

Introduction

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Introduction

By P. HUBER, Basel

It is indeed a privilege and a great joy for me, to be able to welcome so many of you today. In the name of our organizing committee I bid you a most cordial welcome and I hope that your stay in our city may be both pleasant and profitable.

Eleven years ago I had the pleasure of opening, here in Basel, the first part of an international congress of physics, which was later continued in Como under the auspices of our hospitable Italian colleagues. If we compare the subjects then discussed with those on our present agenda, we are amazed to find how far specialisation has progressed in the field of nuclear science. At our congress of 1949 it was still possible to discuss a wide part of what was then known of the subject of nuclear physics. Today we have to concentrate on a very small field of our knowledge, namely the very specific phenomena of the polarization of nucleons.

There is another change which has taken place in the course of the past eleven years: Some of the best known physicists, who honoured us by their presence in 1949, are no longer amongst us. I would only name such illustrious personages as Enrico Fermi, Wolfgang Pauli and Hans Cramers, of whom we think, together with many others, in grateful memory. On the other hand, students of physics, who at that time were listening with reverence and avid interest to the deliberations of those great scientists, have grown in stature during the ensuing years, and are today in a position to make eminently valuable and decisive contributions of their own to our knowledge of nuclear physics.

Basel has dared, for the second time, to prepare and to organize a symposium of the International Physical Union. Eleven years ago it was a hazardous enterprise to obtain consideration for being host to such a rare gathering. This time it was a question of how to justify that yet another congress should be added to the numerous events which are arranged for physicists all over the world. It was evident therefore, from the start, that we would have to find a theme which was of real interest to physicists everywhere. The choice was large, since scientific knowledge has grown rapidly, and the number of published papers has increased at

an alarming pace. This made it all the more important that we should choose an adequate theme, remembering the words of Erasmus of Rotterdam: Not everything which has been achieved in troublesome scientific work is necessarily important.

The main theme of the symposium has been chosen because we know that in various places work is in progress which is concerned with the production of sources of polarized nucleons. Since no international conference has discussed the theme so far, the moment for choosing it seemed propitious. That our choice was not altogether wrong seems to be proved not only by the interest which our program has found, but by a letter we recently received from the USA, stating that it had been intended to hold a conference on the same subject over there. The list of proposed speakers joined to that letter was almost identical with the names of our colleagues we had invited to read papers here. We are very happy in the knowledge that during the next few days nearly all the teams will be heard who are experimenting in the field which is the subject of our discussions.

A symposium is always awaited with a certain eagerness and expectation. Diverse personalities from all over the world are gathered together for a few days, thus creating an atmosphere of special character. One aspect is inherent in every symposium: it possesses a specifically human and cultural atmosphere which finds expression in friendly personal contacts. They lead to new bonds and strengthen old ones which reach far beyond the national frontiers and create in the truest sense a real worldwide community of physicists. In this way we attain an international unity without renouncing our personal individuality.

And now we are awaiting with particular interest the papers which are to be read. To all the contributors I should like to express, already now, our heartfelt thanks for the tasks which they have so kindly taken upon themselves. It is through their labours that the symposium has been made possible.

To all our guests and participants, who are gracing this event with their presence, I extend my very best wishes for an interesting and agreeable stay in our city. On this note I should like to open our symposium on polarization phenomena of nucleons.