



Nichi: a war machine in the service of INAF

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Abstract. The first three contributions of this Volume are memories of Nichi D’Amico written by the three leading figures of the current INAF, who also worked with Nichi, in the context of the management of INAF, during his first Presidency. This second writing is from the General Director of the Institute. This contribution has been translated by Andrea Possenti from the originally provided Italian version.

For me Nichi, in addition to being a talented scientist and a farsighted President, was also a friend. This consideration is neither trivial nor taken for granted, because roles, especially at certain levels, do not actually facilitate relationships, especially when direction and management confront each other in a dialectical, heated and passionate way.

With Nichi it was like that.

Both Nichi and I have strongly defended our different prerogatives, in the belief that they must remain distinct, but not separate, and, at times, we have also clashed hard, but also in moments of friction or misunderstanding there was always a mutual attitude of loyalty, respect and esteem because, in our depths, we were in any case convinced that we both thought and acted in the interest of the organization. Two outstanding personalities who have been able to coexist to contribute, in unity of purpose, but in the diversity of roles, to the good of the scientific community.

And it is for this reason that the full sharing of principles, lines of action and ambitious projects has taken the place of the initial distrust and, gradually, together, in perfect synergy, we have conceived, built and im-

plemented important initiatives, which have marked a turning point, compared to the past. In this sense, the reform plan of the organization’s structure was significant, based on the assumptions of unity and full and unconditional support for the research and its interpreters.

This is how the concept of *widespread administration* was born, which helped to recreate an atmosphere of collaboration and interaction between the *Central Administration* and the *Research Structures*, with a view that, until a few years ago, was completely unknown, due to the questionable behavior of some of my predecessors who qualified what are only the different articulations of a single organization, such as the “center” and the “periphery” which, ontologically, relate to each other in a hierarchical way and not equal.

And how can we forget the battles that Nichi and I have waged to adopt personnel recruitment policies that safeguard the balance sheet. And here I cannot fail to focus on the figure of Nichi, a courageous President and sincere friend, who has taken, with drawn sword, my defense against those who had asked for my head for the mere fact of having rendered, in the exercise of my functions, an opinion that

would facilitate the *Institute Administration Board* (*Consiglio di Amministrazione* in Italian language) in the very complex activity of correctly interpreting and applying the rules that provided for and governed the stabilization procedures of precarious personnel.

And how can I forget the hectic activity that characterized the two hot periods of the year, those in which the budget and final balance had to be approved. Those were the moments in which Nichi pressed me in a particular way so that I could find in the folds of the budgets all the possible resources to be allocated to scientific and technological research, with particular regard to basic research. This

helps you understand what was the spirit that animated Nichi, his thoughts and, ultimately, his entire life: the unconditional, I would say supreme good of the Institute. And that's why he spent all his energy, his time.

How can I forget his activity alongside the Ministry to ask, with tenacity, with constancy, almost stubbornly, financial resources, both ordinary and extraordinary, to be allocated to the Institute to strengthen, consolidate and expand its research and, therefore, its prestige, both nationally and internationally. This was Nichi, a war machine in the service of INAF and, alongside that machine, I had the pleasure and honor of fighting.