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Conference Report

2nd GERMAN–FRENCH CONFERENCE ON TECHNICAL CERAMICS, AACHEN, FRG (4–6 MARCH, 1987)

Under the auspices of the German–French Association for Science and Technology, Professor P. Reijnen, Director of the Institute for Gesteinshüttenkunde (glass/ceramics/cement) of the RWTH Aachen, organized a $2\frac{1}{2}$-day meeting. A similar meeting took place in Lyon 4 years ago. The topic was 'technical ceramics' which may also be termed high technology ceramics, engineering ceramics, advanced ceramics, or what the Japanese most regretfully describe as 'fine ceramics'.

The organizing committee, made up of six German and four French scientists, decided on a programme of review lectures and posters to cover the most recent investigations. There was also a small exhibition in which ten French and German companies displayed their products.

The interesting programme attracted a very large attendance, further evidence for the very great activity in this field. On registration the full text of all lectures and abstracts of the posters were issued, either in German or in French, together with a list of the participants. The latter contained 423 names, 248 from Germany, 139 from France and the remaining 36 almost exclusively from other European countries. The meeting was held in the Karmán-Auditorium of the RW Technische Hochschule which provided ample facilities so that all posters could be viewed during the whole duration of the conference.

Professor Reijnen must be congratulated on having collected together a team of 17 experts to cover, in $\frac{1}{2}$-hour lectures, almost the whole field of high

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technology ceramics. The lecturers and the titles of their contributions were as follows:

H. Hausner	Synthesis and character of ceramic powders for sintering.
J. P. Torre	Methods of shaping.
H. E. Exner	Sintering.
J. L. Chermant	The micro- and macro-structure of ceramics and their influence on the physical properties.
G. Ondracek	The relationship between texture and thermo-mechanical properties of two-phase materials and of porous sintered bodies.
D. Treheux	Treatment of surfaces and ceramic coatings.
K. A. Schwetz	Boron carbide and silicon carbide.
M. Billy	Nitrides and oxynitrides.
N. Claussen	Transformation toughening of ceramics (dispersion ceramics).
P. Jeschke	Thermal insulating materials for high temperatures.
D. von Mallinckrodt	Bioceramics.
D. Rouby	Composites with fibres and ceramic matrices.
B. François	Ceramics and nuclear energy.
A. Lagrange	Ceramics with non-linear electrical properties: thermistors, ZnO varistors.
D. Hennings	Ferroelectric ceramics for piezoelectric components and capacitors.
D. Janke	Ionic conductors.
P. Reijnen	Ferrites.

It was remarkable how much ground some lecturers were able to cover in the $\frac{1}{2}$-hour period. The complete texts of these surveys cover 443 pages in one volume. It is understood that 1000 copies of the volume were printed and that remaining copies can be obtained by writing to Professor Reijnen (no price was quoted!).

The authors of the 93 posters were given the opportunity to present their work in two $1\frac{1}{2}$-hour sessions; this meant two minutes per poster. In my opinion this was a waste of time since abstracts were available anyway and not much more than reading them could be achieved in the time available. The time could have been used more profitably by extending the time for viewing. Moreover, many authors projected slides of whole printed pages or photographs of their posters which were quite unintelligible. Meeting organizers should generally advise contributors that there is a limit to the amount of information that can be presented on a slide or overhead

projection. Once this limit is passed, the transmitted information tends towards zero. On the whole the quality of the posters was good. Several people remarked to me that a more general use of English would have made many contributions more intelligible for the majority of the attendees. However, this may have gone against the spirit of the meeting. Certainly the volume of the papers would have had a much wider appeal.

Overall then, a very informative and enjoyable meeting.

P. Popper