

Preface

The XVIIIth General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union was held in Patras, Greece, from 17-26 August 1982. It was marked by the tragic death of the President of the IAU, Professor M.K.V. Bappu, on August 19, 1982. This sad event, without precedent in the history of the Union, posed serious problems to the organization of the General Assembly, which could only be overcome by the full collaboration of all members, the organizers, and the Executive Committee.

A tribute to the memory of Prof. Bappu was paid during a plenary meeting on 23 August 1982. The full texts of the speeches are published in Chapter I of this volume.

The excellent scientific programme in Patras was organized by the Presidents of the 40 IAU Commissions and coordinated by the IAU General Secretary (1979-1982), Professor P.A. Wayman. The local arrangements were taken care of by Professor C. Goudas and his collaborators from the Patras University. Due to the unexpected withdrawal in 1979 of another invitation to host the 1982 IAU General Assembly, the organizers in Greece had less than two years available for the extensive preparations, and our hearty thanks are due to them for their persistent efforts, which made this General Assembly an outstanding success.

Although the usefulness of IAU General Assemblies, as compared to more specialized meetings, has been questioned at various times, there is little doubt that the XVIIIth General Assembly was a clear demonstration of their value. First of all, it became a most fertile meeting ground for scientists from all over the world, providing a highly efficient forum for evaluation of on-going international collaborative projects and also for the initiation of new ones. Secondly, and not of less importance, it was for many young astronomers the first massive contact with more experienced colleagues from other countries and a unique opportunity to make the acquaintance with authors of scientific papers whom they had only known by name before. For them, as well as for many astronomers working in countries where our science has not yet been firmly established, the meetings in Greece were highly incentive and acted as catalysts for future research projects.

The present volume, IAU Transactions XVIII B, summarizes the work of the 18th General Assembly. The Inaugural Ceremony and the first session of the General Assembly were held in the evening of 17 August 1982, in the Ancient Odeon of the City of Patras under the open sky. The inaugural speeches are published in Chapter II. The proceedings of the General Assembly will be found in Chapter III, which includes the Resolutions and other aspects of the administration of the Union. They provide the official record of the business of the General Assembly, and, together with the Executive Committee Report (Chapter V), the permanent record for the Union in the period 1979-1982.

In addition, this volume contains the Commission Reports from Patras, compiled by the Presidents of Commissions (Chapter IV). Pending re-edition of the complete Astronomer's Handbook, which is foreseen within the next few years, Chapter VI gives updated information about the various activities of the Union. Finally, Chapter VII contains the members lists for IAU Commissions and also an alphabetical list of the more than 5000 individual members of the IAU.

In order to make the information contained in this volume available at the earliest possible date, a tight production schedule was imposed. This would not have been possible without the efficient cooperation of the Presidents of Commissions who provided the camera-ready manuscripts for Chapter IV. Similarly, I am most grateful to Mrs. B. Manning and Ms. P. Smiley (IAU Secretariat, Paris), and Mrs. E. Völk (ESO, Munich) for their expert help in typing and assembling the manuscript for publication. I am also much indebted to my predecessor, Professor P.A. Wayman and Dr I. Elliott of the Dunsink Observatory, Dublin, Ireland, who kindly provided the computer print-outs with the lists of Commission members. Finally, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the friendly, professional support by the IAU Publisher, D. Reidel Publishing Co., and in particular Mrs. N.M. Pols-v.d. Heijden.

IAU Secretariat
61, Ave. de l'Observatoire
F-75014 Paris
France

Richard M. West
General Secretary, IAU
4 December 1982