

## BOOK REVIEW

Stanisław RAKUSA-SUSZCZEWSKI, *Ludzie z Antarktycznej Historii (People of the Antarctic History)*. In Polish. Zakład Biologii Antarktyki Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Department of Antarctic Biology, Polish Academy of Sciences). Warszawa 1995, 72 pp., 13 text-figs, 1 map. No price given.

That concise volume, containing biographical sketches of four prominent Antarctic explorers, is a valuable contribution to the preparations in progress for the centenary celebrations in Poland of the first in history wintering in Antarctica by two Polish scientists, Professors Henryk Arctowski and Antoni Bolesław Dobrowolski, members of the *Belgica* Expedition (1897–1899). Biographies of both polar explorers were included into the reviewed booklet. Its author, Professor Stanisław Rakusa-Suszczewski is one of the most prominent Antarctic scientists in Poland — since 1970 member of numerous Polish and foreign Antarctic expeditions, from 1975 to 1988 acted as leader of seven Polish expeditions to Antarctica, including those establishing the Polish *Arctowski* Station (1977) on King George Island and the Spanish *Juan Carlos I* Station on Livingston Island (1988). Professor Rakusa-Suszczewski is both a successful polar explorer and a productive author. His rich literary output contains not only numerous scientific publications in biology and hydrobiology — his academic specialities — but also books on the history of polar exploration, some of popularizing character, like the reviewed one.

The first of four Antarctic explorers presented in the reviewed book, is Johann Georg Adam Forster (1754–1794), who was born in Gdańsk, as subject of the Polish king. Accompanying his father Johann Reinhold Forster, he took part in Captain's James Cook British Expedition around the world (1772–1775), which on 13 July 1772, as the first in history reached Antarctica crossing the Southern Polar Circle. The book reviews briefly Forster's short, but intensive life, emphasizing his close relations with Poland and above all presents his scientific publications and valuable research achievements.

The next Antarctic hero portrayed by Professor Suszczewski is the Norwegian polar explorer Carsten C. Borchgrevink (1864–1934). His expedition was the first in history to land and spend in 1899 the austral winter on the Antarctic continent. It also approached in 1900 the South Pole to the record distance of 78°50', and also has located the south magnetic pole and proved the existence of rich deep sea fauna at the Antarctic shores. Borchgrevink's story is in Professor Suszczewski's book documented with extensive excerpts from the explorer's relation "First on the Antarctic Continent being an account of the British Antarctic Expedition 1898–1900".

Professor Suszczewski's book are closing brief biographical accounts on the two Polish Antarctic explorers Professors Henryk Arctowski and Antoni Bolesław Dobrowolski, whose names are bearing the two Polish resesarch stations in Antarctica.

The choice of the mentioned four, out of hundreds Antarctic heroes, is the author's undisclosed secret. But all of those selected by Professor Suszczewski bear some common traces: all of them distinguished themselves in the Antarctic history as being the first in their achievements. They also were either Poles or were closely to Poland related. And as the author

himself has stated in the Introduction to his book: "The centenary of the *Belgica* Expedition is an occasion to recall the biographies and the achievements of the prominent personalities from the heroic era in the Antarctic discoveries which had an impact on the development of science also in the Polish society, creating the foundations for the present time, in which since twenty years the Polish Antarctic research is a permanent element of scientific activities."

Jacek MACHOWSKI  
Legionowo