

Five Years of the European Physical Society

(A few thoughts in retrospect)

L. Jansen, EPS Secretary (1968 - 1973)

On 26 September 1973 the European Physical Society celebrated its fifth anniversary. There were, to my knowledge, no special festivities at the Secretariat to commemorate this foundation. Some awareness of this fact will probably shine through at the next EPS Council meeting, scheduled for the end of November in Geneva, especially since the EPS was founded in that city. There will be a reception, by the city authorities during the days of the Council meeting, as there was five years ago. Much has changed, and much has remained the same.

What have we learned in the meantime? One fact, in my mind, is certain: the creation of EPS in 1968 was timely and essential. There is no doubt regarding the validity of Bernardini's initiative and, indeed, we all owe him our deep gratitude for his boldness and for his greatness of thought. Greatness is never out-of-place, whatever the circumstances. In these troubled times, we are in dire need of men who think as Bernardini did, and does.

The initial period of EPS, that is, until Rudberg took over from Bernardini as President (on 1 April 1970), may be called the "romantic period". It was romantic in several aspects. First of all, many of us believed enthusiastically that all barriers separating physicists in Europe were only virtual ones. In this, we were more radical, less realistic, than Bernardini himself. A year or so later, in the wake of sobering thoughts, many of these barriers appeared to be very real indeed, simply because we realized that we have no control over influences and powers which caused these barriers to exist in the first place. Secondly, many believed that the absence of starting capital would not be a grave handicap in the development of the Society. In reality, however, this fact turned out to be the number one handicap for a sound development of EPS. Not only did it cause a negative financial balance for the larger part of the past five years, it also had, a very serious consequence indeed, a profoundly negative

influence on the working spirit of the team at the Secretariat. A constant feeling of insecurity is very detrimental to the climate within a working group; it impedes the development of fruitful and effective activities, as many of us will have experienced ourselves during the past few years. I mention these aspects in particular, not only since I had opportunity of observing them daily, but also because I believe that a major part of the development of EPS must be seen against this background. That, in spite of all this, so much work was done by the Secretariat, and to a large extent so effectively, borders on a miracle. As a third "romantic" aspect, I mention the belief that the dual ordinary membership, invented by Sir James Taylor at the meeting of the Steering Committee in London in May 1967 (that is, Individual Ordinary Members on one hand, National Societies and Academies on the other hand) would be only for the benefit of EPS: individual members would take care of the interests of individual physicists, National Societies and Academies of their own interests, and everyone would work jointly with everybody else for the good of EPS. In a not-too-distant future, the National Societies and Academies would be transformed into truly regional Sections of EPS.

Reality, my fellow members of EPS, turned out to be significantly different from this dream. It was filled with firmly established influences and it withstood, brilliantly, the onslaught of a handful of europeanists who had enthusiasm written in capital letters on their banner, but not much else. What many physicists, during the first development of EPS, did not realize was the strain put on the Society because of its dual membership. It is quite true that, without this provision, EPS would very probably *not exist today*, but it is equally true that this same provision *per se* often curtailed initiatives by those eager to establish an effective European Physical Society, fulfilling the glorious intentions laid down in its Constitution.

As a consequence, we had to settle down, with Rudberg, to a new, and

rather harsh, reality. EPS appeared to be an economically fragile entity, deriving its possible stability from the positive whims of many, with no pedestal of its own, essentially handicapped in its development because of a chronic lack of funds. This aspect EPS shares with most international organisations. In our case, however, the situation was worse. EPS proudly proclaimed that it would shy away from governmental influences. In doing so, however, it forfeited the chance of asking for financial support from governments through direct channels. Initiatives had to be undertaken via National Societies who, understandably, were not enthusiastically motivated because of a conflict of interests. The same applied to the possibility of soliciting for Associate Membership in different countries; here, again, EPS was clearly a potential trespasser in the domain of well-established interests of its Member Societies. It is only just about one year ago that a first formal agreement between EPS and one of its largest Member Societies was reached on this matter. Starting publishing activities, another possibly lucrative source of income, proved to be a road essentially blocked off by lack of starting capital and conflicting interests of Member Societies, the latter aspect aggravated by the fact that several of our Member Societies developed serious financial troubles on their own — "One's skin is closer than one's shirt", as a Dutch proverb goes. There is no question of trying to put the "blame" somewhere: a confrontation with these factors was inescapable. They were there, right from the start, and it was not their existence that surprised us so much, but the extent to which they turned out to influence the development of EPS. Another complicating aspect for our young Society was that we did not have a chance of starting small and growing with experience gained. Although on 26 September 1968 EPS counted only fifty-odd Individual Ordinary Members, it comprised a large number of Member Societies and it

saw itself confronted with a wide range of possible activities, all asking for speedy realisation. It was like "jumping on a horse and scampering off in all directions". Coordinated large-scale improvisation was, under the circumstances, the only way to "ride out the storm and keep the boat afloat". Here, I put the emphasis on *coordination* as an absolute necessity, because, in view of the complicated character of EPS and the numerous sources of potential conflict, uncoordinated actions might very well create chain reactions threatening the very life of the Society. Many physicists seemd to believe that EPS had a broad avenue in front of it, on which to proceed towards prosperity and stability. In reality, because of the many initial conditions imposed, this avenue appeared to be a very narrow path indeed, paved with rather strict rules which would have to be followed to avoid serious accidents.

In this situation, minor miracles happened. A small number of people declared themselves willing to carry, voluntarily, part of the heavy burden and to help the overchanged Secretariat with actual work and with good advice. A shining example is the expert help we received from CERN with *Europhysics News*. Then, Battelle Geneva helped enormously, offering services, time of some of its personnel, and also material help. The European Physical Society owes these two Institutes more than it is aware.

It is difficult for me to realize that all this happened within the past five years. There was, in addition, the changing mood in physics, an influence on EPS which cannot as yet be measured in a quantitative sense. The cultural mission of physics, about which Bernardini spoke during his inaugural address on 26 September 1968 in Geneva now *seems* sometimes less relevant in the light of what is happening.

I hope that I have, with this "look in the rear-view mirror", been able to convey to you some aspects of the sometimes intense, drama that accompanied our Society during the first five years of its existence. It is still too early to characterize the "Casimir era" through which we are, at present, passing. This much is certain: the time of change is not yet over. Casimir, a man of enormous versatility, will, I predict, have ample opportunities to display his talents during the remainder of his Presidency.

Society News

Raise of Unit Fee

The Council of the European Physical Society in its meeting held on 27/28 November in Geneva decided, according to the procedure laid down in Rule 34 of the By-Laws, to raise the unit fee by one third. Therefore as from 1 January 1974 Individual Ordinary Members shall pay the following annual fees

category 4a) Swiss Francs 96.—
category 4c) Swiss Francs 24.—
Academies, National Societies and Laboratories, Members 4b) shall pay fees according to the scale laid down in Rule 35b).

Change in Constitution

Ordinary Members of the European Physical Society are hereby informed that a proposal of amendment of the Constitution has been submitted to Council; a new wording for Constitution, **Article 19.2.** is proposed, as follows:

"Members of the Executive Committee may be immediately re-elected but shall not serve more than five years."

Council will have to decide on the proposed change of Constitution in its next meeting, to be held on 28/29 March 1974 in Geneva.

Individual Ordinary Members

The following have been accepted as Individual Ordinary Members of EPS:

- S. Amiel, Yavne
- G. Andersson, Partille
- J. Bar-Touv, Beer-Sheva
- F. Beniere, Paris
- D.J. Bergman, Tel-Aviv
- J. Brandelik, New Carlisle
- J. Broeder, Bilthoven
- Y. Disatnik, Ramat-Aviv
- Y. Eckstein, Haifa
- G. Fiebig, Jülich
- R. Forbes, Birmingham
- H. Hubeny, Vienna
- O. Igra, Beer-Sheva
- F. Illés, Debrecen
- L. Kerwin, Québec
- Ch. Klit, Copenhagen
- M. Kurepa, Belgrade
- E. Martuscelli, Arco Felice
- E. Muñoz-Merino, Madrid
- A.M. Najmi, London
- I. Otterlund, Staffanstorp
- W. Persson, Lund
- M. Rona, Ankara
- E. Serrallach, Oetwil-am-See
- I. Szabo, Lund
- M. Vrbová, Prague

Associate Members

The following organizations have decided to join EPS as Associate Members:

- Akzo NV**,
Arnhem, The Netherlands
- Institut Max von Laue-Paul Langevin**,
Grenoble, France
- Reactor Centrum Nederland**,
Petten, The Netherlands

Europhysics Journals

The EPS Advisory Committee on Publications, in cooperation with EPS Divisions, is investigating specialized physics journals and has recommended a first set to the Executive Committee for inclusion in the Europhysics Journals scheme.

The specialized journals newly accepted to carry the EPS emblem are:

- Astronomy and Astrophysics*
- Molecular Physics*
- Nouvelle Revue d'Optique*
- Optica Acta*
- Plasma Physics*

The following review journals have been accepted as Europhysics Journals:

- Advances in Physics*
- Reports on Progress in Physics*

Further have been included in the scheme for general physics:

- Acta Physica Austriaca*
- Physica Scripta*

Im Fachbereich Physik der Universität Frankfurt/Main ist eine

H4 — Professur für Theoretische Physik

mit der Arbeitsrichtung Festkörperphysik wiederzubesetzen. Es handelt sich um die Nachfolge von Professor H. Thomas.

Von den Bewerbern wird die Bereitschaft zur Zusammenarbeit mit bereits vorhandenen Arbeitsgruppen in theoretischer und experimenteller Festkörperphysik, sowie ein engagierter Einsatz in der Lehre erwartet. In Zusammenarbeit mit der Technischen Hochschule Darmstadt besteht ein gemeinsamer Sonderforschungsbereich « Festkörperspektroskopie ».

Bewerbungen mit Lebenslauf, Schriftenverzeichnis und Kurzdarstellung der bisherigen Forschung und Lehrtätigkeit werden bis zum 31. Dezember 1973 erbeten.

An den
Präsidenten der Johann Wolfgang
Goethe-Universität

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