

# europ physics news



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## Viewpoint

### A state of emergency

At the meeting of Council in Romania on 22 and 23 March 1973, a state of emergency was declared within the European Physical Society. After hearing of the large financial deficit on the final account for 1972 and of the worsening situation for 1973, Council unanimously accepted a motion proposed by L. A. A. Thomas that there should be a task group appointed to carry out an investigation. The task group comprises: the new Secretary elected in Romania, J. J. Went; the new Treasurer, O. S. Heavens; H. Friedrich; and M. Guenin. C. M. Braams and K. Ganzhorn, members of the Executive Committee, will act as advisers, and the final report will be prepared in co-operation with the President, H. B. G. Casimir.

When the task group has completed the investigation of the financial affairs and relevant administrative matters of the European Physical Society, a report will be presented to the next meeting of the Executive Committee on 5 June 1973. The Executive Committee will immediately take the necessary action that lies within its powers and will refer to the November 1973 meeting of Council any matters which require discussion and approval by Council.

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## The Italian Physical Society and "Il Nuovo Cimento"

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The foundation of the Italian Physical Society, Società Italiana di Fisica (SIF), took place in 1897, and was linked closely with the monthly journal *Il Nuovo Cimento*. The subheading *Organo della Società Italiana di Fisica* (Organ of the Italian Physical Society) first appeared in the January issue of 1897.

It is, therefore, impossible to consider the history of the Italian Physical Society without expounding, although briefly, the history of *Il Nuovo Cimento*, because of the great influence that this journal has had on physics in Italy for more than a century.

*Il Nuovo Cimento* was founded in 1855, and is the only physics journal published in Italy up to the present time. The scientists who founded *Il Nuovo Cimento* also sponsored, in 1844, another publication named *Il Cimento* which had a short and tormented life, because of the political events in which the scientists who founded it were protagonists. It is important to remember that the group of scientists who founded *Il Cimento* originally, and then went on to create *Il Nuovo Cimento*, were affiliated to the University of Pisa; during the first half of the nineteenth century, this was one of the most liberal intellectual centres on the Italian peninsula. This liberalism arose from the 'enlightenment' which distinguished the government of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany and which permitted the fostering of scientific research among men who would be regarded as political progressives. In fact, the group of scientists who organized *Il Cimento* also comprised, in 1848, the military organization called Tuscan University Battalion; this was commanded by the illustrious physicist Mossotti and fought gloriously during the war for

Italian Independence. Mossotti was cited for bravery in the battles of Curtatone and Montanara in which died Pilla, one of the other founders of *Il Cimento*. Scientific activity was then regarded as a liberal activity in itself and those who engaged in it were espousing liberal ideas and considered to be engaged in a political activity supposed to lead to a more liberal system of government for the entire peninsula. It was under these political circumstances that *Il Cimento* ceased to appear for some years because of the reactions caused by the military defeat of the first war of independence. In 1855, it resumed imperceptibly under the new name of *Il Nuovo Cimento*.

In 1894, Battelli, one of the three founders of the Italian Physical Society, came to Pisa to succeed Riccardo Felici (1819-1902) in the chair of physics of the University. Felici was a pupil of Mossotti, in company of whom he had fought in 1848 at Curtatone, and of Matteucci, whom he had succeeded in the chair of experimental physics of the University of Pisa in 1849. Felici, furthermore, was successful in keeping *Il Nuovo Cimento* alive by personally taking it up; in 1897, he was the sole proprietor of the journal. According to Polvani: 'An important declaration was contained in the circular letter in which the promoters of the Italian Physical Society called upon Italian physicists to join: Prof. Felici... hands over the journal to the Society provided the Society will consider it as the official organ and the President of the Society will be one of the directors.'

Thanks to Felici, the only Italian physical journal was kept alive and he gave it to the Italian Physical