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In memoriam Academician Vladimír Kořínek

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Academician VLADIMÍR KOŘÍNEK

NEWS and NOTICES

IN MEMORIAM ACADEMICIAN VLADIMÍR KOŘÍNEK

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A prominent Czech mathematician, Academician Vladimír Kořínek, Professor of Mathematics at Charles University, died on June 2, 1981 at Prague. He was one of those who for several decades devoted all their efforts to building Czechoslovak science, who contributed considerably to its development and successes of the post-war years, who engaged deeply and persistently in the education of the young generation of scientists.

Academician Vladimír Kořínek was born on April 18, 1899 at Prague. His deep interest in Mathematics led him to the study of Mathematics and Physics at Charles University during the years 1918–1923. His teachers were K. Petr, B. Bydžovský, M. Kössler and others. It was particularly K. Petr who had great influence on the young student. Under his supervision, Kořínek prepared his doctoral thesis on the number of representations of positive integers by ternary indefinite quadratic forms and obtained the Doctor of (Natural) Science degree in 1923. His dissertation was the first work of a series devoted to the arithmetical theory of quadratic forms.

After a year at Sorbonne and at the Collège de France, Kořínek accepted an unpaid post of Assistant Professor at the Seminar of Mathematics of the Faculty of Science, Charles University, becoming at the same time teacher at a secondary school. In the years 1925–1927 he was Assistant Professor at the Second Institute of Physics, Czech Technical University, in 1927–1931 Assistant Professor at the Second Institute of Mathematics at the School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering of the Czech Technical University. During this period, he spent the academic year 1929–1930 at Hamburg University with Professor E. Artin, who considerably influenced his later research work.

In 1931, Kořínek habilitated as Associated Professor (Dozent) at the Faculty of Science, Charles University. His dissertation dealt with quadratic fields in quaternion rings. This thesis started his research in the theory of algebras, in which he was very successful and which brought him respect of mathematicians both in Czechoslovakia and abroad.

In spite of his successful habilitation, which was later acknowledged by Schools of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering and of Special Sciences of the Czech Technical University, Kořínek was not offered any further prospects at the University and therefore took a post at the Czechoslovak Office for Statistics, where he was

working during 1931–1935 in statistics and statistical research. Only in 1935 he was appointed Extraordinary Professor of Mathematics at the Faculty of Science, Charles University. His appointment was based on a proposition from 1931 – for lack of funds, the post had been left unoccupied for several years after the death of Professor J. Sobotka.

During the forthcoming period, Professor Koříněk engaged in the theory of groups. Again he achieved world-wide success and respect, especially by his results on direct decomposition of groups. However, his academic career was interrupted by the Nazi occupation and their closing the Czech Universities. He came back to the University only after the liberation in 1945. Simultaneously he was appointed Full Professor, his appointment being dated back to 1940.

World War II brought many problems into the life of the liberated nations. The demands upon the scientific research was growing extraordinarily, as well as those on both the number and the level of university educated specialists. The political, cultural and scientific life of our society was undergoing important changes. Professor Koříněk dealt with all problems brought into our mathematical life with all efforts, devotedly and painstakingly. He published a fundamental Czech textbook on Algebra, which he had started to prepare during the war years, led his students with extraordinary care and earnestness. He won his students for the research in the lattice theory, in which he himself achieved significant results, as well as for research of Abelian groups, universal algebras and of other abstract algebraic structures, thus creating the Prague algebraic group.

Professor Koříněk was member of a number of significant scientific institutions. Let us mention the Royal Bohemian Learned Society, Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts, Czechoslovak National Research Council. He was member of the Society for Cultural and Economical Relations with the USSR and of the Czechoslovak Peace Defenders Council. Further, he was ordinary member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences since its foundation in 1952, member of its Scientific Board for Mathematics, Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University, in 1953–1955. He participated in Editorial Boards of Czechoslovak mathematical journals etc. As member of the Czechoslovak Society of Mathematicians and Physicists he held a number of offices, the most important being that of its first Vice-President in 1956–1962.

For his merits, Academician Koříněk was awarded the Order of Labour in 1962, Silver Medal “For the Development of Charles University” in 1960, Memorial Medal of Charles University in 1968, Bernard Bolzano Golden Medal “For the development of Mathematics” and Silver Medal of J. E. Purkyně University, Brno.

For the Czechoslovak mathematical community, the death of Academician Vladimír Koříněk means a severe loss of a prominent scholar and a man of outstanding personality, who played an unforgettable role in the history of Czechoslovak modern Mathematics. His students and colleagues will always miss him as a honest man, kind friend and devoted teacher.