

sion in Den Haag attracted more than 100 participants. There is clearly great enthusiasm for this Section to which Council gave its formal approbation.

Optics/Quantum Electronics Divisions — Whereas the Q.E. Division has a long history in EPS, the Optics Division is very new and is currently feeling its way under the Chairmanship of Professor H. Tiziani. They come together in the ECOOSA meeting for example (1984, Amsterdam 9-12 October) and while the two Divisions are conscious of the need for close collaboration, they each have their own areas, with the Optics Division much more involved with engineering aspects.

The Q.E. Division in the mean time has been spreading its activities outside the conference field (which is the main pre-occupation of most Divisional Boards). It has been publishing *Who's Who in Quantum Electronics* for some years and the 5th edition (which is free to IOMs) will appear in the Summer. It is also planning to include news pages in appropriate journals so that non-EPS members, particularly in industry, are made aware of its activities. In addition, it is putting together safety rules on the use of lasers to help harmonise practices and legislation in different European countries. It has, moreover, announced its willingness to act as an independent expert group to advise organisations such as the European Communities — an action that could lead to a most important widening of the EPS's field of influence.

Europhysics Letters

Real progress has been made in the negotiations over the launching of a European general physics letters journal which would incorporate *Il Nuovo Cimento Lettere* and *Journal de Physique Lettres*, but these have taken longer than had been hoped and the first number is now planned for 1 January 1986. Only in the past few months were the discussions within the principal national societies completed as a result of which a number of specific provisions in the Copenhagen understanding had to be revised. However, it seemed at Wintertur that there was now substantial agreement on most aspects and that the essential features upon which other

member societies had been invited to express an intention to participate remained intact.

On the editorial side it is foreseen that under the guidance of the Editor-in-Chief there would be from 9-14 Co-editors who would look after different areas of physics and who would be responsible, on the basis of reports from referees they select (mainly from an established panel) for the acceptance or rejection of submitted papers. These would in the first place be sent to the staff editor installed at the Geneva office who would look after the logistics and subscriptions. The staff editor would be an aid also to the Executive Secretary who would in turn have management responsibility for the journal. Invitations to tender for the publishing operations will be sent out once the specification has been agreed and a provisional agreement had been concluded between the main contributing partners.

In addition to the editors indicated, there would also be a broadly-based group of Advisory Editors who would formulate general policy, advise on ap-

pointments and actively sponsor the journal in their area. In the setting up of all these bodies the Divisions must be strongly engaged to ensure that the best people are involved and to make clear that this is something that concerns the whole scientific life of EPS.

Prague

Apart from ribald comments on the desirability of booking accommodation for the 6th General Conference in pairs (see front page of March issue) there was general satisfaction expressed at the advanced state of preparations, the vigour of the programme, and the widespread interest shown — among industrial as much as academic physicists. Prague promises to be a stirring event both scientifically and socially, so that it was on an optimistic note that Council adjourned, having elected a new Executive Committee (see panel) and warmly applauded the efforts of J. Friedel during his two years as President and the work of the retiring members of the Executive Committee, Professors K.E. Ganzhorn and H. de Waard.

Letter to the Editor

This coming summer, many physicists will attend the 6th General Conference of the European Physical Society in Prague, and those who are Individual Ordinary Members will attend as well the General Meeting of our Society. Such meetings are of singular importance as they provide one of the rare occasions when members can discuss their physics and its culture.

But what do we mean when we use the word "culture"? Is it simply the acquisition of more and more esoteric data relating to purely physical phenomena? Few would accept such a narrow definition; the majority would regard our culture as being a complex quantity in which a sense of values must also play a role. And admitting that, we are forced to recognise the differentiation into things that are "good" and those that are "bad". Science cannot be considered *just* a body of knowledge, of specific skills, and of institutions where particular kinds of knowledge are concentrated and some skills well organized; for, in addition, the discussion of virtue and vice as "embodied" in its development should be regarded as an integral part. Lest the complex develop without this

discussion being even recognized as something essential, and lest the complex develop vice that becomes stronger than virtue...

To-day the basic threat to humanity is not coming from "West" nor from "East", nor is it coming from "North" nor from "South". It is coming from the increasing autonomy of a scientific culture which explicitly embodies knowledge but forgets about value. To be more concrete: I believe the present dangerous relation between East and West stems from the existence of nuclear armature and is aggravated by the present political relation — not the other way round! What is so disturbing is not the place of science and technology in the hands of politicians, but the functioning of politicians *under the umbrella* of science and technology. And with regard to the latter, EPS might constitute a forum for an opening debate on the matter.

What I propose is that an effort be made not to miss this opportunity.

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The traditional Council lecture was this year given by R.P. van Staple of Eindhoven on "Nuclear Spin Imaging for Medical Applications". A summary will appear in a future issue of *Europhysics News*.