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The 1998 International Meteor Conference

Stará Lesná, Slovakia, August 20–23, 1998

Dragana Okolić

I am sitting on the train Bratislava-Budapest-Belgrade. It is Sunday, August 24, 1998, a sunny day. Marc Gyssens, the editor-in-chief of *WGN*, asked me yesterday if I would write an article about the *IMC* for *WGN*. I said "yes" without thinking, because the furthest thing from my mind was to refuse Marc and, besides, the *IMCs* are a great thing. Now I wonder why I did it. Well, it is not hard at all to write a story about the *IMC*, on the contrary, it is a real pleasure to do something like that. It is hard to make the story short, because it is hard to decide what is important and what is not at all those glimmering impressions... Hm, if I start from the beginning and try to follow the flow of time and space, maybe I will succeed.

I arrived at Stará Lesná on Thursday around noon. Very warmly welcomed and quickly and comfortably accommodated by the host, I threw the backpack into my room and went out into the beautiful August sun which shone on the High Tatra Mountains. The first ones I said hello to, not counting the hosts, were the participants from Romania, whom I know ever since my first *IMC* in Belogradchik in Bulgaria in 1994. They told me about their Perseid observing camp: about observing of course, but also about some side-activities and interesting guests they had. Some of them informed me that the poster session was about to begin in the congress hall of the nearby Academy Hotel. There, the International Conference *Meteoroids 1998* was still ongoing. I found Eva Bojurova and Henry Hendriks, and, in the next moment, we were sitting among all these important faces from the *International Astronomical Union-Commission 22*. I found out what the posters represented. During the poster session, I scanned the lecture hall and found some more familiar faces smiling at me. I did not realize then, but now I know what the basic difference is between the professionals and the amateurs: the smile. I am not exaggerating. Pay attention next time you have a chance!

The last sentence led my stream of thoughts away from the line of the time continuum. I started to think about the *IMC* in general terms. Each *IMC* is both a little bit the same and a little bit different. The same, because each time the *IMC* starts, wherever and whenever it is held, a similar atmosphere is created, which lasts with the same intensity until the end of *IMC* and even further. It lasts even on the trains, planes, cars, ... our homes, until we wake up in the everyday reality. This *IMC* was also different for me, because it brought about many new faces. It put the professional and amateur astronomers together and made them all excited about the plans for this year's Leonids.

The new faces I referred to above are primarily the ones from Poland and the Czech Republic. I did not yet have a chance to meet them on previous *IMCs*. I met four young people from Warsaw, friendly and smiling—whence, amateurs ;—) —with plenty of fresh observers' enthusiasm. Among them were Marcin Gajos, Urszula Majewska, Arkadiusz Olech, and Marek Samujłło. I should add here a piece of information that Rainer brought up at the *IMO's* General Assembly, as the Director of the Visual Commission: Poland has become the top country in the amount of observing hours this year! As for the observers from the Czech Republic, actually, there was only one. But he is so interesting and so experienced, that the time I spent talking with him went by extremely fast. Mr. Miloš Weber is from Prague. He already observed meteors back in the time my parents were born (!). I think this tells enough about his experience. It was really a pleasure hearing at least one bit of every aspect of meteor astronomy he has been involved in.

But let me get back now to the chronology of events, that is back to the poster session on *Meteoroids 1998*. When I mentioned the meeting of professional and amateur meteor astronomers, a little bit earlier, I should have added that the *IMC* was placed exactly between two professional meetings. The first one, *Meteoroids 1998* took place from August 17 to 21, and the Academy Hotel where it took place was only 500 meters away from the location of the *IMC*. The other one, *Sources of Asteroids and Comets*, took place from August 24 to 28, right after the end of the *IMC*. As for the posters, two of them especially caught my attention. One was about the spectrum

of TV meteors and the other was a shiny picturesque poster about NASA's plans for Leonid observing. I copied the references from the first one, because I have a plan to try to do something in that area. From the second poster, I learned the meaning of "MAC." If you want to know yourselves, here is what it is: Multi-instrument Aircraft Campaign. Is it clear now how and wherefrom (!) they will observe the Leonids?

The time for the poster session ran out and the dinner was about to be served. We returned to the Stará Lesná Hotel, and, all of a sudden, everyone was there. Now the *IMC* got things under control and I lost the sense for time. I am not sure if I am capable to describe the events which followed chronologically. That is why it is hard for me to separate the important from the unimportant. I am positive that the opening of the *IMC*, with the welcoming words of a local official and the organizers, happened before the closing. I also know that the lectures started on Friday, but I did not remember the schedule anymore. I have the program packed at the bottom of my backpack, and so I cannot take it out right now. Anyway, proceedings will be printed, and it will include the detailed program and the content of the lectures. For those who are impatient, I will only say that, besides shower observations and analyses, and among other things, these were discussed:

- detection of minor streams by double-station TV observations;
- more on the forward scatter meteor year;
- Leonid expectations from modeling the stream;
- VISDAT—a database system for visual meteor observers;
- the ratio of start and end heights of meteors; ...

In the evenings, the time of day reserved for less formal topics, we saw some slides and videos. Some were from Perseid observing in Slovenia, and some were from the preparations for the observing of the total solar eclipse in Bulgaria. One evening was reserved for the hosts and on that occasion, we heard more about the history of meteor expeditions in Czechoslovakia and Slovakia.

The obligatory excursion was organized on Saturday afternoon. The weather was sunny, but windy too. The fact that it was windy is especially significant, because we went to visit the Skalnaté Pleso observatory, which is at about 1700 meters above sea level. It was fascinating.

As usually, the *IMC* ended too soon. We all had to leave before we said, asked, or showed all we wanted. I hope you realize that it was wonderful, but, only if you have been at some *IMC*, you know just how wonderful it was. So, if, by chance, you missed this *IMC*, do not miss the next one! For me, the time between two *IMCs* is too long, so I regularly meet my meteor friends on various coordinates, on various occasions. So, see you, my known friends! And those still unknown? See you in Frasso Sabino, just north of Rome in Italy, on September 23 next year!

... I am already in Budapest. I hope that the train to Belgrade is somewhere around here!

The 1999 International Meteor Conference

Frasso Sabino, September 23–26, 1999

communicated by Massimo Calabresi and Roberto Gorelli

The *International Meteor Conference* in 1999 will be hosted by the *Associazione Romana Astrofili* in Frasso Sabino, some 50 km north of Rome, Italy, on September 23–26. The costs covering the conference and lodging from Thursday evening to Sunday noon, including all meals, will be 240 DEM. The participants will be accommodated in a newly built hotel, which is 3 km away from the conference site. The late-summer weather conditions are most inviting in this area in September. We anticipate to give more information in the December issue of *WGN*.

Erratum

Meteorite Craters Discovered by Means of Examining X-SAR Images—Part II

communicated by Roberto Gorelli

Notice that the Internet site of DLR is <http://isis.dlr.de/XSAR/catalog.html> (on p. 137 of *WGN* 26:3, "dlr" was erroneously written as "dir." Furthermore, in the table identifying the images containing the craters discussed, the quicklook for crater 24 (the last in the table) is located in the southern hemisphere, so please change "N" into "S." Finally, the readers must be warned that DLR is changing the number of quicklooks. However, the quicklooks can also be found back utilizing time, orbit, and coordinates.