

41. COMMISSION POUR L'HISTOIRE DE L'ASTRONOMIE

PRÉSIDENT: M. H. Dingle.

MEMBRES: MM. Armitage, Birkenmayer, Danjon, Dijksterhuis, Dittrich, D. S. Evans, Hubble †, Spencer Jones, Kary-Niyazov, Kukarkin, Kulikovsky, Lundmark, Madwar, Marguérat, Nordenmark, Nørlund, Mlle Ruth Northcott, MM. Pelseneer, Pogo, Sadykov, Samaha, Seydl, Tchenakal, Volta †, Woolard, Yabuuchi, Zinner.

A report on the work of this commission must necessarily differ somewhat in form from that of other commissions, owing to the special nature of the subject. Little or no collaboration is possible, and a survey of the work done since the last meeting therefore has to deal with a number of unconnected investigations. These have, in fact, been large in number. Both time and space forbid a critical examination of the work that has been done, and the best course seems to be to present a list of the books and papers that have appeared. This is given below, with a note on work now in progress which has been reported to me. Information received regarding Japanese and Russian publications is given separately, for convenience. Such a list must almost inevitably be incomplete, and pardon is asked for all omissions. In compiling the list I have been greatly assisted by Dr A. Armitage, to whom my grateful thanks are given. The question might be discussed at the Dublin meeting whether the Report could profitably take another form in future.

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Forthcoming Russian publications

- Papers read at the Copernicus 410th Anniversary Meeting, 1954.
- Papers read at the 300th Anniversary of reunion of the Ukraine with Russia, 1954.
- Papers read at the reopening of Pulkovo Observatory, 1954.
- Selected Papers by A. A. Belopolsky.* With biography of author and comments by O. A. Melnikov.
- A new publication on *Investigations in the History of Astronomy* (prepared by a U.S.S.R. Commission).
- Vol. iv of *Complete Works of M. V. Lomonosov*, containing all his astronomical work.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- A. Dittrich has continued his investigations of the Maya Astronomical Tables and a paper has been prepared for publication.
- D. S. Evans is investigating the collaboration of Sir John Herschel and Thomas Maclear at the Cape of Good Hope in the years 1834–38.
- F. Link has submitted for publication a study of the variations of climate for the East and the West during the period A.D. 600 to 1750 on the basis of F. Baldet's investigations of the appearances of comets.
- O. Seydl is publishing a list of 402 appearances of the Northern Lights in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia from 1013 to 1951.

H. DINGLE
President of the Commission

Report of meeting. 3 September 1955

PRESIDENT: Prof. H. Dingle.

SECRETARY: Dr D. S. Evans.

Evidence of general interest in the work of the Commission was shown by the fact that some forty persons attended the meeting; of whom only five were members of the Commission.

The President opened the discussion by recalling that at the Rome meeting it was felt that the Commission had a useful function to perform, but that this should not be defined too precisely but allowed to reveal itself in the light of further experience. He invited views on this matter and referred to one or two suggestions that had been submitted to him.

Dr Brasch, a member of Commission 5 (Bibliography) had suggested that, in view of the close relation between bibliography and history, there should be some formal co-operation between the Commissions dealing with these subjects. The President pointed

out that while no doubt every opportunity of mutual assistance would be readily accepted by both Commissions, their functions were in fact recognizably different. Before the formation of Commission 41, matters relating to the history of astronomy had been dealt with by Commission 5, and the Commissions had some common members who would doubtless preserve a liaison between them. It was felt that the present position in this matter was satisfactory.

Prof. Kamiński had proposed the formation of a joint Sub-commission of Commissions 20 (Minor Planets, Comets and Satellites) and 41 for the investigation of early appearances of Halley's comet. This had been considered by Commission 20 and referred to this Commission without comment. The general view of the meeting was that it would be impracticable to appoint Sub-commissions for particular historical researches, but that this Commission might very well serve as a means of bringing together those who were interested in different aspects of the same problem. The President undertook to circulate those who might be able to assist Prof. Kamiński, inviting them to communicate with him direct.

A number of historical questions had been received by the President. He promised to do his best to transmit them to those best able to answer them, and there was a general feeling that the Commission might act as a clearing-house for the assistance of astronomers who wish for information on particular historical points. It is hoped that any astronomer in such need will communicate with the President.

The question of the availability of funds for assisting historical researches and publications was raised and it was pointed out that while an application to the Union for financial aid would be perfectly in order, the number of researches which could profitably be so encouraged was so great that a special case would have to be made out for any application before it would stand any chance of success.