

presentation of the data would take place in room "M", which was not in the San Martín Cultural Center but in a building one block down the street.

I arrived there in time – only to find out that Room "M" was the venue for the meeting of the Working Group on Ap Stars! In the programme Part of the "Cruz del Sur", I then found the correct place: back to San Martín! There, all elevators were busy, and when I finally arrived on the 4th floor, the discussion of the paper by F. Graham Smith had just begun.

So, I had missed a historical event and was reminded of what I knew already: big conferences require careful preparation, also and in particular on the part of the participants. *D. BAADE, ESO*

Cruz del Sur

Throughout the Buenos Aires General Assembly, the participants were kept very well informed about scientific news and views, changes of programme and other practical matters by means of a daily newspaper with the appropriate name *Cruz del Sur* (the Southern Cross). The editors were Patrick Moore and John Mason (U.K.), well-known popularizers of astronomy; they were supported by Argentinian photographer Osvaldo Marcarian (a rather astronomical name!).

Cruz del Sur carried reports about the observatories in Argentina, participants' opinions about a great variety of matters – from the running of the GA to controversial scientific issues – and scientific highlights, including the possible discovery of the first planet outside the solar system and the latest news from the Hubble Space Telescope. A number of ESO-related items, from Adaptive Optics to MIDAS, were also prominently featured.

To produce a four-page newspaper every day during ten days requires steely nerves and a certain ability to manage without too much sleep. In the morning of July 31, the editorial team left their office at the San Martín Centre at 2 o'clock to catch a few hours sleep at their hotel. They expected to be back at work again at 6 o'clock to continue the typesetting of the texts of IAU Resolutions which would be discussed the next day.

However, when they arrived, they found the Centre on fire (see below) and it was only after some rather agitated hours that the written material and the editorial computer finally could be rescued from the office on the second floor.

As a consequence, instead of the dry IAU Resolutions texts, the last issue of *Cruz del Sur* carried a detailed report



Figure 2: The inauguration of the XXI IAU General Assembly at the San Martín Centre in Buenos Aires on July 23, 1991. At the centre the President of Argentine, Carlos Menem, flanked by the President of the IAU, Professor Y. Kozai (to the left) and the Secretary of State for Science and Technology, Raúl F. Matera.

about this dramatic event, unique in the history of IAU.

Astronomical Technology

During a meeting of Commission 9 (Instruments and Techniques), the current developments in the area of adaptive optics were reviewed. Since the last IAU GA in Baltimore, where the related technology as well as several prototype developments were discussed, adaptive optics has been successfully tested with the VLT prototype system COME-ON.

The scientific results include the imaging of η Carinae and the determination of the axial inclination of the largest minor planet, Ceres (see also page 13). This impressive result is based on the diffraction-limited imaging with this system and was reported by F. Rigaut at a Joint Meeting of Commissions 25 and 9, dealing with the performance of infrared arrays and the scientific results obtained with these devices.

The recent declassification of defense-related activities in the United States, including the successful tests of artificial guide stars, is likely to give adaptive optics in astronomy a major boost.

During the Commission 9 Working Group Session on Detectors, various overviews were presented on the current status of large-format CCDs used at the major observatories. 2048×2048 pixel arrays may soon become the standard. An important question raised in connection with the use of arrays of this size, or even larger ones is: how can the current read-out time of several minutes – during which the instrument as well as the telescope are idle – be efficiently used?

In a meeting of the Working Group on High Angular Resolution Interferometry, which suffered under the circumstances after the fire on Wednesday 31, only very short status reports on on-going projects and related technologies were given. However, this WG has a Newsletter which is jointly published with NOAO and which helps the members to stay up-to-date with the new developments.

F. MERKLE, ESO

Astronomical Education in Argentina

Several meetings about Education in Astronomy were held in conjunction with the XX1st General Assembly.

At the Buenos Aires Planetarium, a meeting took place on July 22 with participation of educationally oriented IAU astronomers and local teachers of natural sciences. Presentations were given about modern means and methods, by which the pupils and students can experience up-to-date astronomy and astrophysics. There was a very lively discussion and it was repeatedly stressed how important it is to stimulate enthusiasm for this extremely wide subject, by judiciously selecting and explaining those topics which are reasonably easily accessible to the students. Astronomy opens the roads to many other subjects.

The relations between professionals and amateurs were discussed during a one-day meeting on July 21, also in Buenos Aires. The services of amateurs to astronomy were highly lauded and many examples of good amateur work were presented by members of "Amigos de Astronomía", a Latin-American association.