

scientific priority, Merton alone continues to deserve exclusive credit.

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CERN's Early History Revisited

As a member of the group of historians charged to write the history of the founding of CERN, John Krige (PHYSICS TODAY, September 2004, page 44) is certainly competent "to read the birth of the laboratory through the lens of US foreign policy." I read his well-written article with great interest. It particularly underlines the important role I. I. Rabi played. As former director general of CERN, I can perhaps add a few comments.

At the 1950 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) meeting in Florence, Italy, Rabi's initiative was undoubtedly an important milestone in the founding of CERN. However, his declaration essentially summarized the efforts of two earlier initiatives. Several eminent physicists, including Edoardo Amaldi, Pierre Auger, Lew Kowarski, Francis Perrin, and, later, Werner Heisenberg, had recognized that Europe would be competitive in nuclear physics only if the countries joined forces, so the physicists had proposed a European research center.

The other, less well-known initiative came from the political side. One essential driving force was the Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont, who, after spending the World War II years at Princeton University, returned to Europe and founded the Institute of European Culture at Lausanne, Switzerland. French, British, and German politicians met there and proposed the creation of a laboratory where scientists from all of Europe could work peacefully together. De Rougemont told me that he considered himself one of the founding fathers of CERN, and he showed me documented evidence. CERN became the first laboratory founded with the two objectives of promoting science and bringing nations together. The Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna, Russia, and the synchrotron radiation laboratory SESAME near Amman, Jordan, were modeled after CERN.

Rabi's initiative would hardly have been possible without the considerable preparatory work done before the Florence meeting. Indeed, he deliberately limited his part in CERN's founding to the formulation of the declaration. He later said, "With the adoption of this resolution, I bowed out, since this was to be a European affair."

Another motivation drove Rabi. He considered CERN a peaceful compensation for building the nuclear bomb. This was revealed when I invited him to speak at CERN's 30-year anniversary celebration in 1984. Here are excerpts from his comments:

CERN was founded less than 10 years after the bomb was made. I feel that the existence of the bomb and its success had a large part in making CERN possible. . . . I am not at all surprised at the great achievements of CERN. I expected that. I was sure that Europe, which was the cradle of science, once brought back into the path, would achieve some very great things. . . . I mentioned Los Alamos and the atomic bomb, which is an expression of the power of [the] personalities [involved]. They are here now before you, and it is important to keep them occupied fulfilling the ideals of science. . . .

I hope that the scientists at CERN will remember that they have other duties than exploring further into particle physics. They represent the combination of centuries and centuries of investigation and study and scholarship to show the power of human spirit. So I appeal to them not to consider themselves as technicians . . . but . . . as guardians of this flame of European unity so that Europe can help preserve the peace of the world.

By bringing together scientists from Europe and the rest of the world, CERN has lived up to this objective better than its founding fathers expected.

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In addition to I. I. Rabi, Edoardo Amaldi also was a significant figure in the founding of CERN.

Amaldi traveled to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in July 1946 to present a paper at a conference. There he met accelerator physicist John

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