

About Roman Teisseyre

Andrzej KIJKO

Natural Hazards Centre, University of Pretoria, South Africa

✉ andrzej.kijko@up.ac.za

I remember Roman as a highly kind boss to whom I owe a lot, who always helped me when needed. And there were a lot of such situations when I needed help.

My first meeting with Roman was not encouraging. It was in Moscow during the IASPEI conference in 1971. I have half a year left to finish my studies at the Faculty of Physics at Lomonosov University in Moscow and return to Poland. My Moscow boss, Professor J.F. Savarenskii, decided to introduce me to Roman and thus secure a job at the Institute of Geophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IG PAS) in Warsaw. Indeed, such a meeting took place, and Prof. Savarenskii recommended me as an excellent material for a scientist. But, from Roman's reaction, it was not difficult to deduce what he thought about my employment at his Institute. Such a prospect was not thrilled. Years later, when we became friends, Roman told me why my stay at IG PAS was inappropriate. He feared that an extended stay in the Soviet Union and systematic propaganda made me a communist. It should be remembered that at that time, in the seventies, during the so-called "commune", none of the IG PAS's chief directors was a member of the ruling party. And that speaks for itself.

Prof. Savarenskii commented on our conversation with Roman in one sentence: I must give you a powerful letter with recommendations. Indeed, after six months, after returning to Poland with a Master's Degree in Physics diploma in my pocket and with a strong letter of recommendation from Professor Savarenskii, I appeared on Pasteur Street in IG PAS. Roman had no choice. He had to hire me. At that time, Professor Savarenskii occupied a special place in the Soviet Union. He was a well-known scientist and an adviser on seismology in the Kremlin. In the seventies, the refusal to hire his student was downright dangerous. So, Roman hired me at his Institute but found a solution to neutralize my potentially unpopular political views. I was seconded to the Observatory in Belsk, where no seismology existed. But there were kind people, like Marysia Wernik, and there was a sound library, a beautiful forest, and peaceful and quiet surroundings. In short, I had perfect working conditions.

Soon and unexpectedly, Roman's attitude towards me changed dramatically. It happened after the trade union trip that I organized for the employees of the Observatory when, on the way to Krakow, we stopped at Jasna Góra in Częstochowa. The Institute was in turmoil. The Communist Party workers were outraged. Roman, the Director of the Institute, was under pressure. So, he called me and asked many questions, but from the beginning of this conversation, it was clear that he did not condemn me for the Częstochowa venture. At the end

of our meeting, he only told me that I should be more careful in the future. For him, it became clear: if I wanted to see Jasna Góra, I could not be a communist. This was the conclusion Roman drew from. From then on, I could always count on his help and kindness. And I often needed such help.

When, in 1982, during Martial Law, I could not return from the United States to Poland on the scheduled date, Roman, fearing that certain services would require him to fire me from the Institute, wrote a letter on my behalf asking for an extension of my stay. Also, with his money, he bought a return ticket to Warsaw and sent it to New York. How he managed to do it, he never told me. All this happened without my knowledge, as communication with the outside world was cut off during Martial Law.

There were more similar cases of help from Roman.

That was Roman. Selfless and always ready to help.

Received 10 September 2023

Received in revised form 21 November 2023

Accepted 22 November 2023