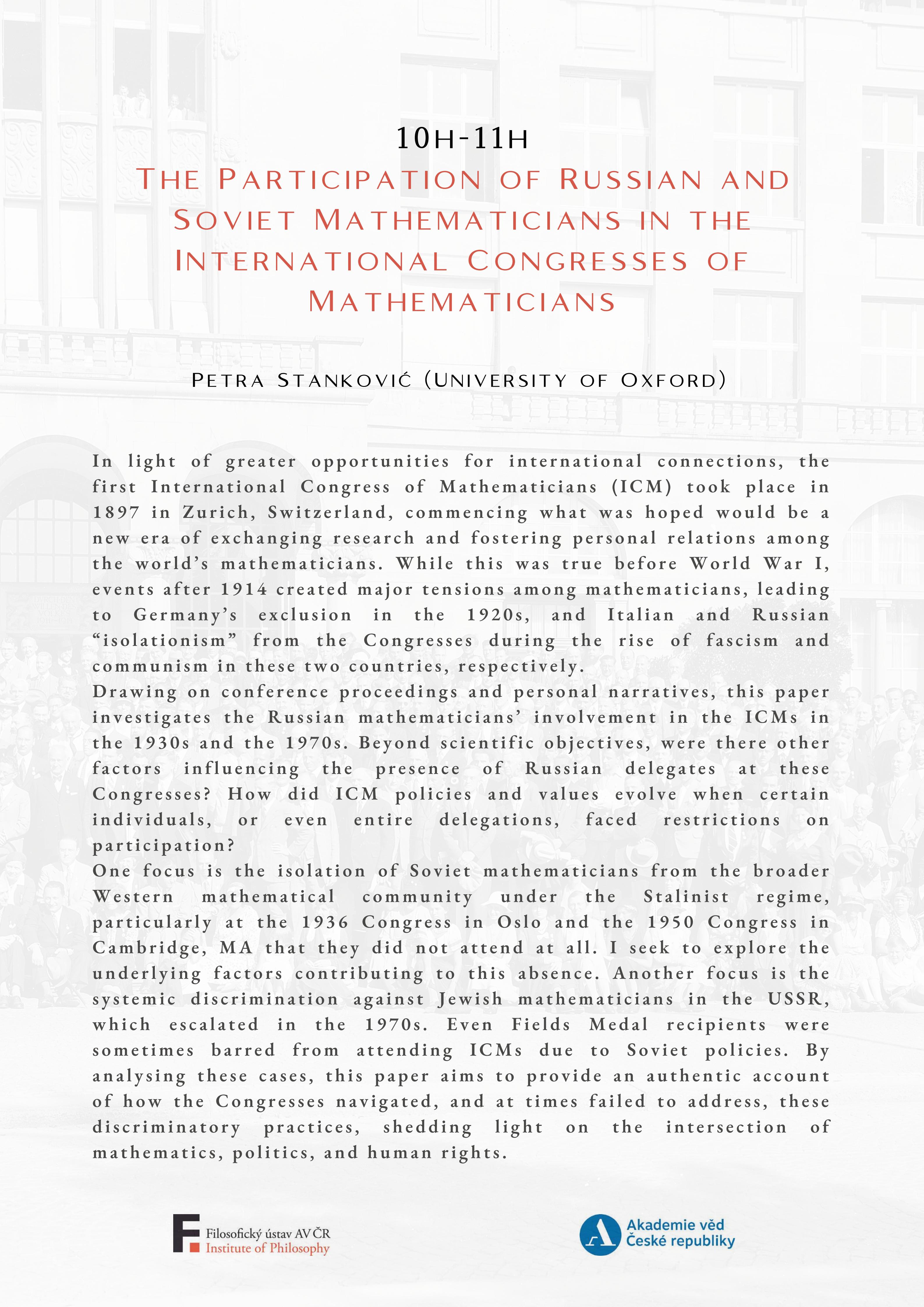WORKSHOP

MATHEMATICAL COMMUNITIES IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2025

MEETING ROOM (124A), INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY CAS, JILSKÁ 1, PRAGUE 1

Filosofický ústav AV ČR
Institute of Philosophy

Akademie věd
České republiky

10H-11H

The Participation of Russian and Soviet Mathematicians in the International Congresses of Mathematicians

Petra Stanković (University of Oxford)

In light of greater opportunities for international connections, the first International Congress of Mathematicians (ICM) took place in 1897 in Zurich, Switzerland, commencing what was hoped would be a new era of exchanging research and fostering personal relations among the world's mathematicians. While this was true before World War I, events after 1914 created major tensions among mathematicians, leading to Germany's exclusion in the 1920s, and Italian and Russian "isolationism" from the Congresses during the rise of fascism and communism in these two countries, respectively.

Drawing on conference proceedings and personal narratives, this paper investigates the Russian mathematicians' involvement in the ICMs in the 1930s and the 1970s. Beyond scientific objectives, were there other factors influencing the presence of Russian delegates at these Congresses? How did ICM policies and values evolve when certain individuals, or even entire delegations, faced restrictions on participation?

One focus is the isolation of Soviet mathematicians from the broader Western mathematical community under the Stalinist regime, particularly at the 1936 Congress in Oslo and the 1950 Congress in Cambridge, MA that they did not attend at all. I seek to explore the underlying factors contributing to this absence. Another focus is the systemic discrimination against Jewish mathematicians in the USSR, which escalated in the 1970s. Even Fields Medal recipients were sometimes barred from attending ICMs due to Soviet policies. By analysing these cases, this paper aims to provide an authentic account of how the Congresses navigated, and at times failed to address, these discriminatory practices, shedding light on the intersection of mathematics, politics, and human rights.

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11h15-12h:15
The Rise of Popular Astronomy in the German-Speaking Academia in the 1780s–1820s

Petra Hyklová, (Institute of Philosophy, AVČR)

Between the 1780s abd the 1820s, astronomy experienced remarkable progress, capturing public attention through the announcements of five new planetary discoveries in the Solar System. This era also saw increasing scientific specialization and decline in the number of individuals able to engage with a wide range of research fields. Simultaneously, rapid technological and scientific developments underscored the growing importance of making science accessible to the general public. During this period, the popularization of science shifted from primarily addressing an educated, often noble, audience to engaging a broader middle-class public. This contribution examines the teaching of Popular Astronomy at universities in Habsburg and German lands and introduces the textbooks and teaching aids used in these courses.

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