

THE BIRTH OF NIAS

The birth of NIAS was not a smooth and happy affair.¹ At certain moments I had a sinking feeling that matters had come to a complete stand-still. Gestation was unnaturally protracted. Eleven years passed before the infant saw the light of day, having gone through several transformations since its initial conception.

I have not been able – quite understandably – to pinpoint the actual beginning of the pregnancy, but it is certain that in the autumn of 1959 discussions began amongst the Dutch representatives in the European Interim Committee for the founding of a European University and a select group of Dutch university professors. In March of the following year they unanimously reached the conclusion that there was a real need for ‘a European Institute of Advanced Studies’. It soon appeared, however, that the idea of bringing together only prominent scholars in such an institute did not meet with general approval within the Interim Committee. The Committee felt that the European University to be established, should give preference to the dissemination of knowledge among advanced students from the various European countries.

This rather negative reaction did not deter the Leiden Professor C.H.F. Polak, Secretary-Treasurer of the European Institute founded in Leiden in 1957 and member of the Dutch delegation in the Interim Committee, to argue strongly in favour of setting up – in Leiden of course – ‘an International Institute for Advanced Research’ (*Instituut voor Hogere Wetenschapsbeoefening*), in which prominent scholars would be free to pursue their own scholarly interests. His speech given on the occasion of the 77th lustrum of the University of Leiden and published in the daily journal, the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* of 15 June 1960, made a deep impression. In September Professor J.E. Jonkers’ speech transferring the Rectorate to his successor, expressed warm approval of Polak’s proposals.

These pronouncements led the Leiden Praesidium (the newly established (1957) governing body which replaced the former Board of Rector and Assessors, of which I was chairman at that time) to take action. It

appointed a committee consisting of three prominent members of the Senate, namely C.H.F. Polak, E. Havinga and I. Samkalden, who were entrusted with the task of exploring the possibilities of creating a ‘European Institute for Advanced Research’ (*Europees instituut voor voortgezet wetenschappelijk onderzoek*) in Leiden. Already on 25 October 1960 the triumvirate presented a concise report of four pages to the Praesidium. The report clearly expressed its conviction that it was highly desirable that an institute comparable to the Princeton institute should be established in the Netherlands as soon as possible.

The Committee also considered it advisable that the name of the University of Leiden would be associated with the institute, not out of ‘local chauvinism’, but to make the initial stages of the existence of the new institute easier, and to give it ‘a certain standing in the international scientific world’ from the outset. Only scholars ‘of exceptional quality’ (*van ongemeen gehalte*) would be admitted. They could be students either of the natural sciences or of the humanities and the social sciences. The total number of scholars would be forty in the first years and would gradually rise to a maximum of eighty. The minimum stay at the institute would be six months, the maximum five years. As in Princeton there would be a small group of scholars with permanent appointments.

At the meeting of the Praesidium of 14 November 1960 the report came up for discussion. Although some members were doubtful about the feasibility of the plan, given the size of the country and the language problem, the idea of creating an institute for advanced study met with general approval. Since Polak, who had been invited to the meeting, had been unable to attend, it was decided that the report would be put on the agenda of the next meeting. At that meeting I informed the Praesidium that I had discussed the report with Professor B.A. van Groningen, President of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. He thought that ‘the Leiden initiative should become a national affair’ (*een nationale zaak*). In the light of this information the Praesidium concluded that it was

necessary for the Polak Committee to get into contact with Professor Van Groningen to determine the procedure to be followed.

At the meeting of the Praesidium on 28 January 1961, Polak gave a confidential account of the meeting with Van Groningen in which Dr. A.J. Piekaar, Director-General of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science also took part, probably at the invitation of Van Groningen. Polak told the Praesidium that, according to Piekaar, the Minister of Education, Arts and Science Dr. J.M.L.T. Cals, was highly in favour of an institute for advanced study in the Netherlands, but – as Van Groningen had already suggested to me earlier – further initiatives should not come from the University of Leiden, but from the Academy. Piekaar, however, had added that it would be desirable that the new institute should maintain a connection with Leiden.

Polak also told the Praesidium that Piekaar had suggested setting up a small committee to explore the various possibilities and modalities of establishing an institute in the Netherlands. Members of this committee, who would report to the Academy, might be: Professor J. de Boer of the Municipal University of Amsterdam, Professor O. Bottema of Delft, of course Professor Van Groningen and Professor Polak, and two senior civil servants: Dr. J.J.M. Aangenendt, Director General of the Governmental Building Department (Rijksgewebouwendienst) and Jhr. Mr. E. van Lennep, Treasurer-General. Dr. Piekaar himself was willing to be chairman. These suggestions were apparently accepted by the Academy. Early in the spring of 1961 the Committee composed as mentioned above, met for the first time.

Within a year the Piekaar Committee's Report was ready. It was presented to the Board of the Academy on 22 January 1962. The Report consisted of twenty closely typed pages with four pages of annexes, and was basically a detailed elaboration of the Polak Committee's Report. The Report retained the idea of bringing together in the institute prominent scholars, primarily from European countries. Their number should not exceed fifty. In principle scholars from all disciplines would be eligible. Their selection should take place according to scientific merit, not on the basis of nationality. The institute would be governed by a Board of Governors, which would appoint the Directorate. There would be a Scientific Advisory Council and a

Selection Committee, which would advise on the scholars to be invited. The main purpose of the institute was described as 'the advancement of our present understanding of the foundations of science, and the study of the relations between the various disciplines'. Although a European institute, it would operate under Dutch management, and it should be located in the Netherlands, preferably 'somewhere between the Hague and Velsen'. It was not clear whether this was meant as an obscure geographical indication of Leiden.

It took the Board of the Academy nearly a year before it felt able to determine its position towards the plan and to reach unanimity on the answer to be given to the Minister. First the Board sent the Report to all members of the Academy for comment. Of the 130 scholars who were members at that time 27 answered in writing: 15 from the Division of Natural Sciences and 12 from the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences. In view of the detailed contents of the Report and the diversity of the commentators it was not surprising that the reactions received by the end of February were mixed. Opinions varied from downright rejection to enthusiastic support. Although a majority was in favour of the Piekaar Committee's plan, criticism of various aspects was voiced even by those who were otherwise ready to support the plan, such as the Wagenvoort Committee, set up in May 1961 by the Minister to examine the study of the humanities in the Netherlands. Although rather positive about the idea of an institute for advanced study, the Committee also made quite a number of critical remarks. To those who had read Professor Wagenvoort's personal comments as member of the Academy, this did not come as a surprise.

An important point raised by several members of the Natural Sciences Division was the question of the relation between the institute and several other international plans, such as the plan for a European university, the Killian Plan presented to NATO for an international institute for science and technology, and the proposal of Euratom for establishing an institute for solid-state physics and low energy nuclear physics. In the letter of 22 January which accompanied the Report of the Piekaar Committee, it was stressed that it could be expected that especially the Killian Plan would have to be compared with the Dutch plan. Such a comparison, however, was not made in the Piekaar Committee's Report.

It goes without saying that the often conflicting opinions voiced in the individual comments did not make things easier for the Board. In April 1962 the Board decided to send all the comments to the Piekaar Committee and to await its reactions. On 9 July the Committee met to discuss the comments on its report. In a long letter of 25 September the Committee formulated a number of mostly minor revisions to the original text of the report which it considered necessary in view of the critical remarks made by the Academy. In a final paragraph Dr. Piekaar expressed the hope that the proposed revisions would help the Board in the final determination of its standpoint. However, this proved to be a far from easy matter. The two Divisions proved to hold different opinions on the procedures to be followed.

The Humanities Division, led by its Chairman B.A. van Groningen, who also occupied the position of President of the Academy as a whole, felt that the Board now had to make a final decision about the Piekaar plan. But C.J. Gorter, Chairman of the Natural Sciences Division, felt that Piekaar's letter of 25 September should first be sent to all Academy members for further comment. This was finally done on 29 October. Comments were to be returned to the Board by 9 November. Fortunately there was no response from any Academy member.

By that time Dr. 't Hart, Director of the Academy, had become a little impatient. In his opinion it was high time to inform Dr. Piekaar about the position of the Academy. He pointed out – no doubt correctly – that the Piekaar Report asked for 'some action' from the Academy. In a clearly written letter addressed to the General Secretary of the Board, 't Hart outlined the various alternatives for an answer. In reply to this letter Gorter noted that 'the Academy should not take the problem too lightly' (*dat de Akademie er zich niet al (Gorter's underlining) te gemakkelijk van kan afmaken*). Gorter went on to say that neither Division of the Academy had much enthusiasm for the plan. Moreover, he said, there are so many other plans and other possibilities, 'that the Academy is entitled to hesitate in committing itself to the Piekaar plan.'

The deliberations among the members of the Board in the following weeks finally led to the decision to send the Minister the revised Piekaar Report. The accompanying letter, containing Gorter's suggestions, was remarkable in several respects. First of all the letter did not explicitly

endorse the proposal in the Report. It merely stated that *if* the Government should decide to establish a European Institute for Advanced Research, the Academy would be ready to co-operate. However, an important proviso was attached to this promise of support. Having pointed out that there were several other plans of an 'international nature' such as the Killian Plan, the Board remarked that it wondered whether the new Dutch institute could be realized 'on an international basis' in combination with one or more of these other plans. The Board raised the question but provided no answer, nor seemed inclined to work towards arriving at an answer.

I have been unable to find out whether this letter of 14 December 1962 led to further discussions with the Ministry. I also have been unable to determine whether the Academy entered into a discussion about the Dutch plan with the *auctores intellectuales* of the international plans mentioned above. In any case a period of stagnation began which lasted until about 1967. It is difficult to determine its causes. It is likely that an important factor has been the fact that at that time the Academy was not yet a vigorous and effective organisation from which initiatives in important matters of science policy could be expected.

Dr. A.J. Piekaar (right) presenting the first copy of the *Old Javanese-English Dictionary* to its newly decorated compiler Dr. P.J. Zoetmulder, at NIAS on 19 October 1982.



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It is also possible that the idea of creating an institute for scholars of the hard sciences and of the humanities and the social sciences was rather unattractive, especially for the former. Nor should the possibility be excluded that the project as outlined in the Piekaar plan was not only too expensive but also too ambitious, as it supposed co-operation and mutual understanding between the natural sciences on the one hand and the social sciences and humanities on the other hand, which hardly existed at that time.

II

In August 1961 I visited the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California. In a way this visit was accidental. I wanted to discuss my views on syntax with my old friend Roman Jakobson, Professor of General Linguistics at Harvard University, and since I was on my way to Honolulu to attend the Pacific Science Congress and was to lecture in Berkeley, Jakobson had invited me to spend a day at the nearby Center where he was fellow at the time.

It is difficult to describe my feelings when we drove up from the Junipero Serra Boulevard in Stanford to the hill where the Center was located. I was immediately taken with the place, by its beautiful setting, by the marvellous facilities for working without distraction, by its relaxed atmosphere. In short I was soon convinced that I had entered a scholar's paradise.

The next year, in the summer of 1962, I was appointed member of the Wagenvoort Committee already mentioned above, to take the place of Professor A. Teeuw, who was going to Indonesia for a year. This gave me a most welcome opportunity to revive the idea of establishing an institute for advanced study in the Netherlands.

It was several years before the Wagenvoort Committee could complete its complicated task. There is no need to go into the causes of its slow progress. I preserve memories of long meetings which took place every single month till the end of 1964. Finally, on 20 November, the Minister was offered a substantial 74-page report. For the history of the birth of NIAS it should suffice to mention only recommendation 16, which contained the advice 'to establish a Dutch institute comparable to the American institutes of Stanford and Princeton'. In a short paragraph the

Committee referred to the previous discussions and expressed the hope that an attempt would be made to develop a more modest plan. Such a plan would not prevent international co-operation. The Committee added rather cryptically that modest size could even be beneficial to such co-operation.

The recommendation of the Wagenvoort Committee, although very brief, was important because it put the idea of an institute for advanced study on the agenda once again. In comparison with the original plan as outlined by the Polak Committee there were three basic differences: (1) the idea of an institute for both the natural sciences and the humanities and social sciences was definitively abandoned, (2) the institute was viewed as an instrument primarily beneficial to the Dutch humanities and social sciences, (3) the institute was no longer considered to be a European institution. This made comparison with other European plans like the Killian proposal unnecessary, which meant that a difficult stumbling block had been removed.

The year 1964, the final year of the Wagenvoort Committee, was also the first year of a new Committee established in Leiden: The Discussion Group Future University (*Gespreksgroep Toekomst Universiteit*), which met for the first time in March 1964. This local Committee consisted of eight members: the President of the Board of Governors of the University Dr. E.H. Reerink, and two members of this Board, and five members of the Senate. Its task was, as its name already suggested, to discuss long term problems and future issues with which Leiden University could expect to be confronted.

I became a member of this group which met with great regularity every month till 1969, when it had to be discontinued, as in that year the basis of its composition, the *duplex ordo*, the system by which responsibilities in the University were divided among the Board of Governors (finance, administration) and the Senate (teaching and research) was abolished. Polak was Chairman of the Committee. I took over this function when Polak became Minister of Justice. It is within this group that the plan for an institute again became the subject of intensive discussion, particularly when I returned to Leiden in the autumn of 1966 after spending a sabbatical year at the Center in Stanford.

In the course of 1964 I had received two invitations: one to become Visiting Professor at the newly founded

branch of the University of California at La Jolla, and another one for a year at the Center. Since in the previous eight years an important part of my time had been taken up by organizational and administrative duties including several years as Chairman of the Praesidium, I was granted – very generously – a leave of absence of eighteen months, so that it became possible for me to accept both invitations. After my stay in La Jolla I would go to the Center. In this way I had the opportunity to fully experience the exceptional value of a long period of time in which I could concentrate on my own work in complete freedom and in the stimulating presence of colleagues who were enjoying the same privileges. There was even time for other things, for instance reading a book not directly related to my professional interests! The academic year 1965–66 spent at the Center had so great an impact on me that I decided after my return to Leiden to do everything in my power to establish exactly the same sort of institute in my own country.

Therefore, when I again took part in the meetings of the Discussion Group Future University early in 1967, I did not hesitate to bring up the idea of an Institute for Advanced Study. In doing so I became aware that not only in the Leiden group but also elsewhere the Stanford Center was a totally unknown institution, because it had been established only in 1954 and few Dutch scholars had been fellows at the Center. The first Dutchman had been Professor G.P. Baerends, biologist and ethologist of the University of Groningen, who was about to leave the Center when I arrived there in 1965.

I am convinced that the fact that I was able to present a first hand account of the Center and its scientific benefits helped to make the rather abstract idea of an institute for advanced study more concrete and therefore easier to pursue. In any case it proved easy to transfer my enthusiasm to the members of the Discussion Group. It is this group which in the following years played an important part in making the University of Leiden a strong proponent of the plan to create an institution like the Stanford Center. It was this group which was ready to discuss thoroughly a strategy for the establishment of such an institute, and no less important: to take action whenever this was considered necessary.

III

In November 1968 an important event took place. At

the meeting of the Discussion Group Future University of 22 November, Havinga, who was also member of the group and who lived in Rijksdorp (Wassenaar), informed us that there was a large villa for sale in Rijksdorp. It had been occupied by a Police Training School which about a year ago had moved to Leusden. In Havinga's opinion it was worth taking a closer look at the building and to see whether it could answer the requirements for housing an institute of the type we had been discussing. On 29 November Havinga and I visited the building. On 3 December I went to Piekaar and told him about Havinga's discovery.

Shortly afterwards I returned to Rijksdorp, this time accompanied by H. Kroneman, a Leiden architect, and D. Vogelenzang, Head of the Building Office of the University, for an expert examination of the building. When they had finished I took them to a little nearby café, for a cup of coffee, which is now the restaurant 'De Valkenier', to talk things over. I awaited their verdict with some trepidation and I was greatly relieved when they told me that I would never find in the entire region of the Central Netherlands a building more suitable for the institute I had in mind. The quality of the main building was quite satisfactory and needed relatively few alterations.

The surprising effect of the availability of good accommodation for the institute was that all of a sudden the idea of founding an institute became more real than it ever had been. The presence of a building excellently located in a quiet section of Wassenaar somehow gave the impression that the institute already existed! However, this illusion was cruelly shattered in the following months.

At the meeting of 24 May 1968, when complete unanimity had already been reached among the members of the Discussion Group concerning the founding of an institute, we discussed the next steps to be taken. It seemed reasonable first to approach the Technological University of Delft and the School of Economics in Rotterdam, because they were Leiden's partners in the so-called Regional Consultative Body (*Regionaal Overleg*). My visits to Delft and Rotterdam were to have no effect. The Rector Magnificus of Delft, in particular, did not see anything to be gained from an institute for advanced study, at least not for Delft, and in Rotterdam too I met with very little enthusiasm.

Another serious difficulty appeared on the horizon. It

turned out that the Department of Education and Science at that time was not in a position to bear all the capital and operating costs involved. Piekaar therefore asked me to try to obtain financial assistance from Dutch business sources. In my optimism I thought that I could perhaps solve this problem by approaching the President of the Unilever Board, Klijnsma, whom I knew well.

I vividly remember that on the last day of the year 1968 I drove to the Unilever office in Rotterdam to present a rosy picture of the institute I had in mind, and to explain why I needed financial assistance of about one million guilders to buy the Wassenaar property. The visit was a disappointment. I was informed gently but clearly that an institute for the social sciences and the humanities would not be of much interest to Unilever. Moreover Unilever was not used to giving large sums of money to what obviously was felt to be basically charity. Finally it was pointed out to me that all I could do was to approach a committee set up in the Hague by the Big Five (Unilever, Hoogovens, Akzo, Philips and DSM) to handle all requests for money, but that I should expect no more than a contribution of a few thousand guilders at most. I walked back to my car. It was snowing. It turned out that I had a parking ticket: there it was, under the wiper. I drove home in very low spirits.

In the following months the financing of the institute remained an insurmountable problem. In September 1969 I had to inform the members of the Discussion Group that various possibilities were still being explored. However, time was running short. The option on the Wassenaar property was only for a limited period of time, and rumour had it that developers were taking interest in the place. I felt that the chances of establishing an institute would vanish if the building was no longer available. At this critical moment Dr. Piekaar took a historical decision. He decided to make funds available for buying the property and informed me that all further expenses would be borne by the Dutch Government. I do not remember exactly when I received the good news. It is likely that this was on 12 November 1969, when I had an appointment with Piekaar at the Ministry in the Hague.

The removal of all financial obstacles cleared the way for further action. A meeting was scheduled at the Ministry for 11 March 1970. Participants were Professor P. Muntendam, the new President of the Board of

Governors of Leiden University, the successor of Dr Reerink. Professor E.W. Hofstee of the University of Agriculture in Wageningen, and myself, while the Department was represented by Dr. Piekaar of course, and by two of his collaborators: the jurist Mr. Dr. W.L. Tan and Drs. C.H. Stefels, Deputy Director General. At this meeting important progress was made. First of all it was agreed that the new institute would be a so-called inter-university institute, that is an institute in which all universities could participate according to certain rules laid down in a Royal Decree of 25 August 1965. Article 1, which contains a definition of an inter-university institute clearly stated that two universities would be sufficient for creating such an institute. It was this article which made rapid progress possible.

It was obvious to all of us that if we decided to ask all Dutch universities whether they would like to participate in the institute, it would take months, if not years, before agreement could be reached about all the various aspects of the plan. It was much more attractive to follow another course. As the University of Leiden and the University of Agriculture in Wageningen were both in favour of creating an institute of advanced study, they could on the basis of article 1 of the Royal Decree of 1965 without further ado establish such an institute. At the same time they could of course inform the other universities of their plan and invite them to join. In the meantime Leiden and Wageningen would be free to proceed and to make all necessary preparations.

After we had made sure that both the General Board of the Royal Netherlands Academy and the Board of the Council for the Social Sciences had no objections and that they were willing to play a role in the selection of the fellows, the way was free for further action.

On 24 March 1970 the Leiden Board of Governors wrote to the Boards of all other universities informing them of its plan to create an Institute for Advanced Study, Stanford style, in the Humanities and Social Sciences. They were also told that the Institute was conceived as an inter-university institute in which all universities could participate, and that the creation of the institute would not have any financial consequences for the participants. More detailed information was added in an annex. The Leiden Board expressed the hope that the universities would participate in the Institute and would appoint a representative to take part in further discussions of the plan.



Professor S. Dresden, Chairman of the Humanities and Social Sciences Division of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, arriving at NIAS with his wife for the official opening of the institute on 30 September 1971.

After the experience gained with the Piekaar Report in 1962, it did not come as a surprise that the reactions from the various academic institutions again were very diverse and in some cases, as we had expected, it took months before we got a reply.

The first reaction, from Wageningen, came by return of post. In a short reply its Board expressed its full support and informed us that Professor Hofstee would represent the University at further preparatory meetings. I knew of course that this would happen. It had been an essential element of the inter-university plan we had made at the Ministry on 11 March.

After this happy but predictable beginning there was a long silence, but by the middle of June we had received from four other universities more or less positive replies. At least they had expressed their willingness to accept Leiden's invitation for a meeting, and had appointed representatives. It did not make sense to wait any longer.

On 12 June on behalf of Leiden University I sent a letter of invitation to the University of Wageningen, the Free University, the Technical University of Twente, the Catholic University of Tilburg, and the University of Utrecht for a meeting in Leiden on 23 June. If a representative proved unable to attend he was asked to appoint a substitute, because no other date would be available before the summer holidays. It was clear that I was in a hurry, a fact that was certainly not appreciated everywhere. I also mentioned in the letter that the Board of the Royal Netherlands Academy would send a representative to the meeting, and that I intended to ask the Netherlands Organization for Pure Research (ZWO) to do the same. I also informed those universities which had not yet been able to reply, about the meeting of 23 June, expressing the hope that they would appoint a representative so that they could keep abreast of further developments.

The meeting on 23 June meant another step in the right direction. It was attended by representatives of eight academic institutions (Utrecht, the Free University, Eindhoven, Twente, Tilburg, the Medical School of Rotterdam, and of course Wageningen and Leiden). Professor Muntendam, the President of the Board of Governors of Leiden, and Professor S. Dresden, the Chairman of the Humanities Division of the Academy, were also present.

The meeting was very useful. It gave me a most welcome opportunity to supply further information

about the plan and to answer all sorts of questions. Topics which came up for discussion were the organization of the governing body of the Institute (General Board, Daily Board, Director), the selection of fellows (by a special committee set up by the Academy), the so-called 'Joint Regulation' (*gemeenschappelijke regeling*), which had to be drafted whenever an inter-university institute is founded, and finally the present situation concerning the property in Wassenaar which had already been bought by the University of Leiden to be transferred later to the Institute. A second preparatory meeting would be held on 21 September 1970.

By this time it was obvious that the Institute would soon become a reality and that it was likely to be ready to receive the first group of fellows in the autumn of 1971. Therefore I did not hesitate to inform the members of the Discussing Group – which, as I have mentioned earlier, had disbanded in 1969 – that the plan which had been the subject of discussion in the Group for so long had finally reached fruition.

But there was of course still a lot of work to be done in the following months. First of all the 'Joint Regulation' demanded my full attention. With the help of Mr. Dr. Tan of the juridical office of the Department of Education a draft was made for discussion at the meeting of 21 September. The draft was approved after some minor textual changes had been made. On 29 September the definite text was sent to the Minister for approval. It was also sent to all universities, to the Academy, and to ZWO. This apparently exerted a remarkable influence on the willingness of the various academic institutions to participate in the Institute.

The replies to the letter of 24 March had often contained reservations and strictures of various kinds. In some cases doubts had been voiced about the need for an institute in general, and there had been complaints that Leiden was moving too fast, exerting undue pressure. However, when the universities which had postponed their decision, observed that the founding of the Institute was rapidly becoming an established fact, their attitude changed quickly. All objections vanished and early in November all academic institutions with the exception of Delft (which remained critical) and the Free University (which needed more time for making up its mind) had informed us that they would take part in the Institute and would appoint a

representative in the General Board of the Institute if they had not yet done so earlier. A little later Delft and the Free University also decided to join!

It was obvious at this point that if we wanted the Institute to open in September at the beginning of the academic year 1971–72, it was of the utmost importance to begin with the selection of fellows immediately. We could not wait till the Institute was officially established. On 3 July 1970 Professor Dresden, Professor Hofstee and I met in Hotel Terminus opposite the old station (*Station Hollands Spoor*) in the Hague to discuss the various aspects of the selection procedure. Already on 22 September the first meeting of the Selection Committee took place. This meeting was followed by a series of other meetings, so that by the end of the year the first invitations could be sent out. By March, eleven foreign scholars had accepted an invitation for 1971–72. In the first year 33 fellows came to the Institute, a number that gradually increased in the following years.

Progress was also made on another front. As a result of advertisements placed in various periodicals, I had received during the summer a number of applications for the position of Director. After having interviewed all promising candidates it became clear to me that Professor H. Misset of the Municipal University of Amsterdam was the only suitable choice. As early as the autumn of 1970 – I cannot remember the exact date – Henk Misset started working for the Institute, obviously with the same enthusiasm as myself. Shortly afterwards I made another important catch: in December I found Mr. J.E. Glastra van Loon-Boon willing to accept the function of Deputy Director. Their appointment did not come a day too soon. They immediately started helping me with the many things which still had to be taken care of, such as the recruitment of the staff, the difficult problem of the housing of the foreign fellows, the preparations for the meetings of the Selection Committee, and the furnishing of the building. I retain excellent memories of our co-operation in this hectic period.

Meanwhile the architect Kroneman had been busy working on plans for the renovation of the villa in Wassenaar. Work on the building began in the spring of 1971 and by the middle of the year it became already possible for the General Board and for the Selection Committee to have their meetings in Wassenaar. Thanks to Els van Loon the villa was fully furnished and ready to receive its first guests by September.



Professor E.M. Uhlenbeck, Chairman of the NIAS Board, addressing the audience during the opening ceremony in the NIAS library, with the yet empty bookshelves as a fitting background.



Professor H.A.J.F. Misset, first Director of NIAS (1970–1986).



Mrs. J.E. Glastra van Loon-Boon, Deputy Director of NIAS (1971–1980).

From a legal point of view however, the Institute still did not exist, but in a letter of 19 November 1970 the Minister of Education and Science, Dr. G.E. Veringa officially informed the Leiden Board of Governors that he had given his consent to the founding of the inter-university institute 'Nederlands Instituut voor Voortgezet Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek'. A few days later, on 25 November, the official installation of the Board of the Institute took place in the venerable room of the Leiden Board of Governors at the Rapenburg. The President of the Board of Governors Professor Muntendam gave a speech which was answered by myself in my capacity of provisional Chairman of the Board, and by Professor Dresden on behalf of the Royal Netherlands Academy.

On 30 September 1971 the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences was officially opened, regrettably not by Dr. Piekaar

who had done more than anybody else to create the Institute. He was ill, and the Deputy Director General Stefels had to take his place.

The infant was now fully born, and even those who had been sceptical of the successful completion of the pregnancy had to admit that the child was very much alive and kicking.

¹ I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mrs. J. Nolen of the Filing Department of the Office of the Board of the University of Leiden for her kind and expert help received on several occasions at the time I was preparing this article. I am also grateful to Mr. J.W. van der Kolff of the Documentation Office of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, and to Mr. J. Hooghuis of the Staff of NIAS for helping me when I had to consult the files of the Academy and of NIAS.