

Milan Mareš

News. RNDr. Albert Perez, DrSc. 8.1.1920--11.12.2003

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RNDr. Albert Perez, DrSc.**8.1.1920 – 11.12.2003**

Shortly before the end of 2003 we parted with Albert Perez, a mathematician who contributed to the extension of human knowledge, directly influenced several generations of Czech cyberneticians, and significantly influenced the profile of this journal.

Dr. Perez was born in January 1920 in Athens, Greece, where he graduated from the National Polytechnical School of Athens. The dramatic events following the end of the Second World War in Greece brought Albert Perez first to Paris and then in 1949 to Prague. Here he found a new home and spent the rest of his life. In 1953 he also graduated from Charles University. He also defended his thesis for the degree of DrSc. (Doctor of Science) in 1964.

After his arrival in Czechoslovakia he joined a group of mathematicians and engineers led by Professor Antonín Špaček and oriented to modern applications of the probability theory including the very new cybernetics. With this group he, in 1959, joined the newly established Institute of Information Theory and Automation of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, where he spent almost all his professional career as the head of the research Department of Information Theory. He belonged among the top cyberneticians in former Czechoslovakia and significantly contributed to the international status of the so-called Czechoslovak (or Prague) school of information theory. He was one of the founders of the Czechoslovak Cybernetic Society (later Czechoslovak – and after 1993 the Czech – Society for Cybernetics and Information Sciences) and he was elected as its first chairman. For many years he was also a member of the editorial board of the journal “Kybernetika”, and, especially in the first years of its existence, he significantly influenced its profile and standard.

Dr. Perez cooperated with mathematicians from many countries. Probably the most intensive were his contacts with colleagues at the Sorbonne in Paris and the University of Clermont Ferrand, where he also spent some time as visiting professor. Probably the provincialism imposed by the previous regime and the very limited conception of a university education separated from active research practiced in that time were the reasons that Dr. Perez never got the opportunity to teach regular courses at Prague universities. He mainly compensated for this handicap by paying a lot of attention to the education of post-graduate students and the professional forming of younger colleagues from his research department. He was an exacting but also appreciative educator with real interest in the development of his students, and he kept in contact with them even after his retirement in 1990. He was not only interested in new results, which he commented on in a highly qualified way, but also contributed to the new research of his younger friends with interesting creative ideas. Even at the age of almost 84, several days before his decease, Albert Perez held assertive discussions with his co-authors about particular wordings in their new mathematical paper.

Albert Perez was a scientist not only by profession but also in the core of his personality, in his vision of the world and in his approach to life. This vision, or some of its features, followed from the strange and turbulent character of the 20th century, which had so deeply marked Perez's life, beginning with his revolutionary youth. But in the essence of his being, he always consequently respected the truth, honesty and ethics in his professional activities as well as in his private life. He expected, and demanded, quality and consistency, he never accepted doing things by halves. Cooperation with him was an impressive experience for

younger researchers so frequently confronted with a political system intentionally based on compromises, superficiality and conniving at elementary morality. It was possible to accept his attitudes or to argue with them but it was impossible to ignore them.

RNDr. Albert Perez, DrSc. had the fateful gift to influence one era in the development of the Czech cybernetics, and also his contribution to the establishment and orientation of this journal cannot be overlooked. His intellectual impact on his followers and students will be perceived even by future generations.

Milan Mareš