



SPEAKER: CLOSE, F. (Oxford University)

TITLE: **Half Life - The divided life of Bruno Maximovitch Pontecorvo**

DATE: Thu 28/04/2016 16:30

PLACE: 500-1-001 - Main Auditorium

## ABSTRACT

When Bruno Pontecorvo fled to the USSR at the height of the Cold War in 1950, half way through his life, the British Government, MI5 and FBI tried to portray him as scientifically insignificant, and to imply that his disappearance posed no threat to the West. In reality Pontecorvo was already one of the leading experts in nuclear physics, and recently declassified papers reveal that a prime agenda of FBI and MI5 was to cover up their errors. . During his time in the USSR he made major contributions to physics, and justified the sobriquet: "Mr Neutrino". This talk will reveal the background to his sudden flight, and also evaluate his work in theoretical physics in the aftermath of his arrival in Dubna. Previously secret documents now show that he proposed the concept of associated production before Gell Mann and Pais, and he had an idea to discover the neutrino at a reactor. He may be considered the father of neutrino astronomy with his successful prediction that neutrinos from a supernova could be detected, but contrary to widespread folklore, the idea of solar neutrinos did not originate with him. Contrary to widespread speculation, the security authorities had no incriminating evidence against Pontecorvo, but recently released papers now reveal a reason for his sudden flight.

The talk is linked to Frank Close's biography of Bruno Pontecorvo: "Half Life".