

Foreword

It is with great pleasure that we can present a facsimile edition of the *Narratio Prima* by Georg Joachim Rheticus. This book, an abstract and resumé of Nicolaus Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus*, was written when both these scholars were staying at Lubawa Castle in the summer of 1539. Their host was a friend of Copernicus, Tiedemann Giese, the Bishop of Culm. Published three years before the work of Copernicus, the *Narratio Prima* recounts, in a clear and concise manner, the heliocentric theory of the great Polish scholar. We have also prepared the first-ever translation of Rheticus' book for Polish readers, published in its own separate volume.

Several years ago, I had an interesting discussion with Professor Jarosław Włodarczyk from the Institute for the History of Science at the Polish Academy of Sciences about the significance of the time Nicolaus Copernicus spent in the land of Lubawa. It is this charming land, shaped by a melting glacier, that the Nicolaus Copernicus Foundation, whose works I am honoured to oversee, has chosen for its seat. It is also here that the Nicolaus Copernicus Foundation has constructed its two astronomical observatories, in Truszczyń and Kurzętnik.

It was at Lubawa Castle that Nicolaus Copernicus, persuaded by his friends Giese and Rheticus, decided to publish his work. This canonical book was later to become one of the milestones of modern science. Moreover, it

is in Lubawa that Rheticus, amazed by the groundbreaking theory exposed by his teacher in *De Revolutionibus*, wrote his own book. The *Narratio Prima* had had two editions before Copernicus’ book was published, and it is from the former that scholars first became acquainted with theories from the Frombork canon.

I am deeply grateful to Professor Jarosław Włodarczyk for his encouragement and inspiration in publishing Rheticus’ book. Professor Włodarczyk has also written the introduction to the present edition.

The highest editorial and publishing standards have been ensured by the University of Warsaw Press.

The present book is being published with funds provided by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development – Europe Investing in Rural Areas. My success in the difficult application procedure was thanks to the aid of Michał Markowski and Karol Draśpa from the ‘Land of Lubawa’ Local Initiative Group and Mikołaj Miros from the Marshal Office in Olsztyn.

I am also grateful to the local government of the Varmia and Masuria Voivodeship, to Marek Brzezin, Marshal of the Varmia and Masuria Voivodeship, and to Zdzisław Fadrowski, the Director of the Department of Culture and Education.

6 I would also like to thank the local authorities of Lubawa and Mayor Maciej Radtke for their continued support in the realisation and promotion of this project. The traditions related to Nicolaus Copernicus are exceptionally vivid in Lubawa.

The promotion of this project was also aided by entrepreneurs. The Board of Directors of PGE Dystrybucja S.A. has supported our activities for years. My special gratitude goes to its presidents, Marek Goluch and Grzegorz Dolecki, as well as to the company’s press officer, Monika Stanisławek. My sincere thanks go to Medcom Ltd. and its president, Jerzy Linka.

I would also like to thank Gabriel Chojak, president of Dekorglass S.A., a company based in Działdowo. The bottles manufactured by Decorglass are

truly the finest in the world. Marek Liberacki, the owner of LIBRO, a manufacturing company specialising in high-quality furniture, also supports all our activities, which includes the publication of this book. I would also like to express my gratitude to the president of the WAM Hotel Group, Robert Małek. I encourage everybody to visit this company's hotels in Toruń and Kraków, cities related to Nicolaus Copernicus.

Patronage of the publication has been overseen by the *Urania – Postępy Astronomy* bi-monthly. I hereby thank Dr. Maciej Mikołajewski, the editor-in-chief of this periodical, one of the world's oldest periodicals dedicated to astronomy, for supporting our activities.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Weronika, for her initiative that led to the creation of the foundation and for inspiring me with tales of Nicolaus Copernicus in my childhood.

Robert Szaj
General Director
The Nicolaus Copernicus Foundation