As announced briefly in our previous issue (December 1983, page 433), theoretician Kurt Symanzik died in Hamburg on 25 October 1983, one month before his 60th birthday.

For particle physicists, his name is primarily linked with the Callan-Symanzik equation, which describes high energy behaviour in quantum field theory. Its application to quark fields leads to 'asymptotic freedom' – viewed in a small enough region of space-time, quark interactions become relatively feeble.

Symanzik's brilliant work on many aspects of quantum field theories began when he was still a student. Later, in the sixties, he discovered euclidean field theory and with it a relation between quantum field theory and statistical mechanics, on which modern Monte Carlo calculations in lattice gauge theories are based.

After his studies, first in Munich and then with Heisenberg in Göttingen, he worked from 1955 to 1961 at various institutes in Europe and the USA. After two years at CERN (1961-2), he became Professor of Mathematical Physics at the Courant Institute (New York). From 1968, he had the position of a Senior Scientist at DESY and was professor at the University of Hamburg. In 1981 he received the Max Planck Medal, the highest distinction of the German Physical Society. Until a few weeks before his death, Professeur Symanzik had been actively working on a problem in quantum chromodynamics.