

Remembrances to Jindřich Nečas

I don't remember when I heard the name Nečas for the first time. For some years for me Nečas was mainly the author of the book "Les méthodes directes en théorie des équations elliptiques". I had lended the only copy of our library. Whenever a colleague needed the book I asked him to give it back as soon as possible directly to me. So I succeeded to have the book at my disposal almost thirty years until I became a pensioner.

My first personal contact with Jindřich Nečas took place during a summer school on the island Hiddensee in 1972. I had just delivered my first lecture ever in English when Professor Nečas approached me and made some encouraging remarks about the lecture. Since Nečas was the most prominent participant of the summer school I was happy that he appreciated my lecture. So the beginning of my acquaintance with Jindřich Nečas is positively charged.

At the Hiddensee conference Nečas had a lecture on mathematical models of elastic-inelastic materials, a subject I became interested in a few years later. At that time, under the supervision of Professor Nečas, in Prague Ludek Trávníček wrote his thesis on boundary value problems describing the behaviour of elastic-plastic materials. Somehow we became aware that each of us knew something that was of interest for the other. Therefore I was glad when I was invited to Prague for fourteen days in June 1977. During these days I had the chance to discuss with Professor Nečas the mathematics behind the models in elastoplasticity. I learned a lot and as a result the plan for a common paper came up. In the end we wrote even two papers, one containing the essential mathematical results and the other (together with Trávníček) the application of the mathematical results to a broader class of models in elastoplasticity. These papers were finalized when we met again during the summer school 1978 in Horni Bradlo.

When I was in Prague I learned more about the person Jindřich Nečas. My wife – who was with me for a week – and I, we both remember gratefully that Jindřich Nečas found the time to take us by his car to what he called his "castle" at the river Berounka. During that trip we heard much about his interests in music and in history. Of course we also discussed the actual political situation.

Since then I met Professor Nečas at various summer schools and conferences. Nečas' presence enriched these events even if he was not a lecturer. As a chairman of a session one could be sure: Nečas had always a question, and Nečas' questions helped the listeners to understand what they had heard.

Often I used the possibility to ask Professor Nečas about mathematical problems I had. Sometimes he had an answer, sometimes not. In any case the discussion with him was helpful. I was always impressed by the scope of his knowledge. But I was likewise impressed by the feeling of responsibility Professor Nečas showed. He felt responsible not only for the level of mathematics in his country but also for the level of education in general. Once during a walk near Matzlow-Garwitz in 1984 we discussed what scientists could and should do under the political circumstances of that time, and he exclaimed with respect to education: "Who should do it if we don't?".

I am grateful that I had the chance to meet Jindřich Nečas, to learn from him – not only in mathematics – and to work with him. As so many others I feel painfully the gap caused by his death.