CENTENNIAL OF PARTICIPATION OF H. ARCTOWSKI AND A. B. DOBROWOLSKI IN THE BELGICA EXPEDITION TO WEST ANTARCTICA (1897–1899)

The Polish Antarctic tradition goes back to participation of Henryk Arctowski and Antoni Bolesław Dobrowolski in the Belgian scientific expedition on Belgica to West Antarctica (1897–1899), led by Adrien de Gerlache de Gomery. Dr H. Arctowski, a geophysicist and geologist, was in charge of the expedition’s scientific programme, A. B. Dobrowolski (then a university student) was first...
employed as a sailor, later – during wintering in Antarctica, turned meteorologist and specialist on snow and ice.

On his return from Antarctica to Belgium, H. Arctowski devoted most of his time to elaboration and editing of 10 volumes of scientific results of the Belgica expedition that were published by the Royal Belgian Academy of Sciences. In this work, he was assisted by A. B. Dobrowolski.

While back home in their native country, since 1918 set free from occupation by foreign powers of Russia, Prussia and Austria, A. B. Dobrowolski and H. Arctowski, though not actively participating in Polar research any more, continued their scientific interest in the Arctic and the Antarctic.

Dobrowolski’s help, influence and good advice was invaluable at the time of the 2nd Polar Year, particularly with respect to scientific programme of the Polish expedition to Bear Island (1932–33) and, later, during preparation stages of the Polish Spitsbergen Expeditions in 1934 and 1938. As an author of an excellent monograph “Natural history of ice”, and as a talented writer of popular-scientific books on history of exploration in the Arctic and the Antarctic, Dobrowolski quite naturally became a centre of knowledge in Polar matters in his native country. Leaders and organizers of the Polish Spitsbergen expeditions, such as Stefan Bernadzikiewicz (in 1934, 1936 and 1938) and Stanisław Sied-

H. Arctowski’s scientific guidance in Polar matters was particularly well taken by his disciples at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów where he was a professor in geophysics and meteorology from 1920 to 1939. The first Polish West Greenland Expedition (1937) was organized and led by Aleksander Kosiba, the member of his research university staff.

The Polish scientific community commemorated both our eminent Polar explorers while establishing scientific stations of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Antarctica:

- The A. B. Dobrowolski Station (66°17’S–100°45’E) at Bunger Hills, East Antarctica, opened in 1959 (presently inactive);
- The H. Arctowski Station (62°09’S–58°28’W) at Admiralty Bay, King George Island, South Shetland Islands, West Antarctica, opened in 1977, operating continuously since then.

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The Committee on Polar Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences takes this excellent opportunity of the Centennial of the famous Belgica voyage to West Antarctica (1897–1899) to commemorate this first international scientific expedition to the Last Continent. The expedition, during which arm-in-arm worked nationals of five countries: Belgium, Norway, Poland, Romania and the United States of America, to their great common goal – the Science.

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