

## PREFACE

This issue of "Publications de l'Institut Mathématique" is dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Mathematical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

The Mathematical Institute was founded in 1946 as the first institute of the Academy. Only 14 mathematicians - members of the Academy and others - were employed at the Institute on permanent research posts. In the following 50 years the Institute went through different changes in organization, mainly due to administrative changes imposed by the state, but the number of its permanent members remained restricted. On the other hand, the Institute always had a large number of collaborators with permanent posts elsewhere whom it helped by providing facilities for research: the library, seminars, colloquia, special courses, publications, etc.

With the growth of the number of universities in Serbia grew the number of collaborators of the Institute. Nowadays, about 250 mathematicians from all universities of Serbia are doing research through projects managed by the Institute, and some 150 more are connected to the Institute in one way or another.

In the first two decades, analysis and its applications in mechanics dominated the activities of the Institute, but research in any branch of mathematics was always encouraged, as long as it was of high quality. Over the years various branches had their ups and downs, based mainly on their ability to attract graduate students through seminars and courses. In general, variety was encouraged and only occasionally special support was given to some groups or to new disciplines. The number of mathematicians in Serbia grew in the last 50 years from less than 20 to more than 400. Their work covers practically all branches of modern mathematics and its applications, keeping up the pace with the explosive development of mathematics in the second half of the century.

In December 1996 a Symposium was organized to celebrate the Institute's jubilee. There were 35 communications, which presented the newest and most important results of individual mathematicians, groups or seminars working in the Institute or in universities of Serbia.

In this issue of "Publications" we publish some of these communications. Most of them make research as well as an expository papers. But we have also included several purely expository papers, surveying years of work on particular problems.