

POLISH POLAR RESEARCH	17	1-2	115-116	1996
-----------------------	----	-----	---------	------

## CHRONICLE

### Symposium on the life and work of Professor Antoni Bolesław Dobrowolski (1872–1954)

The polar community in Poland is intensively preparing for the centenary of the first in history wintering in Antarctica by two prominent Polish explorers and scientists, Professors Henryk Arctowski and Antoni Bolesław Dobrowolski, members of the *Belgica* Expedition (1897–1899). The forthcoming celebrations were inaugurated by a Symposium devoted to the life and work of Professor A. B. Dobrowolski, held on 1st March 1996 at the Museum of Earth (Warszawa). The sponsorship of that learned meeting by the Polish Geophysical Society, the Higher School of Special Education and the Laic Cultural Society, emphasized the broad spectrum of Professor Dobrowolski's interests, abilities and output. These personal traits were also reflected in the programme of that meeting and the choice of speakers, who in a competent manner, presented the various spheres of Professor Dobrowolski's activities.

In his opening statement, Professor Krzysztof Jakubowski, Director of the Museum of Earth, indicated that the choice of place for the Symposium was not accidental, since it is the greatest repository of souvenirs and relics left by Professor Dobrowolski. It contains among other 3 running meters of documents, such as biographical material, manuscripts and typed texts of works in geophysics, glaciology, education and problems of modern humanism, the original manuscript of the diary kept during the *Belgica* Expedition, copies of Professor's scientific and popularizing publications, book reviews, correspondence (ca. 100 letters), a photographic archive and decorations.

Professor Janusz Y. Ostrowski, for many years a close associate of Professor Dobrowolski, introduced him as a natural historian, humanist and educationist. For the leit-motiv of his interesting lecture, Professor Ostrowski has chosen the following motto from Professor Dobrowolski's autobiography (1928): "The point of my very interests were always the secrets of life and of the world, and nothing more".

The next speaker, Professor Andrzej Nowicki, presented Professor Dobrowolski's *Natural history of ice*, as a "Treatise on Man". On that premise, he developed an interesting analogy between the life-histories of human beings and snow-flakes. Against that background he exposed the empirical and esthetic layers of the reviewed work.

The lectures were followed by the projection of a documentary film *An Extraordinary Biography*. In that film, its authors L. Smolińska, M. Sroka, A. Halicka, W. Okoń and J.Y. Ostrowski presented the life and work of Professor Dobrowolski, applying audio-visual techniques and using the preserved original records, registered on the film reel and and photo prints. That pathetic biographical story, which has taken the audience on a sentimental voyage in the far past, has transferred the spectators to the distant places and lands where Professor Dobrowolski's life — long and eventful, interesting but difficult — has lapsed.

Continuing the session after lunch, the succeeding speakers disclosed further traits and virtues of Professor Dobrowolski's rich and many-sided personality.

Professor Wincenty Okoń portrayed Professor Dobrowolski as an educator, both practitioner and theoretician. Cultivating himself in life and work the virtue of integrity in science, he promoted the idea of adoption of a Code of Scientific Morality. Professor Okoń has outlined in details the main propositions of that idea and draft. He did it against the background of Professor Dobrowolski's empirical studies and research conducted during his educational career at the Polish Free University (*Wolna Wszechnica Polska*). That thread was further developed in the discussion by Dr. Wołoszyn, who recalled *Universitas Rediviva*, another idea promoted by Professor Dobrowolski in his endeavours aimed at the humanisation of education. That idea — modern in form and contents — advanced as early as 1935, contained many suggestions for progressive reforms in education, which remain timely even today, such as the self-improvement of educated people by means of permanent education.

The next speaker, Professor Krzysztof Birkenmajer, Chairman of the Committee on Polar Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS), described the geographical places in West Antarctica, bearing the name of Professor Dobrowolski, such as the Dobrowolski Island and Dobrowolski Glacier. Mr. Ryszard Badowski, editor and polar explorer, amended that information with personal impressions of his visit on Dobrowolski Island. According to him, the name of that island was given not by the, Belgian, but by the British Expedition of *Discovery* in 1958. He also mentioned two other Polish geographical names in the Arctic, namely the Dobrowolski Glacier flowing down from the Arctowski Mountain (973 m) on Spitsbergen.

Dr. Maciej Zalewski, Scientific Secretary of the Committee on Polar Research PAS, presented from his personal recollection the history of the Polish Antarctic Station *Dobrowolski* in the Bunger Oasis (East Antarctica). Taken over by Polish explorers on 23 January, 1959 from the Soviet polar explorers, the station was used periodically when visited by Polish Antarctic expeditions in 1959, 1965–66, 1978–79. Amending the information, Professor Janusz Śledziński and Dr. Andrzej Pachuta, added more details on the geodesic research work done at the station, illustrating them with photographs and slides.

The all-day Symposium was closed and recapitulated by Professor J.Y. Ostrowski, who, announced the foundation of the A.B. Dobrowolski Naturalistic and Humanistic Association, aimed at the promotion, continuation and development of his ideas in geophysics, polar research and education.

That inter-disciplinary Seminar was strongly represented by learned personalities of many specialities and of several generations — from the pupils of the Warsaw school bearing the name of Professor A. B. Dobrowolski, to the outstanding senior representatives of Polish science. Some of them have personally known Professor Dobrowolski and had an opportunity to cooperate with him.

The Seminar was an important event in the life of the scientific community in Poland involved in polar research and became an occasion for a social meeting of a large group of Polish polar explorers of all generations. It was attended among other by Mr. Czesław Centkiewicz, Nestor of Polish polar explorers, leader of the first Polish Arctic Expedition to Bear Island in 1932–33 during the International Polar Year. Unfortunately, the meeting could not join two other Nestors of the polar community: Professors Alfred Jahn and Stanisław Siedlecki. The latter was expected to deliver a lecture on selected polar research problems.

The successful Symposium on the life and work of Professor A. B. Dobrowolski was the first and important event in the forthcoming celebrations planned in Poland to mark the centenary of the contribution of Polish polar explorers towards the Antarctic science.

Jacek MACHOWSKI  
Legionowo