

# Histories of Big Science

Those involved in setting up major organizations for science and research naturally wish to see their efforts written down for posterity — but there are also more objective reasons. John Kriege, well known for his scholarly writing on the history of large scientific organizations, including the three volume *History of CERN* (the second volume was published last year and the third is planned for autumn 1992) stresses "history as reference books". For example, a good account allows managers to learn and governments to draw up charters for new organizations (the experience gained in founding CERN helped in formulating the convention for the ESRF in Grenoble). In the case of these organizations, large quantities of material were generated (1000 documents in the UK alone in 1951-52 during the formation of CERN) which may not belong to an easily accessible body (France's negotiations in creating CERN were carried out by a political body involved in sensitive national issues, namely the Department of Foreign Affairs). Fixed ideas of what is historically important may then determine the type of material organizations choose to archive. In a nutshell, Dr. Kriege warns us against focussing upon notable individuals in self-congratulatory "official" histories portraying an artificial chain of events — arrived at irrationally by resolving conflicts in isolation from the prevailing social context and scientific culture.

The dangers have not, nonetheless, dampened enthusiasm as there has been an upsurge in the number of physics-related institutions commissioning histories, including the European Space Agency (ESA).

## A New Project

Dr. Kriege's ideas of what constitutes a good history of big science will be put to test in his next major project — an independent and authoritative account of the history of the ESA, from its early origins to the adoption of the long-term European Space Plan in 1987, which effectively charted Europe's future activities in space research.

ESA material is being progressively transferred for final archiving to the Historical Archives of the European Community at the European University Institutes's Villa "Il Poggiolo" in Florence where Dr. Kriege is now based after his several years at CERN. The EUI Department of History and Civilization sees the ESA project as the core for an expansion of its interests in contemporary history into the field of high technology. A contract was signed in 1990 for a five year, two volume, 1000 page project that includes a short popular history by the end of 1992. While modelled on the *History of CERN*, the main ESA history will be consolidated by John Kriege into a more homogeneous text.

## ESA History

The history of ESA from 1957 to 1987 will span: the daunting challenge posed to Europe by the launch of the first Soviet Sputnik and the discovery soon after by the US of the Van Allen belt; the troubled career of the European Space Vehicle Launcher Development Organization (ELDO) with its launch failures; the successful revision of the European Space Research Organization's (ESRO) working procedures leading to the incorporation of ELDO activities



John Kriege (on the right) with his collaborators on the ESA history project: A. Russo (on the left) and M. de Maria.

and a new name (ESA) and status in 1975; and ESA's enviable series of successful launches and space experiments. The team will address intergovernmental cooperation and national and institutional policies, satellite and launcher programmes, including science and applications, in an analysis of issues at several levels (policy reconciliation, the significance of scientific achievements, technical choices, and the influence of North American programmes).

## Solar Physics Section

Following the ballot of members earlier this year with the election of two new members, the Board of the Solar Physics Section now comprises: W. Mattig (Chairman), B. Schmieder (Secretary and Treasurer), G. Godoli, P. Heinzel, P. Hoyng, A. Righini, G. Simnett, J. Staude, G. Trottet, J.C. Vial, L. Vlahos, and Yu.D. Zhugzhda.



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L'institut de chimie minérale et analytique de la Faculté des sciences cherche un

### Professeur associé

à temps partiel

*Domaine:* infochimie/chimie minérale théorique.

*Entrée en fonction:* 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 1992 ou à convenir.

*Renseignements:* Prof R. Roulet, Institut de chimie minérale et analytique, Château 3, 1005 Lausanne (Suisse), tél. 021/316 38 00.

Candidatures (avec curriculum vitae détaillé, liste complète des publications, un programme de recherche et trois noms de références) sont à adresser, avant le **18 janvier 1992**, à M. Joseph, Doyen, Faculté des sciences, Collège propédeutique, 1015 Lausanne.

Soucieuse de promouvoir l'accès des femmes à la carrière académique, l'Université encourage les candidatures féminines.