

Lunar Names Proposed

Lunar features are being named for two purged Russian astronomers

► THE RUSSIANS are planning to name at least two lunar features for astronomers purged during the late 1930s.

The names of two noted astronomers, theoretical astrophysicist Boris P. Gerasimovich who was once director of famed Pulkovo Observatory and Boris Numerov, were among the 153 proposed by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR to designate objects on the far side of the moon. The list also includes proposals for two areas on the side of the moon visible from earth.

As far as several astronomers in the United States know, Prof. Gerasimovich has never been officially reported dead. He was listed in a monthly publication as director of the Observatory in one issue nearly 30 years ago. The next month his name had been replaced and he was not officially heard from again.

The proposed names will not become official until they are approved

by the International Astronomical Union when it meets in Prague in August 1967. Before the names of Gerasimovich and Numerov can be approved, the Russians will have to prove the two astronomers are dead.

Lunar features are, by tradition, named for outstanding astronomers and men from other fields of science and technology who are deceased. This fact was officially recognized by the 11th General Assembly of the IAU in 1961. At the proposal of the Soviet delegation, 18 features on the moon's far side, identified in Luna-3 pictures, were given names.

An image of a considerable portion of the moon's other side was first relayed to earth in 1959 by the Soviet probe Luna-3. Because of poor illumination, few objects could be positively identified.

Photos taken by the Soviet Zond-3 in 1965 revealed about 3,500 objects on the other side of the moon. As a result of processing all the available information, "blank spots" occupy at present as little as five percent of the lunar surface.

Following observations of the marginal and libration zones of the moon's visible hemisphere, 60 more newly discovered objects were given names of outstanding scientists at the IAU's 12th General Assembly in Hamburg in 1964.

However, despite these additions, the greater part of the invisible side of the moon remained unnamed.

The new list was compiled after the Zond-3 photographs were evaluated. The features were chosen in such a way that they may be evenly distributed on the surface of a site.

New objects have been named after outstanding figures of various countries and continents—mathematicians and physicists, chemists and biologists, geodesists and geographers, science fiction writers and philosophers. Most of the names are well known: Robert Koch, founder of microbiology; philosopher Baruch Spinoza; Norbert Wiener, the "father of cybernetics"; physicists Christian Doppler and Jean Foucault, and others.

Lunar features were named after 13 U.S. scientists, one British and one Canadian—John Plaskett, who died in 1941—as well as German, French, Swedish, Indian, Hungarian, Dutch, Austrian, Japanese, Italian, Czechoslovakian (including Gregor Mendel, botanist and researcher in heredity), Yugoslavian, Swiss, Polish and Danish.

Four lunar features are named af-

ter great scientists from ancient China. They are: Wang Ku, who lived nearly 450 years ago, and, as the legend goes, made the first attempt at manned rocket flight; Confucius (Kung Fu-Tse), whose philosophy dealing with morals and ethics has not lost its significance for the Chinese people to this day; and the astronomers Shih Shen (4th century B.C.) and Chang Heng (78-139 A.D.).

Astronomers make up about one-third of the list. They include an Englishman, Harold Spencer Jones, who worked in the field of theoretical astronomy; an American, Forest Ray Moulton, who specialized in celestial mechanics; a German, Karl Schwartzchild, an expert on star photometry; an Englishman, astrophysicist Edward Arthur Milne; a Frenchman, Eugene Antoniadi, investigator of the planets, and a Dane, Anthonie Pannekoek, who in addition to works on astrophysics and stellar astronomy left for posterity an excellent treatise on astronomical history.

Other Soviet astronomers include Nikolai Idelson, Aristarkh Belopolsky and Grigori Shain.

One typical depression discovered to the south of the Eastern Sea will be called the Sea of Peace.

The crater chains of considerable length discovered on the reverse side of the moon will also be given abstract names.

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