Trieste pays tribute
Alfred Kastler

On 11 March, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste paid tribute to the memory of Alfred Kastler, Nobel Laureate for Physics 1966 and Chairman of the ICTP Scientific Council from 1970 to 1982, who died on 7 January 1984.

The ceremony took place in the context of one of the programmes initiated by him the cycle of extended courses on Atomic, Molecular and Laser Physics, this year seeing the sixth of the series. The addition of Atomic, Molecular and Laser Physics to the multidisciplinary curriculum of the ICTP was by itself an innovation; however the most striking feature had been Kastler’s total intellectual and human commitment to the success of the first course. Despite all his other responsibilities, he directed the course from the first to the last day, listening to all lectures, taking part in all scientific discussions and taking an interest in young scientists from developing countries, not only in their individual difficulties relating to the course itself, but also in their day-to-day problems. Also he never missed the Italian lessons for course participants.

Another innovation of Kastler was the institution of courses in French for scientists from French-speaking African countries. This led to biennial Summer Schools on Physics Teaching and on Non-Conventional Energies. The cycle started in 1977 with the Physics Teaching School held in Trieste. The subsequent ones were held in Grenoble, France in 1979, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium in 1981 and Bizerte, Tunisia in 1983. Louvain-la-Neuve will again welcome the 1985 School. The schools on Non-Conventional Energy have been held at ICTP.

During the ceremony, ICTP Director Abdus Salam and S. Lundqvist, Chairman of the ICTP Scientific Council, together with some of Kastler’s former collaborators, described his many contributions to science and the spread of scientific knowledge.