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Table of Contents

Chapter I. Problems of Semi-Permeable Media and of Temperature Control	1
1. <i>Review of Continuum Mechanics</i>	1
1.1. Stress Tensor	1
1.2. Conservation Laws	2
1.3. Strain Tensor	7
1.4. Constituent Laws	10
2. <i>Problems of Semi-Permeable Membranes and of Temperature Control</i>	11
2.1. Formulation of Equations	11
2.1.1. Equations of Thermics.	11
2.1.2. Equations of Mechanics of Fluids in Porous Media	12
2.1.3. Equations of Electricity	13
2.2. Semi-Permeable Walls	14
2.2.1. Wall of Negligible Thickness	15
2.2.2. Semi-Permeable Wall of Finite Thickness	16
2.2.3. Semi-Permeable Partition in the Interior of Ω	17
2.2.4. Volume Injection Through a Semi-Permeable Wall	17
2.3. Temperature Control	18
2.3.1. Temperature Control Through the Boundary, Regulated by the Temperature at the Boundary	19
2.3.2. Temperature Control Through the Interior, Regulated by the Temperature in the Interior	21
3. <i>Variational Formulation of Problems of Temperature Control and of Semi-Permeable Walls</i>	23
3.1. Notation	23
3.2. Variational Inequalities	26
3.3. Examples. Equivalence with the Problems of Section 2.	27
3.3.1. Functions ψ of Type 1	27
3.3.2. Functions ψ of Type 2	30
3.3.3. Functions ψ of Type 3	31
3.4. Some Extensions	34
3.5. Stationary Cases	35
3.5.1. The Function ψ Is of Type 1	35
3.5.2. The Function ψ Is of Type 2	35
3.5.3. The Function ψ Is of Type 3	36
3.5.4. Stationary Case and Problems of the Calculus of Variations	36

4. <i>Some Tools from Functional Analysis</i>	37
4.1. Sobolev Spaces	38
4.2. Applications: The Convex Sets K	43
4.3. Spaces of Vector-Valued Functions	44
5. <i>Solution of the Variational Inequalities of Evolution of Section 3</i>	46
5.1. Definitive Formulation of the Problems	46
5.1.1. Data V, H, V' and $a(u, v)$	46
5.1.2. The Functional Ψ	46
5.1.3. Formulation of the Problem	47
5.2. Statement of the Principal Results	47
5.3. Verification of the Assumptions	48
5.4. Other Methods of Approximation	50
5.5. Uniqueness Proof in Theorem 5.1 (and 5.2)	51
5.6. Proof of Theorems 5.1 and 5.2	52
5.6.1. Solution of (5.14)	52
5.6.2. Estimates for u_j and u'_j	56
5.6.3. Proof of (5.7).	57
6. <i>Properties of Positivity and of Comparison of Solutions</i>	58
6.1. Positivity of Solutions	58
6.2. Comparison of Solutions (I)	60
6.3. Comparison of Solutions (II).	62
7. <i>Stationary Problems</i>	63
7.1. The Strictly Coercive Case	63
7.2. Approximation of the Stationary Condition by the Solution of Problems of Evolution when $t \rightarrow +\infty$	66
7.3. The Not Strictly Coercive Case	67
7.3.1. Necessary Conditions for the Existence of Solutions	69
7.3.2. Sufficient Conditions for the Existence of a Solution.	70
7.3.3. The Problem of Uniqueness under Assumption (7.48)	71
7.3.4. The Limiting Cases in (7.48)	75
8. <i>Comments</i>	76
Chapter II. Problems of Heat Control	77
1. <i>Heat Control</i>	77
1.1. Instantaneous Control.	77
1.1.1. Temperature Control at the Boundary	77
1.1.2. Temperature Control in the Interior	78
1.1.3. Properties of the Solutions	78
1.1.4. Other Controls	78
1.2. Delayed Control	79
2. <i>Variational Formulation of Control Problems</i>	80
2.1. Notation	80
2.2. Variational Inequalities	80
2.2.1. Instantaneous Control	80
2.2.2. Delayed Control	81

2.3. Examples	81
2.3.1. The Function ψ of Type 1	81
2.3.2. The Function ψ of Type 2	83
2.3.3. The Function ψ of Type 3	83
2.4. Orientation	85
3. <i>Solution of the Problems of Instantaneous Control</i>	85
3.1. Statement of the Principal Results	85
3.2. Uniqueness Proof for Theorem 3.1 (and 3.2)	87
3.3. Proof of Theorems 3.1 and 3.2	87
3.3.1. Solution of the Galerkin Approximation of (3.15)	87
3.3.2. Solution of (3.15) and a Priori Estimates for u_j	93
3.3.3. Proof of the Statements of the Theorems	93
4. <i>A Property of the Solution of the Problem of Instantaneous Control at a Thin Wall</i>	94
5. <i>Partial Results for Delayed Control</i>	96
5.1. Statement of a Result	96
5.2. Proof of Existence in Theorem 5.1	97
5.3. Proof of Uniqueness in Theorem 5.1	101
6. <i>Comments</i>	101
Chapter III. Classical Problems and Problems with Friction in Elasticity and Visco-Elasticity	102
1. <i>Introduction</i>	102
2. <i>Classical Linear Elasticity</i>	102
2.1. The Constituent Law	102
2.2. Classical Problems of Linear Elasticity	104
2.2.1. Linearization of the Equation of Conservation of Mass and of the Equations of Motion	104
2.2.2. Boundary Conditions	106
2.2.3. Summary	106
2.3. Variational Formulation of the Problem of Evolution	107
2.3.1. Green's Formula	107
2.3.2. Variational Formulation	108
3. <i>Static Problems</i>	109
3.1. Classical Formulation	109
3.2. Variational Formulation	109
3.3. Korn's Inequality and its Consequences	110
3.4. Results	118
3.4.1. The Case " T_U has Positive Measure"	118
3.4.2. The Case " T_U is Empty"	119
3.5. Dual Formulations	119
3.5.1. Statically Admissible Fields and Potential Energy	120
3.5.2. Duality and Lagrange Multipliers	121

4. <i>Dynamic Problems</i>	123
4.1. Statement of the Principal Results	123
4.2. Proof of Theorem 4.1	127
4.3. Other Boundary Conditions	130
4.3.1. Variant I (for Example, a Body on a Rigid Support)	131
4.3.2. Variant II (a Body Placed in an Elastic Envelope)	133
5. <i>Linear Elasticity with Friction or Unilateral Constraints</i>	134
5.1. First Laws of Friction. Dynamic Case	134
5.1.1. Coulomb's Law	135
5.1.2. Problems under Consideration	136
5.2. Coulomb's Law. Static Case	138
5.2.1. Problems under Consideration	138
5.2.2. Variational Formulation	138
5.2.3. Results. The Case " Γ_U with Positive Measure"	142
5.2.4. Results. The Case " $\Gamma_U = \emptyset$ "	142
5.3. Dual Variational Formulation	144
5.3.1. Statically Admissible Fields and Potential Energy	144
5.3.2. Duality and Lagrange Multipliers	146
5.4. Other Boundary Conditions and Open Questions	147
5.4.1. Normal Displacement with Friction	148
5.4.2. Signorini's Problem as Limit Case of Problems with Friction	150
5.4.3. Another Condition for Friction with Imposed Normal Displacement	152
5.4.4. Coulomb Friction with Imposed Normal Displacement	153
5.4.5. Signorini's Problem with Friction	153
5.5. The Dynamic Cases	154
5.5.1. Variational Formulation	154
5.5.2. Statement of Results	156
5.5.3. Uniqueness Proof	157
5.5.4. Existence Proof	157
6. <i>Linear Visco-Elasticity. Material with Short Memory.</i>	162
6.1. Constituent Law and General Remarks	162
6.2. Dynamic Case. Formulation of the Problem	163
6.3. Existence Theorem and Uniqueness in the Dynamic Case	165
6.4. Quasi-Static Problems. Variational Formulation	168
6.5. Existence and Uniqueness Theorem for the Case when Γ_U has Measure > 0	168
6.6. Discussion of the Case when $\Gamma_U = \emptyset$	171
6.7. Justification of the Quasi-Static Case in the Problems without Friction	175
6.7.1. Statement of the Problem	175
6.7.2. The Case "Measure $\Gamma_U > 0$ "	176
6.7.3. The Case " $\Gamma_U = \emptyset$ "	179
6.8. The Case without Viscosity as Limit of the Case with Viscosity	180
6.9. Interpretation of Viscous Problems as Parabolic Systems	182
7. <i>Linear Visco-Elasticity. Material with Long Memory.</i>	183
7.1. Constituent Law and General Remarks	183
7.2. Dynamic Problems with Friction	184
7.3. Existence and Uniqueness Theorem in the Dynamic Case	185
7.4. The Quasi-Static Case	189

7.4.1. Necessary Conditions for the Initial Data	189
7.4.2. Discussion of the Case “Measure $\Gamma_U > 0$ ”.	190
7.4.3. Discussion of the Case “ $\Gamma_U = \emptyset$ ”.	192
7.5. Use of the Laplace Transformation in the Cases without Friction	193
7.6. Elastic Case as Limit of the Case with Memory.	195
8. <i>Comments</i>	196
Chapter IV. Unilateral Phenomena in the Theory of Flat Plates	197
1. <i>Introduction</i>	197
2. <i>General Theory of Plates</i>	197
2.1. Definitions and Notation	197
2.2. Analysis of Forces	198
2.3. Linearized Theory	201
2.3.1. Hypotheses	201
2.3.2. Formulation of Equations. First Method.	203
2.3.3. Formulation of Equations. Second Method (due to Landau and Lifshitz)	206
2.3.4. Summary	207
3. <i>Problems to be Considered</i>	208
3.1. Classical Problems	208
3.2. Unilateral Problems.	208
4. <i>Stationary Unilateral Problems</i>	209
4.1. Notation	209
4.2. Problems (Stationary)	210
4.3. Solution of Problem 4.1. Necessary Conditions for the Existence of a Solution	214
4.4. Solution of Problem 4.1. Sufficient Conditions	215
4.5. The Question of Uniqueness in Problems 4.1 and 4.3	217
4.6. Solution of Problem 4.1a	218
4.7. Solution of Problem 4.2	219
5. <i>Unilateral Problems of Evolution</i>	222
5.1. Formulation of the Problems	222
5.2. Solution of Unilateral Problems of Evolution	225
6. <i>Comments</i>	227
Chapter V. Introduction to Plasticity	228
1. <i>Introduction</i>	228
2. <i>The Elastic Perfectly Plastic Case (Prandtl-Reuss Law) and the Elasto-Visco-Plastic Case</i>	228
2.1. Constituent Law of Prandtl-Reuss	228
2.1.1. Preliminary Observation	229
2.1.2. Generalization	231
2.2. Elasto-Visco-Plastic Constituent Law	233
2.3. Problems to be Discussed	236

3. <i>Discussion of Elasto-Visco-Plastic, Dynamic and Quasi-Static Problems</i>	237
3.1. Variational Formulation of the Problems	237
3.2. Statement of Results	240
3.3. Uniqueness Proof in the Theorems	241
3.4. Existence Proof in the Dynamic Case	242
3.5. Existence Proof in the Quasi-Static Case	245
4. <i>Discussion of Elastic Perfectly Plastic Problems</i>	247
4.1. Statement of the Problems	247
4.2. Formulation of the Results	249
4.3. Proof of the Uniqueness Results	250
4.4. Proof of Theorems 4.1 and 4.2	250
4.5. Proof of Theorems 4.3 and 4.4	252
5. <i>Discussion of Rigid-Visco-Plastic and Rigid Perfectly Plastic Problems</i>	254
5.1. Rigid-Visco-Plastic Problems	254
5.2. Rigid Perfectly Plastic Problems	257
6. <i>Hencky's Law. The Problem of Elasto-Plastic Torsion</i>	259
6.1. Constituent Law	259
6.2. Problems to be Considered	260
6.3. Variational Formulation for the Stresses	260
6.4. Determination of the Field of Displacements	261
6.5. Isotropic Material with the Von Mises Condition	264
6.6. Torsion of a Cylindrical Tree (Fig. 19)	266
7. <i>Locking Material</i>	271
7.1. Constituent Law	271
7.2. Problem to be Considered	273
7.3. Double Variational Formulation of the Problem	273
7.4. Existence and Uniqueness of a Displacement Field Solution	275
7.5. The Associated Field of Stresses	276
8. <i>Comments</i>	276
Chapter VI. Rigid Visco-Plastic Bingham Fluid	278
1. <i>Introduction and Problems to be Considered</i>	278
1.1. Constituent Law of a Rigid Visco-Plastic, Incompressible Fluid	278
1.2. The Dissipation Function	279
1.3. Problems to be Considered and Recapitulation of the Equations	281
2. <i>Flow in the Interior of a Reservoir. Formulation in the Form of a Variational Inequality</i>	285
2.1. Preliminary Notation	285
2.2. Variational Inequality	286
3. <i>Solution of the Variational Inequality, Characteristic for the Flow of a Bingham Fluid in the Interior of a Reservoir</i>	288
3.1. Tools from Functional Analysis	288
3.2. Functional Formulation of the Variational Inequalities	291

3.3. Proof of Theorem 3.2	293
3.4. Proof of Theorem 3.1	299
3.4.1. Existence Proof	299
3.4.2. Uniqueness Proof	301
4. <i>A Regularity Theorem in Two Dimensions</i>	303
5. <i>Newtonian Fluids as Limits of Bingham Fluids</i>	305
5.1. Statement of the Result	305
5.2. Proof of Theorem 5.1	306
6. <i>Stationary Problems</i>	310
6.1. Statement of the Results	310
6.2. Proof	312
7. <i>Exterior Problem</i>	314
7.1. Formulation of the Problem as a Variational Inequality	314
7.2. Results	315
8. <i>Laminar Flow in a Cylindrical Pipe</i>	317
8.1. Recapitulation of the Equations	317
8.2. Variational Formulation	317
8.3. Properties of the Solution	319
9. <i>Interpretation of Inequalities with Multipliers</i>	322
10. <i>Comments</i>	326
Chapter VII. Maxwell's Equations. Antenna Problems	328
1. <i>Introduction</i>	328
2. <i>The Laws of Electromagnetism</i>	328
2.1. Physical Quantities	329
2.2. Conservation of Electric Charge	329
2.3. Faraday's Law	330
2.4. Recapitulation. Maxwell's Equations	332
2.5. Constituent Laws	332
3. <i>Physical Problems to be Considered</i>	334
3.1. Stable Medium with Supraconductive Boundary	334
3.2. Polarizable Medium with Supraconductive Boundary	335
3.3. Bipolar Antenna	335
3.4. Slotted Antenna. Diffraction of an Electromagnetic Wave by a Supraconductor	336
3.5. Recapitulation. Unified Formulation of the Problems	338
4. <i>Discussion of Stable Media. First Theorem of Existence and Uniqueness</i>	339
4.1. Tools from Functional Analysis for the "Weak" Formulation of the Problem	339
4.2. The Operator \mathcal{A} . "Weak" Formulation of the Problem	343
4.3. Existence and Uniqueness of the Weak Solution	347
4.4. Continuous Dependence of the Solution on the Dielectric Constants and on the Magnetic Permeabilities	349

5. <i>Stable Media. Existence of “Strong” Solutions</i>	354
5.1. Strong Solutions in $D(\mathcal{A})$	354
5.2. Solution of the Physical Problem	356
6. <i>Stable Media. Strong Solutions in Sobolev Spaces</i>	358
6.1. Imbedding Theorem	358
6.2. B as Part of a Sobolev Space	364
6.3. D as Part of a Sobolev Space	365
7. <i>Slotted Antennas. Non-Homogeneous Problems</i>	365
7.1. Statement of the Problem (Cf. Sec. 3.4)	365
7.2. Statement of the Result	366
7.3. Proof of Theorem 7.1	368
8. <i>Polarizable Media</i>	369
8.1. Existence and Uniqueness Result for a Variational Inequality Associated with the Operators of Maxwell.	369
8.2. Interpretation of the Variational Inequality. Solution of the Problems for Polarizable Media	371
8.3. Proof of Theorem 8.1	372
8.3.1. Existence Proof	372
8.3.2. Uniqueness Proof	377
9. <i>Stable Media as Limits of Polarizable Media</i>	377
9.1. Statement of the Result	377
9.2. Proof of Theorem 9.1	378
10. <i>Various Additions</i>	380
11. <i>Comments</i>	381
Bibliography	382
Additional Bibliography and Comments	392
1. <i>Comments</i>	392
2. <i>Bibliography</i>	392
Subject Index	394

Introduction

1. We begin by giving a simple example of a *partial differential inequality* that occurs in an elementary physics problem.

We consider a fluid with pressure $u(x, t)$ at the point x at the instant t that occupies a region Ω of \mathbb{R}^3 bounded by a membrane Γ of negligible thickness that, however, is *semi-permeable*, i.e., a membrane that permits the fluid to enter Ω freely but that prevents all outflow of fluid.

One can prove then (cf. the details in Chapter I, Section 2.2.1) that

$$(1) \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} - \Delta u = g \left(\Delta u = \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x_1^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x_2^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x_3^2} \right) \quad \text{in } \Omega, t > 0,$$

g a given function, with boundary conditions in the form of inequalities¹

$$(2) \quad \begin{aligned} u(x, t) > 0 &\Rightarrow \partial u(x, t) / \partial n = 0, & x \in \Gamma, \\ u(x, t) = 0 &\Rightarrow \partial u(x, t) / \partial n \geq 0, & x \in \Gamma, \end{aligned}$$

to which is added the initial condition

$$(3) \quad u(x, 0) = u_0(x).$$

We note that conditions (2) are *non linear*; they imply that, at each fixed instant t , there exist on Γ two regions Γ'_0 and Γ'_1 where $u(x, t) = 0$ and $\partial u(x, t) / \partial n = 0$, respectively. These regions are not prescribed; thus we deal with a “free boundary” problem.

We can restate (1), (2) in the (equivalent) form of *inequalities*. For that purpose, we introduce the set K of “test functions” v :

$$(4) \quad K = \{v \mid v = \text{function defined in } \Omega^2, v \geq 0 \text{ on } \Gamma\};$$

then (1), (2) are *equivalent* to

$$(5) \quad \begin{aligned} u(., t) \in K \quad \forall t \geq 0, \\ \int_{\Omega} \left[\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} (v - u) + \text{grad}_x u \cdot \text{grad}_x (v - u) - g(v - u) \right] dx \geq 0 \quad \forall v \in K. \end{aligned}$$

¹ $\partial / \partial n$ denotes the derivative in the direction of the normal to Γ directed towards the exterior of Ω .

² We must take v in the Sobolev space $H^1(\Omega)$; this will be formulated more precisely in Chapter 1.

The problem to find a solution u of (5) with the initial condition (3) is what we call an *inequality of evolution* (of parabolic type).

2. The preceding example has features of a general character: we will encounter problems that can be expressed in terms of *inequalities* in situations where the constraints, the equations of state, the physical laws change when certain thresholds are crossed or attained.

The aim of the present work is to discuss examples of such situations in Mechanics and Physics.

3. The “program” indicated in the above paragraph covers an immense field that we have not studied exhaustively; we limited ourselves in this volume to the simplest classic laws. We have treated the following subjects:

- 1) problems of semi-permeable walls, of diffusion, applications to thermodynamics and hydrodynamics;
- 2) problems of control, particularly in thermodynamics;
- 3) problems in (linearized) elasticity involving friction and unilateral conditions;
- 4) problems of bending of plane plates;
- 5) phenomena of elastic-visco-plasticity, perfect elasticity, plasticity, rigid-visco-plasticity, rigid-perfect plasticity, and locking materials;
- 6) flows of Bingham fluids;
- 7) problems of inequalities connected with the system of Maxwell operators.

4. In order to avoid ambiguity in the formulation of the problems enumerated above, it was necessary to give a concise but precise review of the mechanical or physical bases for the situations envisioned. This is done at the beginning of each chapter. We now give a short description of the contents of the chapters.

5. In Section 1. above, we gave an example of the problems treated in *Chapter 1*; other problems concern temperature control.

In *Chapter 2*, control problems are discussed that lead to inequalities of the type (compare with (5))

$$(6) \quad \begin{aligned} & \partial u / \partial t(., t) \in K, \\ & \int_{\Omega} \left[\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} \left(v - \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} \right) + \text{grad}_x u \cdot \text{grad}_x \left(v - \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} \right) - g \left(v - \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} \right) \right] dx \geq 0 \\ & \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \forall v \in K, \end{aligned}$$

with the initial condition (3).

Chapter 3 treats the classic linear theory of elasticity rather completely (in particular, we give a proof of Korn's inequality, the indispensable mathematical basis for the theory); then we go on to problems of friction that lead to inequalities; we adopt Coulomb's law and indicate some modifications.

Chapter 4 deals with problems of friction connected with the mechanics of thin plates.

Chapter 5 is devoted to phenomena of elasto-visco plasticity from which we derive, by various passages to the limit, the elastic-perfectly plastic case, the rigid-visco-plastic case and the rigid-perfectly plastic case, all of these problems being stated in the form of inequalities. In this chapter, we also investigate Hencky's law and locking materials.

Chapter 6 treats the flow of a certain type of non-newtonian fluid: Bingham fluids. Here, we are led to inequalities of evolution containing, as a special case, the classic system of Navier-Stokes equations.

Chapter 7 is concerned with the problems of inequalities connected with the system of Maxwell operators. We will first study conducting media where the relation between the electric field and the current density is expressed by the classic Ohm's law, i. e., media with constant resistivity (we call such a medium "stable"). Subsequently, we treat the case of media susceptible to ionization under the influence of the electric field. The resistivity then abruptly becomes infinite: these are the phenomena that occur in connection with breakdown of condensers or antennas.

"Hybrid" problems simultaneously involving two of the situations described in the outline for the preceding chapters are treated in separate articles by the authors (see: Duvaut-Lions [7], [8]).

6. Throughout this book, we made use of the most direct methods possible, generally representing *inequalities* (the absolutely indispensable tool, especially for *problems of evolution*) as *limiting cases of non linear equations* (which, moreover, usually have a mechanical or physical interpretation).

In addition, in order to facilitate the reading of the book, we presented each chapter as independent as possible (at the price of some repetition).

7. There are numerous earlier works on stationary inequalities in Mechanics. The classic approach (see P. Germain [1], G. Mandel [1], E. Tonti [1] and the bibliographies of these works) consists in studying stationary elasticity in relation to minimization of quadratic functionals on *vector spaces*. The minimization of analogous functionals on convex sets that *are not* vector spaces made its appearance in *perfect plasticity* (where the stress tensor remains in a closed *bounded* convex set) (cf. W.I. Koiter [1], G. Mandel [2], W. Prager [1] and the bibliographies of these works), subsequently in *unilateral elasticity* in the problem of Signorini, solved in G. Fichera [1], then in J.L. Lions-G. Stampacchia [1].

Similarly, the phenomena of cavitation studied by J. Moreau [3] and the investigation of minimal surfaces with constraints (J.C. Nitsche [1]) also lead to problems in variational inequalities.

The *inequalities of evolution* were introduced in Lions-Stampacchia for the parabolic case, in Lions [4] for the hyperbolic case and have been investigated particularly by H. Brézis [2]³ (cf. also the book Lions [1] and the bibliography of this work). It seems that the applications of the inequalities of evolution to Mechanics and Physics are being investigated here for the first time. As might be expected, these applications lead to many new problems, some of them still open; we mention specifically:

- the problem of *regularity* of solutions (the methods of Brézis-Stampacchia [1], Brézis [2] are not applicable to numerous situations in this book);
- the problem of inequalities of evolution in connection with convex sets or with functions *depending on t* (they occur particularly in the theory of dynamic elastic-visco plasticity).

³ where one will find, in particular, the use of the theory of *non linear semigroups*, a theory that has not been used in this book.

8. There are other situations in physics leading to inequalities, either stationary or of evolution. We will return to this subject, e.g. in the discussion of thermo-elastic-visco plasticity and of optimal control of systems governed by inequalities. We also would like to point out that a free boundary problem, occurring in hydrodynamics, was solved with inequality methods by C. Baiocchi [1].

We did not treat two subjects related to this book:

i) *singular perturbations* related to inequalities (theory of singular layers); we refer to J.L. Lions [5], [6];

ii) methods of *numerical approximation* of solutions of inequalities of evolution, methods that will be treated in the book by R. Glowinski, J.L. Lions and R. Trémolières [1]. We refer to the works on this subject by D. Bégis [1], J.F. Bourgat [1], H. Brézis et M. Sibony [1], J. Céa et R. Glowinski [1], J. Céa, R. Glowinski et J. Nédelec [1], R. Comincioli [1], [2], [3], B. Courjaret [1], M. Frémond [1], A. Fusciardi, U. Mosco, F. Scarpini et A. Schiaffino [1], M. Goursat [1], Y. Haugazeau [1], P.G. Hodge [1], A. Marrocco [1], M. Sibony [1], D. Viaud [1].

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