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A LOOK BACK TO CERN COURIER VOL. 8, APRIL 1970, COMPILED BY PEGGIE RIMMER

SACLAY

Mirabelle is ready to move

Mirabelle, the large hydrogen bubble chamber built by the Elementary Particle Physics Department of the CEA, the French Atomic Energy Commission, is being dismantled for removal to Serpukhov's 76 GeV accelerator, where experiments with the chamber are due to start from the middle of 1971.

In 1966, a Franco-Soviet agreement was signed specifying that a large bubble chamber would be built at Saclay and installed at Serpukhov for collaborative experiments. It gave French physicists the possibility of working with the highest energy accelerator in the world while allowing Soviet scientists to profit from Saclay's considerable experience in the field of bubble chamber construction, shown in the table.

The agreement laid down that the chamber, which costs 37 million French francs, would be operated at Serpukhov for at least five years by French staff, while, in return, teams of French physicists would take part in the experiments in mixed teams.

Mirabelle weighs 2000 tonnes, and the total weight, including all the auxiliary equipment, is 3600 tonnes. Dismantling, transporting and reassembling such a huge assembly is a labour of Herculean proportions and will take a year to complete. The equipment will be taken from Paris to Le Havre by road, from there to Leningrad by boat, and then by train to the experimental hall at Serpukhov.

Once Mirabelle is operating, a small colony of fifty families from Saclay will be housed in the village of Protvino, near Serpukhov. Together with the families of scientists taking part in joint experiments, there will be a total of almost 250 French people. Saclay has given particular attention to this problem of "transplantation".

The families will be distributed in blocks of flats in which local people also live. An infants' school has been set up, integrated into a local Russian school, with its operating costs shared between the French Ministry of Education and the CEA. Two French teachers are to be employed initially. To make it easier for the children to become adapted to their new surroundings, they will receive lessons in Russian from a Russian teacher.

● Compiled from texts on pp118–119.

First op.	Useful volume	Operated at
1957	1 litre (a model known as ME3 in which tracks were first photographed)	Saclay
1959	3 litre (20 cm long)	Saclay
1959	25 litre (35 cm long)	Saclay
1960	70 litre (50 cm long)	Saclay
1961	70 litre (81 cm long)	CERN
1962	300 cm ³ (Model ME5, installed as a target inside a heavy liquid chamb.)	Saclay
1964	130 litre (81 cm long)	DESY
1964	180 litre (81 cm long)	Rutherford
1966	7000 litre (The Mirabelle prototype known as ME6)	Saclay
1969	7000 litre (Mirabelle)	Saclay/Serpukhov

CONFERENCE European Molecular Biology Conference

A very successful session of the European Molecular Biology Conference was held at CERN on 6–8 April. For the first time the Conference was meeting "formally", as sufficient European governments had ratified the agreement setting up the Conference for it to move from provisional to formal status.

Before the creation of the Conference, the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) and individual scientists had been urging that a European Laboratory for Molecular Biology should be established to bring together the many disciplines involved in the pursuit of molecular biology. Similar to the way in which CERN operates, the

Laboratory is seen as a research centre with limited "permanent" scientific staff, to which visiting scientists would come to carry out experiments in a multi-disciplinary environment with first-class equipment and then return to their home countries.

A new detailed proposal concerning the establishment of such a Laboratory was presented to the Conference and was warmly welcomed. It has not yet been examined by the governments but there is a strong conviction in the scientific community that such a Laboratory is of vital importance for the future of molecular biology in Europe. The Conference set up a Working Group to pursue the study of the proposed Laboratory and to make recommendations at its session on 26–27 November 1970.

● Compiled from texts on p117.

Compiler's Note



biology in Grenoble (France) and Hamburg (Germany), and mouse biology in Monterotondo (Italy).

While the Saclay/Serpukhov collaboration was getting underway, a second CERN/Serpukhov experiment was being prepared at the 76 GeV proton synchrotron. The Antonov 22 cargo plane (see cover thumbnail) that transported some of the equipment to Moscow attracted a great deal of attention at Geneva airport in early April.

