As reported in our October issue, Felix Bloch died on 10 September in Zurich, the town where he was born in 1905. After studying and an initial appointment in Leipzig, he left Germany in 1933, emigrating the following year to the United States, where he soon moved into a position at Stanford. On the US West Coast, he worked with Ernest Lawrence, and with Luis Alvarez in a historic first measurement of the neutron magnetic moment. During the war years, his talents were in demand elsewhere, first for the Manhattan project and then in radar research. In 1952, Bloch shared the Nobel physics prize with Edmund Purcell for pioneer work in what is now known as nuclear magnetic resonance. NMR went on to become one of the standard tools of physics and chemistry, and has now emerged as a powerful new diagnostic technique in medicine.

When CERN was being set up in the early 1950s, its founders were searching for someone of the stature and international prestige to head the fledgling international Laboratory, and in 1954 Professor Bloch became CERN’s first Director-General, at the time when construction was getting under way on the present Meyrin site and plans for the first machines were being drawn up. After leaving CERN, he returned to Stanford, where he continued to take an active part in physics.