

Towards Mars!

by Risto Pellinsen & Paul Raudsepp (Eds.)

Oy Raud Publishing, [Albertinkatu 17, FIN-00120, Helsinki, Finland], 2000.
ISBN 952-9689-11-X. Pp 410, £46.00 (hbk).

Any book about Mars written just now runs the risk of being instantly out of date, but this one certainly has done its best to be topical and forward-looking. This is an attractive large format book from the Helsinki-based publishing house of Oy Raud. It is a multi-author work involving 33 (mostly European) writers, as well as a contribution from the NASA/JPL team. Co-editor Professor Pellinsen chaired ESA's Solar System Working Group, 1996–1999, and the International Mars Exploration Working Group, 2000–2001.

Towards Mars is intended for a general readership, but BAA members and amateur astronomers generally will find plenty of depth too, especially those interested in instrumentation or exploration. The book is visually very striking. It has a distinct flavour of its own, given the large number of Finland-based contributors, and the many unusual and beautiful illustrations chosen. Your reviewer liked it very much. Small touches such as the page decorations and titles, together with the generous use of full-page illustrations all combine to please the eye.

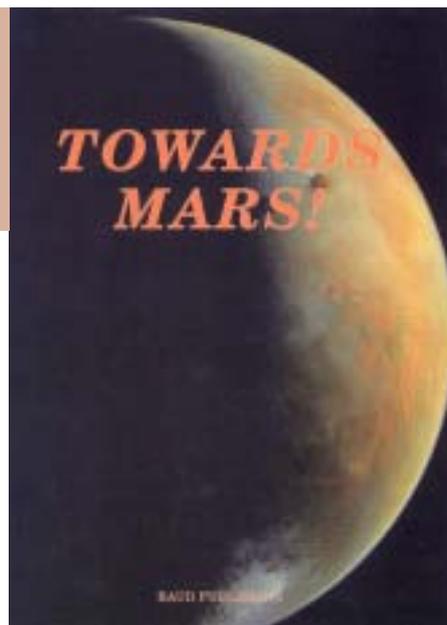
Towards Mars begins with a good chapter full of basic facts, and continues with a very brief historical sketch. The bulk of the text is appropriately concerned with the various missions to Mars and their discoveries, and with a discussion of what might happen in the future in terms of manned exploration. Pellinsen writes informatively about the international strategy for martian exploration, reviewing past, present and future missions. We learn about the forthcoming *Beagle II* lander to be dropped by *Mars Express*. I liked the chapter entitled 'Images of Mars' (by Gerhard Neukum and Harald Hoffmann), which describes imaging, image processing, and some of the uses to which images at various resolutions may be put. We learn about the martian interior, what is to be expected from future seismometry, and of martian geochemistry. Successive chapters deal with the solar wind, the martian atmosphere (a very nice collaborative chapter by Siili of Helsinki and Tillman of Seattle), space electronics and sensors, spectroscopy and mineral research. We also get a flavour of the Finnish space industry. Final chapters cover specific space missions: *Mars Global Surveyor*, *Nozomi*, etc., and last of all there is a discussion of the first manned missions (what, when and how).

There is really very little to criticise. I noted casually that the captions for pages 23, 43 and 320 are obviously incorrect: thus the map on page 23 is Gerard de Vaucouleurs' general map from 1939, and not 'a drawing made in the 1880s'. But I believe one can rely upon the accuracy of the text. A lot of the text has had to be translated into English and this has been very well done on the whole, but there are some brief 'wobbly' moments which a general reading of the whole book by a native English speaker could have eliminated.

In concluding, let us echo Paul Raudsepp's own passionately expressed hope for a peaceful future for civilisation by humankind's reaching out into space: 'In saving the common sense among humans, a united mission to the planet Mars might be a blessing'.

Richard McKim

Richard McKim directs the BAA Mars Section, and has been responsible for the analysis of all the Association's Mars observational work since the 1980 opposition of the planet.



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