

Applications of Mathematics

Josef Pacák

Address of the vicerector of the Charles University Professor Josef Pacák

Applications of Mathematics, Vol. 38 (1993), No. 4-5, 243–244

Persistent URL: <http://dml.cz/dmlcz/104552>

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ADDRESS OF THE VICERECTOR OF THE CHARLES UNIVERSITY
PROFESSOR JOSEF PACÁK

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

I would first like to welcome you to our historic Charles University. This gives me the opportunity to tell you something about it.

The University was founded by the Czech King Charles IV in 1348, and was the first university established in any region of central, northern or eastern Europe. One year after the foundation Charles IV became the Holy Roman Emperor and in this capacity granted Charles University full status through the Holy Roman Empire.

During the subsequent centuries our University experienced periods in which it was thriving and others when it was suffering decline. The present century has been hard for our university as it has been for the nation, because academic freedom suffered under the Nazi occupation and more recently under the totalitarian repressive communist regime.

After the events of November 1989 it was necessary that the University should be restored to its original preeminence, and in the last three years we have started on this very difficult task. Difficult because 40 years of one system cannot be changed overnight.

However, we feel that the responsibility put on us by the past glories of Charles University challenges us to such an extent that we have to succeed.

Part of our activity involves bringing eminent scientists such as yourselves to Prague to interact with our scientists and therefore I am particularly pleased to see this august body of mathematicians here.

Successful science cannot be undertaken in isolation, so we welcome the cooperation with the Polytechnic University of Madrid, and all the interaction that it brings. This is the fourth ISNA Conference with two having been held in Madrid, and this the second in Czechoslovakia.

I am a chemist but I have studied enough mathematics to be able to use it for my own ends in my own organic chemistry research, particularly with computational techniques. The numerical schemes that you devise will, I hope, eventually be of use to me and my colleagues.

Not only for this, but for all the best reasons of advancing mathematical research and establishing useful contacts, I am pleased to wish you a successful and rewarding conference in the next four days. It goes without saying that I hope you will also find time to see something of our beautiful city, Prague.