IN MEMORY OF VASILII ALEKSEEVICH ISKOVSKIKH

Vasilii Alekseevich Iskovskikh, an outstanding mathematician, one of the most brilliant representatives of the Moscow school of algebraic geometry, and a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, passed away on January 4, 2009 in his 70th year.

The work of Iskovskikh helped shape modern birational geometry and greatly influenced related branches of algebraic geometry as well as other domains of modern mathematics: number theory, algebra, and mathematical physics. He is responsible for solutions of some of the most difficult mathematical problems and for the development of concepts and directions that opened new avenues of research for many generations of mathematicians. Iskovskikh always enthusiastically tackled the most complex classical problems. He solved (jointly with Yu.I. Manin) the Lüroth problem, introduced the concept of Fano varieties and obtained their classification in the three-dimensional case, developed techniques for the study of groups of birational automorphisms, and described the Cremona group of the plane. The works of Iskovskikh on rational surfaces over non-algebraically closed fields are rightfully considered classical. The achievements of the Mori Program of the 1980's relied substantially on Iskovskikh's outstanding results.

For more than thirty years, Iskovskikh worked at the Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics, Moscow State University. He created an entire school of birational geometry. The seminars of V.A. Iskovskikh at Moscow State University and the Steklov Institute of Mathematics, which always enjoyed a great deal of popularity, fostered intense scientific activity and attracted a lot of young people.

While this volume was being prepared for the 70th birthday of Vasilii Alekseevich, there was a tragic turn of events. With his passing away, the mathematical community lost a beautiful human being with a big heart, a man deeply devoted to his cause, an outstanding scientist in love with mathematics, a remarkable teacher with an open mind, an original thinker able to find creative solutions to the most challenging problems.

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