

Preface

The present issue of *Advanced Studies in Pure Mathematics* constitutes the proceedings of the first of the two consecutive meetings held in Sapporo and Tokyo in July 1998. The idea of organizing an event on singularities and arrangements of hyperplanes came up in an informal discussion in 1996 of Jean-Paul Brasselet (IML, CNRS, Marseille), Mutsuo Oka (TMU, Tokyo), Kyoji Saito (RIMS, Kyoto), Tatsuo Suwa (Hokkaido University) and Hiroaki Terao (TMU, Tokyo). It was decided to have not one but two consecutive conferences in Sapporo and Tokyo, in order to express the relation between France and Japan in the domain of singularities on one hand and to commemorate the sixtieth birthday of Peter Orlik on the other hand.

This project had been realized as the international symposium “Singularities in Geometry and Topology” and “Workshop on Mathematics Related to Arrangements of Hyperplanes”. The former is an expansion of the Franco-Japanese Seminar supported by CNRS and JSPS and was organized by J.-P. Brasselet and T. Suwa. The latter was organized by M. Oka and H. Terao with Michael Falk (Northern Arizona University) and Richard Randell (University of Iowa) as the program committee.

These two events have strong relationship. First of all, singularities and arrangements of hyperplanes are closely related from the mathematical viewpoint - the subjects studied and the tools used in the two theories are often the same; hypergeometric functions, singular de Rham complexes, resolution of singularities and Milnor fibration, to name a few. In fact, many mathematicians participated in the two conferences and some of them gave talks in both. Thus our original intention was to publish one joint volume as the proceedings of these two meetings. However, due to the page restriction, we had to publish in two separate volumes. We should mention that the proceedings of the other meeting will also be published in the series of *Advanced Studies in Pure Mathematics*.

The international symposium on “Singularities in Geometry and Topology” took place at Hokkaido University, Sapporo, July 6 - 10, 1998. There were sixty-eight participants, mostly from Japan and France but also from other countries including China, Mexico, Poland, Spain and USA. There were twenty-two lectures, whose main topics are singularities of curves, characteristic classes of singular varieties, \mathcal{D} -modules, motives, resolution of singularities, Milnor fibration, Enriques diagrams, Hilbert schemes and log-canonical singularities.