

Professor de Shalit

Professor Amos de Shalit died on 2 September from acute pancreatitis. In his comparatively short life (he died at the age of 43) he had achieved prominence in the field of nuclear physics, had been a key figure in the development of science in Israel, and had contributed to the work of international organizations such as UNESCO, the European Physical Society, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, and CERN.

Amos de Shalit was born in 1926. He was educated at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and at ETH Zurich. He did research in nuclear physics in the USA, at Princeton, Stanford and MIT, and spent a year at CERN as a Ford Foundation Fellow from October 1957 to October 1958. From 1956 he was Visiting Professor at the Hebrew University becoming Head of the Department of Physics from 1961 to 1963. He then moved to the Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovoth, as Scientific Director and was Director General of the Institute from 1966 to 1968. In his last few years he devoted much thought and effort to the problems of science teaching. A

few months before he died he took up the post of Head of a new Department of Science Teaching at the Weizmann Institute.

Professor de Shalit was a theoretical physicist whose work was mainly concerned with nuclear structure theory and nuclear spectroscopy, covering such topics as the application of group theoretical methods and diffraction theories of nuclear reactions. His most important contributions were on the nuclear shell model for which he received the Israel Prize, with I. Talmi in 1965. He had just completed a book, with H. Feshbach, on nuclear structure. But as important as his directly creative work was his ability to absorb and assess what was happening in the whole field of nuclear physics. He was thus an outstanding review speaker able to draw out the essential developments and to initiate new lines of attack.

He was among the first to promote the use of high energy particle beams for the study of nuclear structure and took part in the discussions which led to this research playing an important part in the

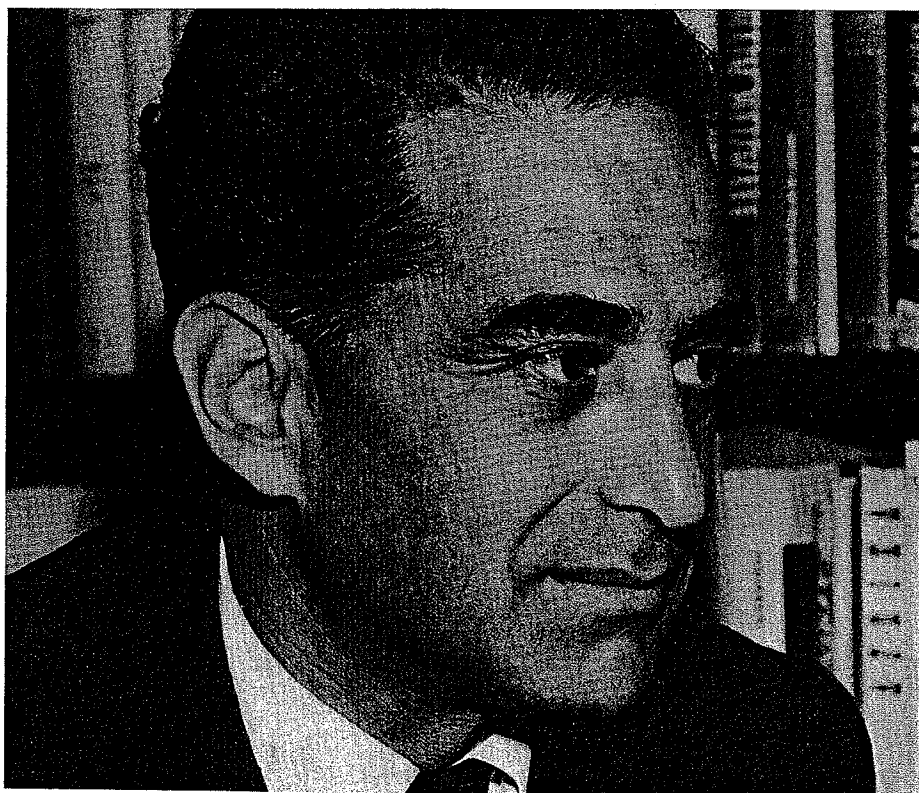
experimental programme of the CERN synchro-cyclotron. In May of this year he spoke at CERN evaluating the nuclear physics aspects of the research at the SC. Shortly before his death he had accepted to serve as a consultant to the CERN 'Physics III' Committee which concerns itself with the SC programme.

Together with Professor Weisskopf, he initiated a series of international conferences on High Energy Physics and Nuclear Structure which began at CERN in 1963. The latest conference in this series was held at Columbia USA a few days after his death. It was dedicated to Amos de Shalit.

One of the important formative influences on his life was his participation in Israel's war of independence in 1947 as a member of the Haganah. This left him with a very strong devotion to the cause of his country. He was one of the founders and the leaders of the brilliant school of physics in Israel, and one of his major concerns has been to ensure that science in his country should be closely integrated with that in leading centres elsewhere in the world. This was one of the motives which brought him into such close and fruitful contact with many international organizations.

Another legacy of the war years was a firm belief that things could be done given determination. This led him to devote seemingly endless energy to the things he believed in. He was always spilling over with things to be done and stimulated others by his enthusiasm. Coupled to this was a warmth of personality which carried others with him. He had exceptional skill in organization and successfully bore heavy administrative responsibilities from a very early age.

His concern with the social implications of science was always evident, particularly so in the last few years when he was in charge of the reform of science teaching in Israel and participated in work on science and education in developing countries. The thinking that he had already put into this important topic is likely to be influential for many years to come.



(Photo Weizmann Institute)