

INAUGURAL ADDRESS*

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Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to welcome you most sincerely on behalf of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences at the 71st Symposium of the International Astronomical Union whose subject matter is the basic mechanisms of solar activity.

The Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences esteems it an honour that the International Astronomical Union has accepted its invitation to organize this symposium in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The presidium of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences has commissioned the Astronomical Institute to organize such an important international event. The Astronomical Institute in deciding to organize this symposium in Prague – a city with a rich astronomical tradition – certainly made a correct decision.

After all, astronomy took root in the Czech lands more than 600 years ago. Astronomy helped to establish a university in Prague as early as the turn of the 13th and the 14th centuries. In the Middle Ages, the Prague Astronomical School was a source of astronomical knowledge for the whole of Central Europe. The Polish research workers have recently proved that the Prague Astronomical School gave birth to the Cracovian School which, at the end of the 15th century, gave the world its greatest pupil Nicolas Copernicus. It was Prague again that played an important role in disseminating the teaching of Copernicus. The Copernicus teaching found its supporters especially in a Czech family of Tadeáš Hájek of Hájek, known under the name of Hagecius. Four hundred years ago, in 1574, the Hagecius book *Dialexis de novae et prius incognitae stellae apparitione* was published. This book sharply criticised the very base of the medieval and Aristotelian interpretation of the Universe. It became the most famous of all 16th-century writings. Thanks to Hagecius, born 450 years ago, Tycho Brahé and Johannes Kepler, the best astronomers in the world, came to Prague at the turn of the 16th and the 17th centuries and Prague became the most important centre of astronomical research all over the world.

The institutes in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic follow in their work this glorious tradition. The Astronomical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, the oldest and the largest of all our institutes, celebrated last year its 250 years of existence. It is one of the oldest scientific astronomical institutions in our country.

Therefore, we are glad that astronomers from the whole world meet again in Prague, after the International Astronomical Union General Assembly in 1967 and the COSPAR congress in 1969. A close international cooperation has a long tradition in the field of astronomy. As you probably know, a meeting of solar astronomers became the predecessor of the IAU General Assemblies. This close

* The Inaugural Address was presented by corresponding member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences V. Guth.

cooperation between scientists from the whole world is important not only for scientific progress itself but it also is an important element in the present day detente, in the struggle to strengthen peaceful cooperation in the spirit of the recent Helsinki Conference results.

We appreciate also the fact that the subject of our symposium is the basic mechanisms of solar activity in the first place. The study of these questions concerns not only solar activity itself but it also is of great importance for other scientific branches as well. The Sun is nothing but the nearest star and the knowledge of the Sun is of great importance for stellar astrophysics and cosmogony taken as a whole. Knowledge of basic mechanisms of solar activity is closely connected with plasma physics, with problems of plasma and magnetic-field interaction, with problems of nuclear reactions and energy release in general. For this reason solar physics can bring a lot of new stimuli in this field and thus can contribute to the solution of important technical and economic problems of mankind. Knowledge of basic mechanisms of solar activity plays an important role in the prognosis of solar activity, physically justified and thus reliable. These prognoses are ever more necessary since the importance of the solar activity influence upon the Earth is ever more evident in the sphere of geophysics, technology and of the biosphere. The actual trend shows that the importance of solar activity research for everyday life is steadily increasing.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that this symposium will represent another step in our efforts to know better the laws of nature and at the same time will enhance further cooperation between scientists all over the world. I wish you a lot of success in your work and a pleasant stay in Prague – the capital of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.