

WORD OF WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE.
PROFESSOR J. SMAK

'Obywatelu Prezesie Rady Ministrów, Monsieur le Président de l'Union Astronomique Internationale, Distinguished Guests, Dear Members of the International Astronomical Union, Ladies and Gentlemen,

W imieniu Lokalnego Komitetu Organizacyjnego Nadzwyczajnego Kongresu Międzynarodowej Unii Astronomicznej mam zaszczyt powitać wszystkich naszych dostojnych i drogich gości przybyłych na ten Kongres, a w szczególności na dzisiejsze Uroczyste Otwarcie i Sesję Plenarną, związaną z obchodami 500-letniej Rocznicy Urodzin Mikołaja Kopernika.

On behalf of the Local Organizing Committee for the Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union I have the privilege to welcome all our distinguished and dear guests which came to participate in the Assembly, and particularly in this General Commemorative Session connected with the celebrations of the Quincentenary of Nicolaus Copernicus.

I have the honour now to request the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Polish People's Republic, Mr Piotr Jaroszewicz, to deliver his address.

Obywatelu Premierze, proszę o zabranie głosu.'

ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE
POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC, MR P. JAROSZEWICZ

'Mr President of the International Astronomical Union, Distinguished Members of the Extraordinary Session of the Union's General Assembly,

Among the many international meetings of scientists, the importance of which in the world of today can hardly be overestimated, the session we have just inaugurated undoubtedly assumes special significance. This is so, on account of the high rank astronomy enjoys as a branch of science, the high esteem for your Union in the international scientific community, and by no means incidental time and place of this meeting which crowns the international observances of Mikolaj Kopernik's 500th birthday anniversary on his native soil.

Astronomy is one of the most prominent and one of the oldest branches of science, yet it is abundant in new great discoveries of surprisingly large scale, constantly affecting man's cognitive abilities, world outlook and civilization. Just as in remote times astronomic knowledge had laid the ground for the development of navigation, due to which new seas and lands were discovered, our mother planet Earth became better known and its place in the universe was defined, today astronomy paves man's way in the cosmic space, fulfills his ages-long aspirations to fly in the air, steals away from Nature its greatest secrets.

Time calendar, in common use by all mankind today, owes its existence to astronomy. We use the calendar not only to measure time. We also use it to mark down the happenings which make up the history of humanity, which shape the awareness of successive generations and are the traces of their common heritage: development and progress.

On one page in this calendar the birthday of a genius was also marked down, a genius whose discovery opened a new chapter in the history of astronomy, a mile-stone in the history of human cognition, thus laying the foundations for a major breakthrough in human awareness and intellectual culture.

More than three hundred years had to elapse for that basic truth to become fully recognized, to become an element of education and popular awareness. The lapse of time, however, did not diminish the enormity, creative power and validity of Copernican traditions in present-day world; quite the opposite, it enhanced them. These traditions are alive today due to the scientific discoveries and the continually valid patterns of Kopernik as a man, as an explorer looking for truth everywhere, as a Pole and citizen who combined his service of the country with service of humanity.

The strength and significance of Copernican traditions are particularly notable in Poland.

The memory and loyalty to the legacy of Polish science and culture played an essential role in the

history of our nation. They allowed us to preserve our national identity and the sense of community in the years of bondage, filled us with strength and consolation in the long struggle for national and social liberation, and following World War II, when there was a shortage of bread and roof over the head, they made us undertake the effort of reconstruction of science and cultural monuments parallel to the reconstruction of production plants in our towns and villages.

The worldwide observances of the 500th birthday anniversary of Mikolaj Kopernik, climaxed by the current debates of the extraordinary session of the general assembly of the International Astronomical Union, are a convincing confirmation of the significance and universal character of Copernican traditions.

For us Poles, who play host to this world meeting, the fact that such a distinguished group of scientists from the world over has come to our country is a source of great satisfaction. In greeting the members of this extraordinary session I wish to express, on behalf of the Government of the Polish People's Republic, our gratitude for the heart you have put in making this Copernican anniversary an even greater event and for promoting Copernican traditions in your homelands.

I also wish to convey sincere greetings extended to you by the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Edward Gierek, and by the President of the Council of State, Prof. Henryk Jablonski.

We wish the observances of the Copernican Year and your debates produced fertile and lasting effects, we wish they could help carry out the noble-minded mission of science in the contemporary world as a creative force in the service of mankind, the mission to which Kopernik was faithful and which today, in an era of international detente, should become a moral imperative determining the outlooks and pursuits of scientists in the whole world.

These outlooks and sense of responsibility are the major values on which largely depend the development of international collaboration, the initiation and realization of joint research programmes which meet half-way the needs and hopes of contemporary man, the success of science as a tool of progress in economy, social life and culture.

The efforts of our nation, our initiative in the international arena, our socio-economic, scientific and cultural policies are all aimed in that direction.

Ever since People's Poland came to exist, we have regarded science as one of the key instruments to be used in construction of our socialist economy and culture.

In the lifespan of one generation we have created modern science, we have developed quite a network of academic schools and research centres, we have brought up nearly 700 thousand specialists with higher education and a sizable scientific cadre. Polish science has successfully performed its function at the stage of reconstruction; today it helps create and partakes in the realization of an extensive programme of continual transformation of Poland and of us all. At this stage of development, which will multiply our country's economic and technical potentials, which will enrich its cultural life and increase the wealth of its people, we attach great importance to the cultivation of the best traditions of scientific progress and of the social service of science, to their correlation with the needs and tasks of today and tomorrow.

The fact that Kopernik's genius developed on the ground of Polish culture, in the reputed atmosphere of tolerance and freedom of creative pursuits, has charged us with an obligation to create favourable conditions for continued springy development of Polish Science, conditions in which it plays an increasing role in shaping socialist Poland, in multiplying its contribution to the sum-total of cognitive values and civilization of mankind.

That was the aim of the II Congress of Polish Science, held in Warsaw in June of this year, which mapped out the directions of its development today and in the future.

In a few years to come, it is our intention to considerably increase financial resources for astronomical research in this country. Soon, the Astronomical Copernican Centre will be open in Warsaw, and in Toruń, Kopernik's birthtown, a modern Centre of Radioastronomy is being developed.

We shall undertake more active and broader participation in international astronomical programmes, among others in the area of cosmic physics. We hope that the next decades will see

Poland's growing share in the immense task of exploring the Cosmos, in which our Great Compatriot was a pioneer.

We are glad this session of world astronomers will give them an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the achievements of our science, with the gains of post-war Poland, with the presence and inspiring strength of Copernican traditions in our country.

I wish all members of the extraordinary session of the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union that your debates—thanks to the presentation of the latest research achievements, the exchange of opinions and creative inspirations—make a valuable contribution to the progress of cognitive thought and to the pool of scientific knowledge, to strengthening peace and cooperation among nations, to enriching Copernican traditions which unite us all and make us build human science in a human world.'

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
 PROF. W. TRZEBIATOWSKI

'Mr Prime Minister, Mr President of the International Astronomical Union, Distinguished Guests,

The Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union which we are opening today is an occurrence of exceptional importance. In its international aspect, it marks the culminating point of this year's Copernican observances. For the participation in this session of astronomers from all parts of the world we accept, among other things, as a tribute paid to our Great Compatriot, the founder of modern astronomy, the bedrock of the present-day outlook on the world.

The session is at the same time a scientific gathering with an extensive working programme. At the symposia starting tomorrow, all the latest astronomic problems will be discussed. We are glad the symposia will be held in Poland's three academic centres: Warsaw, Toruń and Cracow, and will have active participation of Polish astronomers and physicists. That will provide a particularly important and valuable opportunity to strengthen the existing and establish new personal ties between Polish and foreign scholars.

Characteristically, two of the mentioned symposia, being a part of this Extraordinary General Assembly, will be devoted to subjects related to physics and astrophysics, while the third one will be dealing with exploratory problems of cosmic physics. That programme demonstrates the important role contemporary astronomy plays in the family of natural sciences, its growing correlation with physics and ever stronger feedback with all those branches of science and technology involved in the exploration and peaceful use of outer space. Aware of this, the Polish Academy of Sciences accords astronomy a prominent place in its long-range plans for the development of scientific agencies and the research conducted thereby. We wish that Polish astronomy make a contribution to world science that would be proportional to our ambitions, that it continue the valuable Copernican traditions.

On behalf of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and on my own behalf, I would like to most sincerely welcome all members of the Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union. I wish you a successful debate, inspiring scientific impressions, and a pleasant stay in this country.'

ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WARSAW CITY COUNCIL, MR. MAJEWSKI

'Distinguished Guests,

On behalf of Warsaw inhabitants and authorities, I have the honour to welcome in the capital of People's Poland members of the Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union. I wish to express my great satisfaction that we can play host to so many outstanding representatives of such a magnificent and universal domain of science as astronomy is and that your presence in our town is a sign of appreciation for the contribution to the history of human thought made by a great Pole, Mikolaj Kopernik.