, Colorado, USA, and Janusz Onyszkiewicz (a former Minister of Defence in the first post-communist government and Solidarity pioneer), a former mathematician at the Mathematics Department of the Warsaw University. All three of them were active in mathematical logic, and connected in the sixties and seventies with the Warsaw seminar of the great logician Andrzej Mostowski; we both were his students.
In total there were 34 plenary lectures, about one third of them delivered by Polish mathematicians living abroad, which testifies to the size of the Polish mathematical diaspora. Several (almost exclusively Polish) participants arrived from Canada, USA, France, UK, Australia, and other countries. (To our knowledge there were three participants from the Netherlands.)

All talks were supposed to be given in Polish, though some of the invited speakers living abroad after a general introduction switched to English. (The website of the congress stated: “English will only be acceptable in case of plenary lectures given by those invited guests, who have been living abroad for many years and thus feel more comfortable talking about mathematics in a foreign language.”)

During the opening ceremony Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, the President of the European Research Council, obtained an honorary membership of the society. Also a number of the society awards were conferred.

The extensive scientific programme was divided into several parallel sessions that were named after famous Polish mathematicians. The organizers of the sessions tried to adjust the subjects of the talks to the sessions’ names.

In particular, one of us was a co-organizer of a session on Logic and Theoretical Information Science, called ‘Tarski’, which included a historical lecture about Alfred Tarski, lectures on Mathematical Logic, and on Theoretical Computer Science related to decidability.

The programme of the congress reflected a broad understanding of mathematics in Poland. In particular, there were sessions on the Didactics of Mathematics, Philosophy of Mathematics, and on Mathematical Physics (“Kac and Ulam”). Also, there were special sessions devoted to Theoretical Computer Science (with invited lectures on Algorithmic Game Theory), on Mathematics in Economics and Finance, and on Mathematical Olympiad Problems of ‘remarkable beauty’.

The scientific programme also included a number of panels, in particular about the state of Polish mathematics, popularization of mathematics, and on the education of mathematicians teachers.

**Reference**