ASTRONOMY

Astronomy Meetings

Executive Committee of the International Astronomical Union will convene at Copenhagen in March. Soviet and U. S. each to send three delegates.

➤ THE EXECUTIVE Committee of the International Astronomical Union, which had suspended activities for the duration of the war, will convene at Copenhagen on March 7. The three American delegates will be Dr. Otto Struve, director of the Yerkes and McDonald Observatories of the Universities of Chicago and Texas; Dr. Joel Stebbins, director of the Washburn Observatory of the University of Wisconsin and research associate of the Mount Wilson Observatory; and Dr. Harlow Shapley, director of the Harvard Observatory and president of the American Section of the International Astronomical Union.

Soviet astronomers look forward with great interest to the opening of the conference as the first practical measure for the restoration of international cooperation in science, according to a cablegram to *Science Service* from Prof. Gregory Neuimin, director of the famous Pulkovo Observatory near Leningrad. The Soviet Union will be represented by three delegates, Prof. Neuimin reports. He adds that Soviet astronomers are drawing up a number of proposals on the organization of scientific work and the participation of the Soviet Observatory in international undertakings.

The Conference in Copenhagen, Prof. Neuimin continues, will be attended by 20 astronomers from the ten most important countries in astronomical research. Some of the proposals that will be presented by the Soviet astronomers are the organization of an international center in Russia for the study of variable stars, and the participation of Russia in the renewed work of the Bureau, formerly centered in Germany, for the study of minor planets. At the Conference the Soviet delegates will report on the joint work of Soviet observatories in a compilation of a catalogue of faint stars, Prof. Neuimin states. They will also propose to foreign observatories that they participate in this work on faint stars; and they will submit also a number of other proposals on the organization of the international time service, the publication of astronomical annuals, etc.

The Pulkovo Observatory, of which Prof. Neuimin is director, was completely destroyed by German bombardments and bombs during the siege of Leningrad. Some of the library and a few of the astronomical lenses were taken from Observatory Hill and buried. Some of the other Russian observatories were also destroyed or badly damaged and it is now the plan of the Soviet government to restore all of the astronomical equipment and improve its quality and increase its quantity.

The plans for renewal of international work in astronomy were formulated on Pulkova Hill in June, 1945, when Dr. Harold Spencer Jones, Astronomer Royal of England, and Dr. Harlow Shapley were in Russia as guests of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

The scope of research work now confronting astronomers, Prof. Neuimin stated in the cablegram, insistently demands cooperation and coordination of the comparatively few scientific institutions and individual scientists working in this field. Need for an international organization of astronomers as early as the 18th century led to the formation of a more or less stable international union to carry out tasks that are beyond the power of one observatory or even of all observatories of one country.

This tendency found more complete expression after the first World War when the International Astronomical Union was formed. A number of countries represented by their academies of sciences or by scientific committees entered the Union. The purpose of the Union is to coordinate and organize astronomical work in all its branches. Every three years the Union convenes a congress where past work is summed up and future tasks outlined.

The USSR joined the International Astronomical Union in 1935 and was represented at the following and last congress held in Stockholm in 1938. Germany didn't deem it necessary to join the union.

FOR BALANCING—Stroboscopic light played an important part in the exact balancing of rotating parts in the Norden Bombsight where tolerances were kept within 20 millionths of an inch. Timed light flashes permitted precise determination of rotating speeds and visual study of imbalance during laboratory tests. In the picture is a technician in the laboratory of the Victor Adding Machine Company using a General Radio Strobotac and a Gisholt Dynetric Balancer.