WELCOME ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR ALGIRDAS AVIŽIENIS
Vytautas Magnus University

Dear colleagues, guests, and members of academic community,
I had the privilege of serving as the first Rector of Vytautas Magnus University when it was reborn in 1989 after having been closed by the Soviet occupants in 1950. Before returning to Kaunas, the city of my birth that I left at the age of eight, I was on the Computer Science Faculty of the University of California at Los Angeles for thirty years.

It was one of the most treasured experiences of my service at Vytautas Magnus University to be able to invite professor Czesław Miłosz who was my friend and colleague at the University of California, although at the Berkeley Campus, to return to Lithuania, the country of his birth, after an absence of fifty-two years and to receive the Doctor Honoris Causa degree at our University on May 28, 1992.

In his acceptance speech Czesław Miłosz stated that one reason why this Doctor Honoris Causa degree was very special for him was that his mentor Oscar Miłosz had received the Doctor Honoris Causa degree from Vytautas Magnus University in 1936.

It is true that Adam Mickiewicz did not get the Doctor Honoris Causa from Vytautas Magnus University since it was only founded in 1922, but I am happy to observe that the great poet was a teacher at the secondary school here in Kaunas after he had completed his studies at Vilnius University in 1819 until his arrest in 1823.

I thank all researches of this book for joining our academic family in celebrating the year 2011 as the Year of Czesław Miłosz that was declared by the Seimas (Parliament) of Lithuania to observe the Centenary of his birth on June 30, 1911.