Jean Meyer 1925–2010

Jean Meyer, who was head of the Service d’expérimentation par les chambres à bulles (SECB) in the department for particle physics at Saclay, passed away on 23 September.

Jean Meyer was born in the territory of Danzig (now Gdansk) in 1925. Confronted by the rise of Nazism, he fled and immigrated into France towards the end of the 1930s. As the Nazi threat extended, he fled again to Portugal from where he embarked for Brazil. Despite the factory work that was necessary to ensure his survival, he started to learn physics when he was 15 years old and this was to become his passion. In Brazil, he pursued his studies at the university of São Paulo, where he met several great physicists, among them Gleb Wataghin and Beppo Occhialini, one of the discoverers of the pion in 1947, as well as the theorist David Bohm. On returning to France, Meyer joined the Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), in Saclay. There, in 1958, he designed the first bubble chambers, as the French groups did not yet have any experience in this field, and he quickly became the head of the service for bubble-chamber experiments (SECB). He then left for CERN, where he was offered a permanent position, and became a member of the committee for the construction of the Big European Bubble Chamber. He participated in kaon physics and the checking of SU(3) symmetry with a series of experiments on kaon-nucleon scattering with, in particular, Roland Barloutaud, Antoine Lévêque and P Granet. He also participated in committees for the future of particle physics together with Murray Gell-Mann.

At the request of the Brazilian government, Meyer went back to Brazil in the middle of the 1970s, and created the Wataghin Institute in São Paulo, where he became director, before becoming director of the Brazilian national centre for scientific research.

Meyer returned to France in 1980 and was again employed by the CEA, managing the SECB once more in 1982. In 1984 he became head of the Laboratoire de Physique Nucléaire et de Hautes Energies (LPNHE).
the Laboratoire Leprince-Ringuet at the École polytechnique. He made a big reorganization of the laboratory, introducing topics such as plasma acceleration – an activity that continues there successfully today. He remained director until 1990.

Retirement did not mark the end of Meyer's activities, as he took care of extending recruitment at the École polytechnique throughout Europe, his network of relations enabling him to welcome young foreign students. Together with Guy Aubert, director of the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) of Lyon, and Bernard Bigot, director of studies, Meyer continued the "Europeanization" of the ENS, knowing how to attract brilliant European students in collaboration with many European universities.

In recent years, Alzheimer's disease overshadowed the end of his life, and distanced him more and more from the memories of his friends. However, his dynamism and kindness remain in the thoughts of all those who knew him.

His colleagues and friends.