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150 YEARS OF CHARLES DARWIN'S THEORY – PREFACE

DEAR READERS,

This volume commemorates Charles Darwin's bicentennial and the sesquicentenary of publication of his groundbreaking book „The origin of species”. It was not our aim to present a comprehensive overview of modern evolutionary biology – this was very competently done by many excellent textbooks, such as “Evolution” by Douglas Futuyma, recently published in Poland. Rather, we intended to present a wide, even if incomplete, picture of problems handled by contemporary evolutionary biologists. For the benefit of the readers from outside this field, we asked several authors to present in an accessible way the basis of Darwin's theory of natural selection. This basic information can be found mostly in the first few chapters of the second part of the volume. Other articles touch on more advanced topics, but usually in a way accessible to non-specialist readers. The volume commemorating 150th anniversary of the theory of natural selection could not omit a historical overview, contained in the articles collected in the first part of the volume. The second part contains papers on mechanisms and consequences of evolution, and the methods of investigation of evolutionary processes. These methods contribute

to the understanding of the history of life on our planet, fragments of which are described in the third part of the volume. Finally, the fourth part describes (controversial as usual) social implications of Darwin's theory. For each part we provided a separate introduction, giving the overview of the content and meant to encourage the reader to delve into respective papers. We hope this volume will contribute to the increase in popularity of evolutionary biology.

The Editor in Chief of “Kosmos”, Professor Kazimierz L. Wierchowski invited us, members of the Committee of Evolutionary and Theoretical Biology PAS, to edit this volume. We, in turn, asked other Committee members to contribute their articles and to recommend other authors. We are entitled to acknowledge, therefore, that this volume is an accomplishment of the whole Committee.


