

The story of the new IMU contains a number of remarkable successes. But the Union has also had many difficulties. The Iron Curtain was drawn before the Union had come into existence. It was not at all clear at the beginning how to regulate the relations between the IMU and the ICMs, a question of paramount importance for both parties. Lack of funds hampered the launching of many projects.

These initial problems were gradually solved. In the 1960s, the Union consolidated its position and could thus better deal with new difficulties, where politics and questions of morality were entangled with mathematics. The section "IMU and Soviet National Committee" is an account of the deep conflict between the Union and the Soviets about the scientific program of the ICMs and how the disagreement suddenly disappeared in 1979. The section "Martial law in the host country of the Congress" deals with the complications related to the ICM in Warsaw. A Soviet candidate for the IMU presidency was opposed for reasons of human rights, and this forced the Union to clarify what its non-political status meant. South Africa caused problems in connection with the principle of Free Circulation of Scientists, and the adherence of the People's Republic of China to the IMU was complicated and time consuming.

It is too early to assess the impact on the IMU of the profound changes in the world which took place in 1989 and later. It is however certain that the immediate future of the IMU is again full of challenges.

Remarks

¹ The 300th anniversary could not be celebrated as planned in 1940 (the Winter War had just ended in Finland).

² The Berlin ICM 1998 will be the 23rd. The Congresses of 1920 and 1924 are then included, even though they were not truly international since Central Powers were barred from participation. For this reason, the Congresses have not been designated by their order number since 1920.

³ A chief architect of the discriminatory policy was the French mathematician Emile Picard, the President of the IRC. Hardy and Mittag-Leffler were among his outspoken critics.

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Erinnerung an Herbert Seifert

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Herbert Seifert ist am 1. Oktober 1996 im 90. Lebensjahr infolge Nierenversagens in Heidelberg gestorben. Er war Mitglied der Deutschen Mathematiker-Vereinigung seit 1930, Ehrenmitglied seit 1992. Er promovierte 1930 an der TH Dresden und außerdem, auf Anraten seines Lehrers W Threlfall, 1932 an der Universität Leipzig (bei B. v. d. Waerden). Seit 1937 war er ordentlicher Pro-

fessor in Heidelberg.

Herbert Seifert war ein Pionier der modernen geometrisch-algebraischen Topologie. Sein Lehrbuch mit Threlfall (1934) verbindet in unübertroffener Weise anschauliches und technisches Verständnis des Gebiets. Gleiches gilt für seine „Variationsrechnung im Großen“. Seifert-Faserungen, -Mannigfaltigkeiten, -Knoteninvarianten sind Pionierleistungen von bleibender Aktualität. Seine Approximation differenzierbarer Mannigfaltigkeiten durch algebraische, oder seine angebliche Vermutung über geschlossene Integralkurven von Vektorfeldern haben jeweils bedeutende, anhaltende Entwicklungen ausgelöst.

Seine Schüler führte er mit unaufdringlicher Autorität – sicher an kaum merklicher langer Leine. Sie werden ihm immer dafür dankbar sein.

Ein ausführlicher informativer Nachruf ist vorgesehen.

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