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In Search of Copernicus' Clue : Professor Jerzy Dobrzycki - Scholar, Astronomer and Historian

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IN SEARCH OF COPERNICUS' CLUE:
 PROFESSOR JERZY DOBRZYCKI
 – SCHOLAR, ASTRONOMER AND HISTORIAN

On 1st February 2004, Jerzy Dobrzycki died in Warsaw – a historian of science, specialized in the history of astronomy, an open minded scholar, a distinguished and versatile man, professor at the Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). He was one of the founders of the Institute and its first elected director after the political changes in Poland which came with the collapse of communism. He held the post from 1989 till 1995. Since 1983, he was active in the Warsaw Scientific Society (1992–1995 as its General Secretary, and after 1995 as a Secretary of the 3rd Department of the Society and a member of its audit commission). He was elected a member of the International Academy of the History of Science (Académie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences), the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS) and the International Astronomical Union. As a fellow of the editorial boards of *Studi Galileani* (Castel Gandolfo) and *Journal for the History of Astronomy* (Cambridge) he contributed to a persistent presence of Polish research in history of science in the European milieu. For a long time (1976–1997), he lectured as a professor of history of science at the Institute for Bibliology and Scientific Information of the History Department at Warsaw University. He was also a member of numerous Polish academic committees: the Committee for the History of Science and Technology, the Neo Latin Commission of the Committee of Antique Culture Sciences, later the Committee of Culture Sciences of PAN, the Committee of Astronomy, as well as some academic councils: e. g. the Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy Archives and of the Museum of Natural Sciences PAN.

He considered his work on pre-Copernican astronomy and on the history of Polish astronomy as his most valuable studies¹. His Copernican contribution was also significant, especially the English edition of the *On the revo-*

¹ J. Dobrzycki, M. Markowski, T. Przytkowski, *Historia astronomii w Polsce [History of Astronomy in Poland]*, (ed.) E. Rybka, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1975, vol. 1 and numerous articles in the *Journal for the History of Astronomy*.

lutions, published in Copernicus' *Opera Omnia*¹, printed simultaneously in England and in the USA.

Among his works, an important position is occupied by his book on Copernicus which was written with Marian Biskup as a co-author and published in Polish, English, Japanese, and thrice in German², as well as the Copernicus biography included in the Polish Biographical Dictionary³. He devoted the last years of his life to meticulous work on the closing volume of Copernicus *Opera Omnia* comprising his minor scripts, the edition of which was prepared by a group of scholars under professor Andrzej Wyczański's supervision. The task was completed in spite of Dobrzycki's health problems.

Tall and slim, he was perfect in keeping a distance, especially during formal situations. He would often make the impression of a stand-offish and caustic person. Many people were afraid of his sharp glance and it was very easy for him to point out any drollery, peculiarity or irrational behavior. At such moments he would usually be intensely sarcastic. He abominated stupidity and in this matter he could be sincere to the bones. His critical-mindedness transferred into his political views, in which there was no acceptance for the Polish pre-1989 reality. He was a strong supporter of the first *Solidarity* (1980-1981) and a total critic of the *ancien régime*. Those who knew him more closely, quickly realized that he was an excellent story-teller (though not everyone could follow his stories), but also a deeply warm-hearted man always ready to give useful advice. In difficult situations, Professor was one of those rare people who could and wanted to give a helping hand without caring for consequences. His distance of manner hid an authentic character. Usually close-tongued, he behaved like a spitfire but was also a joyful person. He loved to crack jokes in the English manner, play on words, stage situation tricks and had an abstract sense of humor. Everything of that kind was always done on an upper level, but – on the other hand – many people were not bright enough to understand the irony of a particular phrase or situation, nor to understand nuances of his statements (because of this, some people would not understand his bitter criticism).

He was a man of changes. Despite his professional interest in astronomy and its history, he coped perfectly well with understanding mechanisms of worldly life. He implemented this knowledge without scruples and the results could be very serious to him personally. This trait, quite unusual in academic circles, on the one hand broadened the range of his supporters, but, on the other, his hostile circles also widened. His firm positions would influence and press people not to stand out of events. From that point of view, Professor Dobrzycki was an entirely opposite figure to the typical – “avoid trouble” – scholar of the Polish academic reality of the so-called *real socialism* epoch.

¹ Nicholas Copernicus, *Complete works*, 2: *On the Revolutions*, (ed.) J. Dobrzycki, transl. and commentary by E. Rosen, Polish Scientific Publishers, Cracow 1978, XVII, 450 p., il.

² [co-author M. Biskup], *Mikołaj Kopernik, uczonec i obywatel*, Interpress, Warszawa 1972, 114 p., eadem, *Copernicus, scholar and citizen*, Interpress Publishers, Warszawa 1972, 119 p.

³ [co-author L. Hajdukiewicz], *Mikołaj Kopernik (1473-1543) [Nicolas Copernicus]* in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny [Polish Biographical Dictionary]*, vol. 14, Wrocław 1968-1969, pp. 3-16.

Born in the West of Poland – in Poznań – on 8th April 1927, in a family which – as he facetiously maintained – was a compound of the impoverished lesser gentry and the socially rising farmers from the Southern part of the country (his grandfather, a parochial organist, lived in Skawina, a small village not far from Cracow¹). His father, Stanisław, was a renowned philologist and historian of literature, a follower of Stanisław Tarnowski, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay and Joseph Kallenbach – all first rank Polish academicians. Kallenbach was the professor who conferred his doctorate degree. In 1901, Stanisław succeeded to the Chair of Slavic Languages and Literature in Freiburg, Switzerland. After the First World War, he settled in Poznań as a professor of the newly opened Poznań University, and later its Rector.

In 1927, when Jerzy was born, the history of Polish literature – written by his father Stanisław – was published and highly valued by contemporaries². After the death of Jerzy's father – in 1931 – the family had to cope with difficult times. His mother – Marcjanna Dobrzycki – had to educate her six children by herself. Later, nearly all of them chose academic careers.

In 1939, Jerzy had just completed elementary school when – in September – the War began. At the end of the year, the whole family was transferred from Poznań (incorporated by the Third Reich) to the General Government – a special administrative zone for Poles established by Nazis in central Poland. They settled in Piotrków near Łódź. In 1940–1945, Jerzy attended clandestine study classes and simultaneously worked in a notary office and in the sugar-factory nearby. He passed his secondary-school certificate exam at the Nicolas Copernicus (!) High School in Łódź in April 1945. In the same year, he returned to Poznań and – in June – started his studies in astronomy at the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of Poznań University. In April 1951, he completed university and obtained his M. Sc.

Earlier, during his university studies in 1948, he was employed in the astronomical observatory – at first as a voluntary librarian. In December 1949, he became an assistant, and – in 1951 – an *aspirant* – a post-graduate student in the Astronomy Department. He was deeply involved in the observatory activities. In 1949, with his colleague A. Kwiek, they discovered a new planetoid they named *Posnania* which was later included in the world register of small planets. This discovery was awarded by the Ministry of Education in 1953³.

While still in Poznań, Dobrzycki began to prepare his doctoral thesis. At the same time, he taught, made observations and calculations; he also designed and made a photo device to register the declination rings of the meridian circle. He was active in the Polish Society of Friends of Astronomy as a member of its Poznań board. He took part in the executive committees preparing exhibitions for the Copernicus Anniversary Year (1953) in Poznań (The

¹ M. Bajer, *Dobrzyccy i Kolbuszewscy* in: *Forum Akademickie [Academic Forum]* 1/1998.

² R. Pollak, *Dobrzycki Stanisław (1875–1931)* in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 5, Wrocław 1939–1946, p. 273.

³ Personal papers of professor J. Dobrzycki, Institute for the History of Science Archives. Later records quoted after this source.

Poznań Society of the Friends of Sciences and Letters), for Watch History (the Ancient Museum), as well as the regular exhibition in the Copernicus Museum at Frombork. At the time – in 1955 – he started his cooperation with the Committee for the History of Sciences and Technology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, particularly with its History of Astronomy Section and with the International Astronomical Union. For the last organization, he compiled a bibliography of Polish astronomy which was published in *Bibliographie générale de l'astronomie 1881–1898*. In those days, he specialized in astrometry and – in particular – in positional and geodetic astronomy.

In November 1955, he married Maria Staniewski¹, and – in December – became an assistant and lecturer at the Astronomy Department of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Subsequently, he moved with his wife to the Latitude Astronomical Station of PAN in Borowiec near Kórnik (a town south of Poznań). He took up the post of an observer. The Dobrzycki organized the so-called standing service of the latitude (a survey of the fluctuations of the earth poles) there which was part of the International Geophysics Year program and later became a member of the Service Internationale Rapide des Latitudes.

In 1957, Dobrzycki observed the artificial satellites of the earth and continued his doctoral research under the supervision of professor Józef Witkowski, the director of the Station and head of the Astronomy Department. Witkowski was pleased with Dobrzycki's performance on the zenithal telescope and stressed the high quality of the outcome which was comparable with the results obtained by the international service of latitude. He quoted an opinion of Dr. N. Stoyko of the Paris Observatory: *Les resultats obtenus à Borowiec sont excellents*².

Since 1956, Dobrzycki was in close contact with the Department of the History of Science and Technology of PAN and, personally, with professor Aleksander Birkenmajer. He was appointed to the team of researchers working on a collective synthesis of the *History of astronomy in Poland*³. The job extended to the decade of the 60s, and the first volume was finalized in the first half of the 70s⁴. The second volume was published at last in 1983⁵.

Cooperation with Birkenmajer, a renowned expert of Copernicus heritage and a person who enjoyed high international esteem at the time, was a turning point in Dobrzycki's biography. Birkenmajer fully appreciated the virtues of a young astronomer who merged an excellent sense of astronomy with a perfect

¹ Maria Dobrzycka, born in 1928, now professor emeritus of the Institute of Geodesy and Cartography.

² Letters of professor J. Witkowski to the Third Department of the Polish Academy of Sciences, March 22nd, 1958 and October 19th, 1955.

³ A. Birkenmajer, *Roboczy konspekt zespołowej „Historii astronomii” w Polsce* [A Working Draft of the „History of Astronomy in Poland”] in: *Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki Polskiej*, seria C: *Historia Nauk Matematycznych, Fizyczno-Chemicznych i Geologiczno-Geograficznych*, 2/1959, pp. 7–27.

⁴ J. Dobrzycki, M. Markowski, T. Przykowski, *Historia astronomii w Polsce* [History of Astronomy in Poland] (ed.) E. Rybka, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1975, vol. 1.

⁵ E. Rybka, P. Rybka, *Historia astronomii w Polsce* [History of Astronomy in Poland], Ossolineum, Wrocław 1983, vol. 2.

knowledge of English, German, French, Latin and Greek¹.

In 1960, after his Ph. D. exams in classical astronomy with elements of stellar astronomy and higher geodesy, Dobrzycki was awarded his doctor's degree at Poznań University for his dissertation entitled: *Search of the Holmes Comet Motion – Approach to Jupiter 1906–1913*.

As a matter of fact, the dissertation was a study in classical astronomy and was fully inscribed into research of firmament mechanics. In spite of this, Dobrzycki's many achievements, especially in the history of astronomy, brought him closer to the Warsaw Department of the History of Science and Technology. In December 1960, Dobrzycki received an offer of official transfer from the Department of Astronomy in Borowiec to Warsaw. The proposal was supported by the head of the Warsaw institution, professor Bogdan Suchodolski, and also by professor Birkenmajer who was retiring. The young scholar was accepted by the PAN authorities and took up the post left by Birkenmajer². The Secretary General of the Academy, professor Stefan Żółkiewski, pointed out that it is crucial to prepare an edition of Copernicus' *Opera omnia*³.

In the Summer of 1961, Dobrzycki started his new job in the new place. Under the searching glance of Birkenmajer, in the so-called third section, he conducted research upon medieval astronomy, the astronomy of the 15th and 16th c., and upon Copernicus' work. He entered on the continuation of comments to *De revolutionibus*, previously began and supervised by Birkenmajer, and was engaged in the organizational activities connected with the forthcoming 500th anniversary of Copernicus birthday (1973). He also became a secretary of the *Comité Nicolas Copernic*, an international board preparing the anniversary established by the International Union for the History and Philosophy of Science in 1965. Finally, on behalf of the Polish Academy of Science, Dobrzycki was one of the main organizers of the *Colloquia Copernicana* Congress in Toruń in 1973. At that meeting, he delivered an important speech on *The Uppsala Notes*⁴. Later, in 1974, he became the chairman of the Commission for the History of Science in the Renaissance of the IUHPS.

Meanwhile, he worked on his final degree – his *habilitation* thesis. The *colloquium* – or oral examination – took place in the Department of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry at the Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń. On the grounds of his *general scientific output* and dissertation entitled: *The Precession Theory in Medieval Astronomy*⁵, he obtained an academic degree of *docent* in November 1965, and in the following year he was appointed – by

¹ Dobrzycki spoke also Russian and Italian.

² Opinion of professor Suchodolski of July 2nd, 1966.

³ A letter of professor Suchodolski to Secretary General of Academy of January 12th, 1961.

⁴ *The Uppsala Notes* in: *Proceeding of the Joint Symposium of the IAU and the IUHPS, cosponsored by the IAHS. Astronomy of Copernicus and its background*, (ed.) O. Gingerich, J. Dobrzycki, Toruń 1973, *Studia Copernicana* 13, *Colloquia Copernicana* 3, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1975, pp. 161–197.

⁵ *Teoria precesji w astronomii średniowiecznej [The Precession Theory in Medieval Astronomy]* in: *Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki Polskiej*, seria C, vol. 11, 1965, pp. 3–47.

the General Secretary of PAN – to the post of a so-called *independent academic researcher*.

Close cooperation with Birkenmajer continued till his death in 1967. A few years later, Dobrzycki wrote a short essay devoted to Birkenmajer's activity in the field of history of science¹.

But before all that happened – in 1964 – Birkenmajer, as a president of the Academic Council, and Suchodolski, as Head of the Department, offered to continue Dobrzycki's contract for a further three years². In 1963, Dobrzycki received a two month scholarship to *École Pratique* in Paris. The trip resulted in a few articles written in French, the text on *Galileo and Poland*³ and some smaller book reviews⁴. In 1969, as a *docent* – Dobrzycki succeeded to the chair of History of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry at the Department for the History of Science, PAN. He was 42 years old. Five years later, he became an extraordinary professor and got the post of professor at the Academy⁵.

The reviewers of Dobrzycki's academic output were professors: Włodzimierz Zonn, Marian Biskup, and Waldemar Voisé. Professor Zonn stressed Dobrzycki's perfect familiarity with the latest achievements in astronomy, which – in his opinion – was quite unique among historians of astronomy. As his most valuable strengths, he pointed out an excellent knowledge of pre-Copernican astronomy (rare both in Poland and abroad), as well as Dobrzycki's critical thinking and prudence in making any general statements. Professor Biskup also stressed the unique value of his academic output and highlighted that Dobrzycki – as the first Polish historian – undertook an attempt to synthesise Copernicus' accomplishment. In a biography of the great astronomer published in the Polish Biographical Dictionary, Dobrzycki presented an honest and fair review of the world opinions on the genesis, character and significance of Copernicus' discovery. Professor Voisé noted the ramifications of this research carried out by Dobrzycki, namely: the enlargement of the source scope, the discovery of the full version of *Commentariolus* – the Aberdeen commentary, and rectifying some wrong attributions of the pseudo-Copernican materials. i.e. the Uppsala notes, manuscripts from Moscow and Florence⁶.

In 1974, the Department of History of Science and Technology was merged with the Department of History of Education. A new institution – the Department of History of Science, Education and Technology – was established, and Professor took up the post of its deputy director who was respon-

¹ Aleksander Birkenmajer jako historyk nauki [Aleksander Birkenmajer as a Historian of Science] in: *Przegląd Biblioteczny* 1978, pp. 169–174.

² A letter of Birkenmajer and Suchodolski to the first Department of Social Sciences of PAN from May 5th 1964.

³ *Galilée et la Pologne* in: *Hebdomadaire Polonais* 50, 1964, p. 7.

⁴ For example: A. Shirakatsi, *Cosmography* in: *Archives Int. D'Histoire des Sciences* 64, 1963, p. 320.

⁵ The professor title conferment of the Polish State Council, April 4th, 1974, professor of PAN May 12th, 1974.

⁶ Opinions from July – September of 1972.

sible for research¹ (a young historian, professor Józef Miąso, was appointed the director of this newly founded institution). In 1977, the former Department was transformed into the Institute of History of Science, Education and Technology. Professor Dobrzycki was appointed to the post of its deputy director².

In spite of the communist regime, Poland in the 70s experienced a breath of fresh air. With Edward Gierek as the first secretary of the communist party, the borders were partially opened and chances to go abroad arose. Censorship weakened and the country opened its gates to the West. For the Department, and subsequently the Institute, enlargement of the Polish Academy was important as it guaranteed its primary role in Polish academic life. The communist authorities were eager to create an attractive picture of Poland. Therefore, significant financial sources were directed to the development of sciences and letters. The anniversary of Copernicus birthday in 1973 – as a political task – was to lift the prestige not only of Copernican research but of the country itself. It was a great opportunity to show off Poland as a modern state with *creative achievements* in science and its history.

For Professor Dobrzycki, the 70s were creative too. Three volumes of the Toruń Copernicus congress were published in *Studia Copernicana*³ under his supervision. In 1975, the Latin version of *De revolutionibus* was released with commentaries by Birkenmajer and Dobrzycki⁴. In the same year, an important text in the *Journal for the History of Astronomy* concerning Copernicus' *Commentariolus* from Aberdeen was published⁵. Popular books on Copernicus and pre-Copernican astronomy were presented, including a monograph on *Copernicus – scholar and citizen*, written with Marian Biskup as co-author. This monograph, published at first in Polish and English, later had three editions in Germany: in 1973, 1980, and 1983⁶. In 1973, it was also released in Japanese as part of a book entitled *Copernicus – Past and Present*.

¹ Letter of professor Władysław Markiewicz, the Secretary of the first Department of PAN from November 16th, 1974.

² Letter of professor Władysław Markiewicz, the General Secretary of PAN from September 29th, 1977.

³ *The reception of Copernicus' heliocentric theory in: Proceedings of a symposium organized by the Nicolaus Copernicus Committee of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science*, (ed.) by J. Dobrzycki, Toruń Poland 1973 in: *Studia Copernicana* 5, *Colloquia Copernicana* 1, D. Reidel, Dordrecht, Boston 1972, 368 p.; *Études sur l'audience de la théorie héliocentrique. Conférences du Symposium de l'UIHPS*, (ed.) Jerzy Dobrzycki, Toruń 1973 in: *Studia Copernicana* 5, *Colloquia Copernicana* 1, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1972, 368 p. (also in English and German); *Études sur l'audience de la théorie héliocentrique. Conférences du Symposium de l'UIHPS. Toruń 1973*, Editor Jerzy Dobrzycki, *Studia Copernicana* 6, *Colloquia Copernicana* 2, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1973, 132 p. (also in English, German and Italian); *Proceeding of the Joint Symposium of the IAU and the IUHPS, cosponsored by the IAHS. Astronomy of Copernicus and its background*, (ed.) O. Gingerich, J. Dobrzycki, Toruń 1973 in: *Studia Copernicana* 13, *Colloquia Copernicana* 3, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1975, 212 p. (also in French).

⁴ *Nicolai Copernici de revolutionibus libri sex* [edidit R. Gansiniec, commentariis instruxerunt A. Birkenmajer, G. Dobrzycki. Commentaries in linguam latinam verterunt A. Kempfi, G. Wojtczak, G. Danielewicz], *Nicolai Copernici opera omnia*, vol. 2, Varsaviae, Officine Publica Libris Scientificis Edendis 1975, XXV, 444 p.

⁵ *The Aberdeen Copy of Copernicus's "Commentariolus"* in: *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 4, 2/1973, pp. 124–127.

⁶ *Astronomia przedkopernikowska [The Pre-Copernican Astronomy]* in: *Biblioteka Kopernikańska* 7, *Prace popularnonaukowe* 47, Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, Toruń 1971, 57 p.; [co-author M. Biskup], *Copernicus, scholar and citizen*, Interpres Publishers, Warszawa 1972, 119 p.

In 1975 – ultimately – the first volume of the *History of Polish Astronomy* was published and – in 1978 – the critical English edition of *De revolutionibus*¹.

Especially this endmost release, prepared by Dobrzycki in an excellent editorial and professional manner, with excellent commentaries and academic apparatus, had an enthusiastic reception in scholarly circles all around the world. This also affected its later fate. In 1978, the book was simultaneously printed in London and in the United States, and in 1992 – subsequently – reissued in the U. S. A.² Nowadays, it is the most popular English edition of the main Copernicus work, persistently distributed and purchased, quoted in many studies and dissertations concerning Copernican astronomy.

The 70s and 80s were a period of passages. Professor strengthened relations with scholars from abroad and made some valuable source ascertations in Copernican literature. His perfect familiarity with congress languages made him one of the most popular Polish scholars in the Copernican field abroad (the only other was professor Paul Czartoryski). In 1971, Dobrzycki visited Stockholm and Uppsala University. He took part in the International Congress of Science and Technology in Moscow and Leningrad. In 1972, he discussed the project of an English translation of *scripta Copernicana* in the U. S. A. In 1973, he conducted research in Amsterdam, Rome, and West Germany. The following year, he attended the 14th International Congress of the History of Science in Kyoto. In the middle of the 70s, he visited London, Oxford and Grenoble. In 1977, he worked in Cambridge, Massachusetts, preparing the next congress of the International Astronomical Union and then traveled to Edinburg, Scotland and to West Germany. This activity continued also in the 80s and 90s. One of the last symposia in which he was engaged was the one in Prague, 2001, entitled: *Tycho de Brahe and Praque: Crossroads of European Science*.

During the period of *Solidarity* (1980–1981), Professor was deeply involved in independant trade union activity. In 1980, he ceased being a deputy director and the only function he retained was the post of the chief of the Department of History of Exact Sciences and Technology.

In December 1981, at the beginning of Martial Law in Poland, Professor took part in the strike at the Polish Academy. But – thanks to the liberal approach of the Institute authorities – nobody was punished. Nevertheless, Dobrzycki was not the typical union activist. In the 80s, he concentrated on scholarly work. This did not prevent him, though, from taking risks he found necessary such as hiding and thus preserving the Institute *Solidarity* archives during the whole period of Martial Law³.

¹ J. Dobrzycki, M. Markowski, T. Przykowski, *Historia astronomii w Polsce [History of Astronomy in Poland]*, (ed.) E. Rybka, Ossolineum, Wroclaw 1975, vol. I; Nicholas Copernicus, *Complete works, 2: On the Revolutions*, (ed.) J. Dobrzycki, transl. and commentary E. Rosen, Polish Scientific Publishers, Cracow 1978, XVII, 450 p., il.

² Nicholas Copernicus, *On the Revolutions*, (ed.) J. Dobrzycki, transl. by E. Rosen, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1978, 481 p. [2nd American edition: Baltimore 1992]; Nicholas Copernicus, *On the Revolutions*, (ed.) J. Dobrzycki, transl. E. Rosen, London 1978, 481 p.

³ The *Solidarity* archives were successfully taken from the Staszic Palace, the PAN main quarter, which at that moment was surrounded by the police, by professor Dobrzycki (with his wife's help).

In that period, Professor was preparing the chapters on history of exact and natural sciences for the 4th volume of the *History of Polish Science*. The volume was finally published in 1987¹. In 1987, the popular Polish edition of *De revolutionibus*, also prepared by Dobrzycki, was professionally released by the Toruń Scientific Society. The book was reissued in 1994².

At the end of the 80s, the next political and social upheaval came. In June 1989, communism in Poland collapsed. Many could ultimately spread their wings. The situation also had an impact on the academic milieu. With the new wind of change, Professor also caught a new breath. Accordingly, he released two significant books. The first one, co-authored with professor Tadeusz Bieńkowski, was dedicated to students and comprised university lectures on the history of science entitled the *Directions of Development of Science*³. The other, compiled with his son, Adam, was the *Stellar Firmament Atlas: J2000.0 Era*, which quickly became a marketing hit in circles of astronomers and astronomy fans⁴. Simultaneously, in cooperation with professor Lech Szczucki, Dobrzycki prepared an important text on the reception of Copernicus' *Commentariolus* in 16th c. Europe published in the *Journal for the History of Astronomy*⁵.

On 17th December 1989, Professor Dobrzycki was elected to the post of director of the Institute. The decision of the Academic Council was accepted by the Vice President and the General Secretary of the Academy in January 1990⁶.

The enthusiasm caused by political change in the country was on a very high level, and not yet dimmed and stifled by the fiscal problems which came later. But the difficult period had already started for academic life. Research activity, as well as the financial situation of the Polish Academy of Science's institutions, had to enter not only basic but radical reform. First of all, it was necessary to get rid of old habits, reject earlier solutions and modernize the institution.

Professor proved to be an excellent manager. The salaries were, mildly speaking, modest. But, at the threshold of the 90s, there was no shortage of means to finance the infrastructure – first of all the computers. At the beginning, the Institute had only two PC's, later over a dozen. Professor ini-

¹ *Nauki matematyczno-fizyczne [The Sciences]. Wstęp [Introduction]* in: *Historia nauki polskiej [History of Polish Science]*, (ed.) B. Suchodolski, editor of the volume: Z. Skubała-Tokarska, vol. 4, part 3, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1987, pp. 40–42; *Astronomia* in: *Historia nauki polskiej*, vol. 4, part 3, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1987, pp. 60–69.

² M. Kopernik, *O obrotach. Księga pierwsza [On the Revolutions. Book One]*, translation from Latin: M. Brożek, introduction and epilogue: J. Dobrzycki, Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu. Prace Popularnonaukowe, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1987, 124 p. [2nd edition: Toruń 1994].

³ [co-author: T. Bieńkowski], *Kierunki rozwoju nauki [Directions of the Development of Science]*, PWN, Warszawa 1989, 191 p.

⁴ [co-author: A. Dobrzycki], *Atlas nieba gwiazdowego: epoka J2000.0 [Stellar Firmament Atlas: J2000.0 Era]*, PWN, Warszawa 1989, 15 p., [12] maps, tables.

⁵ [co-author: L. Szczucki], *On the Transmission of Copernicus's "Commentariolus" in the Sixteenth Century* in: *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 20, 1/1989, pp. 25–28.

⁶ A letter of the General Secretary of the Academy, January 11th, 1990.

tiated computer instruction, starting with his own assistant who was made familiar with the keyboard by Professor's remark that *even a monkey can manage to press keys* (afterwards he gave her a banana, a very exceptional item on the Polish market of that time)¹.

In the 90s, the Institute's library was still one of the best equipped with books and journals on the history of science in this part of the old continent. The Institute held its pivotal position in East Central Europe until the end of the 20th c. More problems were connected with editorial practice.

Market forces meant that former collaboration agreements had to be deliberately cut and the Institute, in fact, had to break its contacts with Ossolineum – the Publishing House of the Polish Academy, and with PWN – the State Scientific Publishers. Their charges were impossible to accept. The last position published by Ossolineum Press was the 5th volume, part one, of the *History of Polish Science*, covering the period 1918–1951². The Institute's own publishing house was established with its own new logo³. That new agency successfully took over the printing of the journals: *History of Science and Technology Quarterly*, *Studies and Materials for the History of Science*, later transformed into the half-annual *Analecta*, and the *Dissertations on the History of Education*. The new editor took up book printing as well. First of all, Professor continued to publish the main Institute book series: the *History of Science and Technology Monographs*, the *History of Education Monographs*, *Studia Copernicana*, and the *History of Education Archives*⁴. Single titles were also released⁵. Professor decided to start printing the *History of Polish Science of the 20th Century* by fascicles comprising related disciplines (exact sciences; earth sciences)⁶, and later philology⁷. Occasionally, the agency undertook on extra initiatives. Concerning Edward Raczyński of London, the former Polish President in exile, a reprint of memoirs by Wirydianna

¹ Aleksandra Szpilewicz-Milewski was Professor's assistant in 1971–1995. She had to cope with all the problems which arose from difficult circumstances, especially in the 80s and 90s.

² *Historia nauki polskiej* [*History of Polish Science*], vol. 5, part 1, 1918–1951, (ed.) B. Suchodolski and Z. Skubała-Tokarski, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1992, 699 p.

³ The institute's logo and also the logo of the institute publishing house was designed by K. Witkowski.

⁴ The following, for example, were published: *Album studentów Akademii Zamojskiej 1595–1781* [*The Students Album of the Zamość Academy 1595–1781*], edited and prepared by H. Gmiterek, IHN PAN, Warszawa 1995, 604 p. and later: *Listy z prowincji. Korespondencja wizytorów generalnych, rektorów i nauczycieli ze Szkołą Główną Koronną 1779–1794* [*Letters of the General School Inspectors, Rectors and Teachers to the Crown Main School 1779–1894*], prepared, collected and introduced by K. Mrozowska, IHN PAN, Warszawa 1998, 432 p.

⁵ One of the first was: M. Bečkova, T. Bieńkowski, D. Čapková, *Znajomość dzieł Jana Amosa Komeńskiego na ziemiach czeskich, słowackich i polskich od połowy XVII w. do czasów obecnych* [*The Reception of John Amos Comensky Heritage in Czech, Slovak, and Polish Territories since 17th c. till Our Times*], IHNOiT PAN, Warszawa 1991, 164 p.; the other one was a book of Zbigniew Szydło published in English: Z. Szydło, *Water Which does not Wet Hands: the Alchemy of Michael Sendivogius*, Warszawa 1994, XIV, 300 p.; and Polish edition: *Woda, która nie moczy rąk: alchemia Michała Sędziwoja*, Warszawa 1997, 299 p.

⁶ *Historia nauki polskiej. Wiek XX. Nauki ścisłe* [*History of Polish Science. 20th c. Exact Sciences*], fasc. 1, IHN PAN, Warszawa 1994, 378 p., il.; *Historia nauki polskiej. Wiek XX. Nauki o ziemi* [*History of Polish Science. 20th c. Earth Sciences*], IHN PAN, Warszawa 1995.

⁷ *Historia nauki polskiej. Wiek XX. Nauki filologiczne* [*History of Polish Science. 20th c. Philology*], (ed.) A. Śródka, IHN PAN, Warszawa 1999, 240 p.

Fiszer was released¹.

The Institute's publishing house was in its full vitality and ready to undertake extra initiatives and to print for outside orders. In this way, the "Records of the Diet of the King of Prussia, 1520–1526" was published, having been meticulously prepared by Marian Biskup and Irena Jarosz-Biskup, particularly difficult from the editorial point of view because of the old German language².

At the beginning of 90s, two important international symposia were organized. The first one, *Birth and Activity of Polish University College in London, 1947–1953*, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of establishing the Polish Commission of Academic Technical Studies in Great Britain, took place in Warsaw in September 1992. The other one, *Science against Totalitarianism*, to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War, was organized in September 1994³. There were many other serious achievements such as the *Lvov Academic Milieu in 1939–1945*⁴, also an excellent session, and an important volume about *Piarist [Scholarum Piarum] Activity in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth*⁵.

In 1993, the Institute's name was shortened to the Institute of History of Science as was Professor Dobrzycki's intense desire. During his tenure as Director of the Institute, thanks to his own effort and due to the research achievements of the staff, Dobrzycki acquired the highest rank – the A Category of the Committee for Scientific Research, for good. Since March 1990, he was also a coordinator of the government's Central Program for Basic Research entitled: *Science and Education in the Development of the Polish State and Society*.

As a General Secretary of the Warsaw Scientific Society in 1992–1995, Professor reduced the editorial cost of the Society publications. The *Annals of the Warsaw Scientific Society*, including a couple of back numbers for which the materials had been gathered back in the 80s, were published also outwith the Ossolineum Press⁶. Similar changes were also imposed on the book series

¹ W. Fiszer, *Dzieje moje własne i osób postronnych [History of My Own and Persons Around]*, London 1975, reprinted by IHN PAN, Warszawa 1993, 439 p.

² *Akta stanów Prus Królewskich [The Records of the Diet of the King's Prussia]*, vol. 8: 1520–1526, (ed.) M. Biskup & I. Jarosz-Biskup, Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 77; IHNOiT PAN Editions, Warszawa – Toruń 1993, XXI, 468 p.

³ *Narodziny i działalność Polish University College (1947–1953) [The Birth and Activity of the Polish University College in London]*, *Symposium w pięćdziesiątą rocznicę powołania w W. Brytanii Komisji Akademickich Studiów Technicznych (5 I 1942 r.)*, Warszawa, 9–11 września 1992 r., (ed.) B. Orłowski, Warszawa 1992, 176 p.; *Nauka wobec totalitaryzmów [Science against Totalitarianism]*, W 55 rocznicę wybuchu II wojny światowej. *Materiały sympozjum, 15–17 września 1994*, (ed.) B. Orłowski, Warszawa 1994, 144 p.

⁴ *Lwowskie środowisko naukowe w latach 1939–1945 [Lvov Academic Milieu in 1939–1945]*, (ed.) I. Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, IHNOiT PAN, Warszawa 1991, 96 p. [first edition], Warszawa 1993, 240 p. [third edition].

⁵ *Wkład pijarów do nauki i kultury w Polsce XVII–XIX w. [Contribution of the Scholarum Piarum Order to the Science and Culture of Poland in the 17th–19th c.]*, (ed.) I. Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, IHNOiT PAN and Polish Scholarum Piarum Province, Warszawa – Kraków 1993, 652 p., il.

⁶ The last number printed by Ossolineum Press: *Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego*, vol. 51, 1988, vol. 52, 1989 (joint volumes), Ossolineum Press, Wrocław 1992, 140 p.

publishing practice. In 1991, Professor Dobrzycki supported a revival of the *Kasa Mianowskiego* – the Mianowski Fund – Foundation for the Promotion of Science, an old Polish institution first established in 1881 but destroyed by Communists in the 50s.

In 1995, Professor Dobrzycki resigned from the post of the Institute's director. Since November 1992, he was already an ordinary professor¹, and in October 1997 – after an amendment to Academic Law in Poland – he was appointed once more to the professorship of the Polish Academy of Science².

He focused on the research of astronomy of the early Renaissance period. It resulted in some collective works written together with professors Owen Gingerich (Harvard) and Richard Kremer (Dartmouth College)³. The outcome was presented in a few important papers which were published – principally – in the *Journal for the History of Astronomy*⁴. Only to a certain degree could these articles express the large scope of cooperation and friendship which – in particular with Owen Gingerich – continued successfully for many years.

The *Journal for the History of Astronomy* was a major platform for academic discussion. Dobrzycki was not only an author but also a member of its editorial board. After 1990, apart from the works written collectively with Gingerich and Kremer, he published some other papers there⁵. The next periodical which caught Professor's sentiment was the popular *Vistas in Astronomy*. A few of Dobrzycki's works were also published in it, especially ones devoted to Copernicus and Kepler as well as to general issues of astronomy and its history⁶. At the same time, together with Tadeusz Bieńkowski, he published a synthesis *Staropolski świat nauki [Polish Ancient World of Science]*⁷ in Polish and two important papers in the journal *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce [Renaissance and Reformation in Poland]*⁸. He also

¹ Official document of the General Secretary of Academy for the post of ordinary professor of November 1992.

² Official document of the General Secretary of Academy for the post of Polish Academy professor of October 1997.

³ Exposé on the International Congress of Science in Liège, 1997.

⁴ [co-author: Owen Gingerich], *The Master of the 1550 radices: Jofrancus Offusius* in: *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 24, 1993, pp. 235–253; [co-author: Richard L. Kremer], *Peurbach and Maragha Astronomy? The Ephemerides of Johannes Angelus and their implications* in: *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 27, 3/1996, pp. 187–237.

⁵ *Zinner on Regiomontanus* in: *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 23, 4/1992, pp. 305–307; *Saturn, Aristotelian Astronomy, and Cracow Astronomers: an episode from the early years of Telescopic astronomy* in: *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 30, 1999, pp. 121–129; *Notes on the Copernicus's early heliocentrism* in: *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 32, 3/2001, pp. 223–225.

⁶ *The Role of Observations in the Work of Copernicus* in: *Vistas in Astronomy* 17, 1975, pp. 27–30; *Kepler in Żagań* in: *Vistas in Astronomy* 18, 1975, pp. 177–181; *Astronomy versus Cartography – Late Medieval Longitudes* in: *Vistas in Astronomy* 28, 1985, p. 187; *Charting the Sky: Between Cartography and Art* in: *Vistas in Astronomy* 39, 1995, p. 723.

⁷ [co-author: T. Bieńkowski], *Staropolski świat nauki: uczeni i szkoły wobec osiągnięć nowożytnych nauk przyrodniczych [Ancient Polish World of Science]*, IHN PAN, Warszawa 1998, XIV, 99 p.

⁸ *Wcześni czytelnicy Kopernika [Early Readers of Copernicus]* in: *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 41, 1997, pp. 33–42; *Święty Jerzy gra na skrzypkach, czyli krakowski spór o podstawy i metodę nauki w XVII wieku [Saint George plays Violin]* in: *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 42, 1998, pp. 73–80.

wrote an obituary devoted to professor Paweł Czartoryski¹ and an entry on the Warsaw Scientific Society for the six volume State Scientific Publishers (PWN) Encyclopedia². Occasionally, the texts were published – as earlier – in the Polish popular astronomy journal, *Urania*³.

Working on Copernicus in the 70s, Dobrzycki strengthened his ties with philosophers and historians of philosophy and in particular with professors Juliusz Domański and Lech Szczucki. They remained in close touch till Dobrzycki's last days. Together with Szczucki, they prepared and published significant papers in the *Journal for the History of Astronomy*.

Another important friendship was with professor Andrzej Kajetan Wróblewski, physicist and historian of exact sciences, former Rector Magnificus of Warsaw University and later a President of the Academic Council at the Institute for the History of Science. Among the people who were close to him at that time was also a Slavist scholar, professor Ewa Rzetelska-Feleszko, Secretary General of the Warsaw Scientific Society before and after Dobrzycki's term on that post.

He also kept up his old acquaintances with professors: Marian Wojciechowski, a historian and friend from his grammar school in Poznań, and with technologist Marek Sokołowski with whom he got acquainted under Nazi occupation.

Dobrzycki's academic activity reflected – to a certain degree – his character. Albeit behaving as a child at making research, he would describe his results in an utterly laconic and curt style and would expurgate sentences untill the last, useless – in his opinion – word was swept out. That is why he never decided to enter on any monumental work as a writer but preferred short forms and essays. On the other hand, he believed that even a smaller form might be more significant when announced in a *common*, popular language. The air-tightness of Polish was a burden to him, one might think.

There were so many fascinating problems all around and never enough time to engage in solving all issues. This does not change the heart of the matter that he could work for a long time on certain problems without getting weary.

Professor also highly valued the dissemination of scientific knowledge, especially through its history. But he could not beat the barrier of his laconic style which was the main obstacle to writing in this way. However, at the end of the road, with the helping hand of his pupil, Jarosław Włodarczyk, he managed to prepare a monograph on the natural history of constellations which was published in 2002 and gathered an excellent response⁴.

Alas, the state of Dobrzycki's health was far from perfect. He was – step

¹ Paweł Czartoryski (1924–1999) in: *Postępy Fizyki* 6, 1999, pp. 336–338 (in memoriam).

² [co-author: L. Zasztowt], *Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie [Warsaw Scientific Society]* in: *Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN*, vol. 6, 1997, p. 430.

³ *Krakowska obserwacja Saturna, 5 września 1640 r. [Cracow Observation of Saturn, September 5th, 1640]* in: *Urania* 1, 1999, pp. 40–41.

⁴ [co-author: J. Włodarczyk], *Historia naturalna gwiazdozbiorów [Natural History of Constellations]*, Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 2002, 287 p., illustrations, tables, maps.

by step – more and more difficult to communicate with. In 2003, it transpired that the problems were tied with the progress of an illness similar to Alzheimer's disease.

At the end of 90s, during the International Alzheimer Congress at the Staszic Palace in Warsaw, Professor – as usual – was making jokes. On the official plaque of the Congress, where the name of participant should be exposed, he wrote: Beg your pardon, what? Later coincidence was striking.

The funeral ceremony was held at the small church in the Tarchomin borough of Warsaw. This winter day was sunny and cold. Professor was buried at the old cemetery on a hill surrounded by high trees near Mehoffer street. The place was silent and beautiful – a perfect place to rest in peace. In the memory of all who were close to him, he will remain smiling, full of humour, and cheerful. I will remember him thus.

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