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Speech opening Nicolaus Copernicus Exhibition

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, OPENING NICOLAUS COPERNICUS
EXHIBITION

ADELAIDE 6/4/73

MR. ZAGORSKI, MR. SWITKOWSKI, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ASKING ME TO OPEN THIS EXHIBITION. THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE BIRTH OF NICOLAUS COPERNICUS COMMEMORATE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A MAN WHOSE ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS WAS AS PROFOUND AND ENDURING AS A GALILEO, NEWTON, DARWIN OR EINSTEIN.

IT CAN BE LITERALLY SAID OF COPERNICUS THAT HE WAS ONE OF THAT HANDFUL OF GENIUSES WHO CHANGED MAN'S VERY CONCEPT OF THE UNIVERSE AND GAVE THEIR NAME TO AN AGE. THE WORLD BEFORE HIS GIANT INTELLECTUAL LEAP WAS PRE-COPERNICAN. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS THEORY OF COSMOLOGY MADE IT POST-COPERNICAN AND OVERTHREW

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ESTABLISHED BELIEFS NOT ONLY IN ASTRONOMY AND THE NATURAL SCIENCES BUT ON PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY, INDEED THE ENTIRE RANGE OF INTELLECTUAL ENDEAVOUR.

AFTER COPERNICUS, MAN COULD NO LONGER CONCEIVE OF HIMSELF AS THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE UNDER GOD. THE WAY WAS OPEN FOR A VIEW OF MAN AS AN INCREASINGLY PUNY, PERHAPS EVEN ACCIDENTAL, MITE IN INFINITY.

COPERNICUS WAS A PRODUCT OF THAT EXTRAORDINARY AGE - THE RENAISSANCE - AND PERHAPS, THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF A DA VINCI NOTWITHSTANDING - ITS GREATEST PRODUCT.

IN ACCEPTED RENAISSANCE STYLE, HE DID NOT CONFINE HIMSELF TO ONE AREA OF STUDY OR OCCUPATION. BESIDES HIS WORK IN COSMOLOGY, HE WON FAME IN HIS TIME AS A PHYSICIAN, ECONOMIST, ENGINEER AND ADMINISTRATOR.

COPERNICUS WAS A POLE BUT NATIONAL BOUNDARIES HAVE NO MEANING SO FAR AS HIS WORK IS CONCERNED. IT IS THEREFORE APPROPRIATE THAT THIS YEAR'S ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS SHOULD BE WORLDWIDE AND THAT HIS DISCOVERIES SHOULD BE COMMEMORATED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO FROM CARACAS TO PARIS AND MOSCOW.

BUT POLES AND PEOPLE OF POLISH DESCENT AROUND THE WORLD NATURALLY TAKE A SPECIAL PRIDE IN COPERNICUS AS A NATIONAL FIGURE, JUST AS THEY DO IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE MANY OTHER POLES OF WORLD STATURE, A CHOPIN, PADEREWSKI OR MADAME CURIE.

THE HISTORY OF POLAND HAS FREQUENTLY BEEN A TRAGIC ONE: A PEOPLE WITH PASSIONATE COMMITMENT TO FREEDOM AND TOLERANCE

HAVE HAD TO FIGHT BACK INVADERS AND OCCUPIERS THROUGHOUT THEIR HISTORY.

THEY HAVE RETAINED A SENSE OF NATIONALITY AGAINST INCREDIBLE ODDS AND HAVE DEVELOPED A NATION OF HEROES. IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, THE POLISH MIGRANT COMMUNITY IS NOTED FOR THE SAME VIGOUR, ENTERPRISE AND PRIDE OF HERITAGE THAT CHARACTERISES THE POLISH PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD.

THE AUSTRALIAN POLISH CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA HAS OBVIOUSLY TAKEN VERY GREAT PAINS IN ORGANISING THIS EXHIBITION IN THE FINE SETTING OF EDMUND WRIGHT HOUSE. IT IS FOR THEM, AND FOR ALL SOUTH AUSTRALIANS, AN IMPORTANT OCCASION AND ONE TO WHICH THIS DISPLAY DOES JUSTICE. I HAVE MUCH PLEASURE IN OFFICIALLY DECLARING IT OPEN.

THANK YOU.