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TWENTY YEARS ESO

On the 5th of October 1962, the ESO Convention was signed in Paris by representatives of Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. More than a year later, on the 17th of January 1964, the Convention went into effect, following parliamentary ratification in the required majority of countries. In 1967, Denmark also joined. In the early days (partly before the formalities were completed), site surveys were made which led to the choice of La Silla as the observatory location, and work was started on the La Silla infrastructure and on the Schmidt telescope and the 3.6 m telescope. Some other telescopes were ordered from industry. After it was realized that ESO did not have the necessary (technical) management capabilities to bring all its projects to a successful completion, discussions took place with CERN which led in 1970 to the founding of the T(elescope) P(roject) Division in Geneva, partly staffed with CERN personnel. As a result, the 3.6 m telescope was completed in 1976.

Fundamental decisions about the future of ESO were taken at the end of 1975: It was decided to continue the TP Division at roughly the same size and with the task to develop the instrumentation. In addition, the Scientific Division was created which would give the organization its scientific identity. By 1980, ESO moved to Garching where the German government provided a new building.

Equally important changes took place in Chile. While originally a centre had been founded in Santiago, 600 km from the Observatory, it became increasingly clear that it was difficult to give La Silla the necessary priority from such a distance. As a result, in 1975 the decision was taken to move all scientific-technical facilities to the mountain.

In the last few years, a new strong impetus was given to ESO. Two new countries, Italy and Switzerland, decided to join and completed the ratification procedures earlier this year. Partly related to this, it was decided to add the 2.2 m telescope of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft to the La Silla telescope park and to construct a 3.5 m New Technology Telescope. Moreover, the European Space Agency decided to place the European Coordinating Facility for the Space Telescope at ESO. These developments indicate that ESO has been able to

obtain the confidence of the European community as an effective cooperative organization.

It is important that ESO has shown that it can develop telescopes and instrumentation and stimulate scientific research at a level comparable to the best available elsewhere. Perhaps, however, its most significant contribution is to European integration. Of course, the fact that persons of different nationalities work together in relative peace is all to the good. But the task of ESO goes far beyond this: ESO has to make its contribution to creating the confidence that Europe can set its own aims in science and technology and accomplish these successfully. Only on the basis of this self-confidence can an advanced and independent Europe be built.

L. Woltjer, Director General

Professor M. K. Vainu Bappu (1927–82)

It was with great sadness that we received the news of the death, on 19 August 1982, of Professor M.K.V. Bappu, President of the International Astronomical Union and Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore, India. Professor Bappu was spending a few months with ESO in Munich, doing research within solar and stellar spectroscopy and at the same time preparing for the XVIIIth IAU General Assembly. A heart ailment necessitated a major surgical intervention, which was apparently successful. However, post-operative complications set in, and after a heroic struggle, assisted by the foremost medical expertise, Professor Bappu expired in the early evening of 19 August.

Few astronomers ever were as esteemed and liked as Professor Bappu. Combining a great scientific insight in many areas of astronomy and an outstanding talent for organization, he won friends on all continents, wherever he travelled. His very human approach and charming appearance will always be