

Montreux, Switzerland : the 4th EuMC

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Abstract— The Fourth European Microwave Conference, held in 1974 in Montreux, Switzerland, was the first one organized professionally with a commercial exhibition, Microwave'74. Joining two basically different events required a careful preparation, with many discussions: at that time people feared that the commercial aspects of the Exhibition would adversely affect the high standards of the Conference. But the long-term agreement between the two partners worked flawlessly and the event was highly successful. This started a long series of joint events, organized since then on a yearly basis.

I. AN OFFER THAT ONE COULDN'T REFUSE

The series of European Microwave Conferences started in London, in 1969, followed in 1971 by the second event in Stockholm, Sweden. Holding a conference every other year looked like the best way to do it, and a third event was planned for 1973 in Brussels, Belgium, organized by Professor Jean Van Bladel. An European advisory committee of microwave experts overlooked the events, which remained to a large extent independent as far as their organization was concerned. Some background information, recommendations and mailing lists were forwarded from one event to the next one. And the search was already starting for the next event in the series, to be held in 1975 ...

And then, sometime in 1972, thunder struck out of a clear sky, in the form of an unexpected announcement: a microwave trade exhibition would take place in 1973 in Brighton, England, organized by the British firm Microwave Exhibition and Publishers, Ltd. (MEPL). And this exhibition, called Microwave'73, would be accompanied by a small conference! This event would take place on a yearly basis... This meant direct competition for future European Microwave Conferences, and some microwave people started to worry. Was the European microwave market large enough to support two major microwave events?

Several microwave colleagues who had been involved in previous conferences wondered whether the unexpected competition would not be detrimental, they felt that European Microwave Conferences — on a two-year basis — might be at some disadvantage against the new event, which would take place every year. How should one deal with such a bothersome newcomer? Should one consider outright confrontation? Would it be possible to integrate one event into the other one? Or would it be possible to find a “middle way,” with some kind of collaboration? Discussions and consultations took place among microwave experts all around Europe, and eventually basic sense took over, it was agreed to get in touch with MEPL and consider possible ways to collaborate — but, of course, without losing scientific independence.



Fig. 1 The picturesque city of Montreux, on the shore of Lake Geneva (which should rather be called Lake Léman)

At that time, the little town of Montreux, on the Riviera shore of Lake Geneva, hosted every year a very successful Television Symposium. It was suggested that this would be a good place to organize a joint microwave event, in 1974 or 1975. A colleague felt that Montreux offered such an ideal setting that all future Microwave Conferences should be held there! The Montreux Tourist Office (MTO) was contacted, and indicated its willingness to organize such an event.

Then came the next question: who would chair this conference? This particular individual would have to closely collaborate with the commercial firm MEPL, while maintaining the high scientific standard that the two previous European Microwave Conferences had established. At the time, none of the persons previously involved was willing to take up this challenge, so that the search for a suitable volunteer started.

Professor Fritz Borgnis, organizer of the Television Symposium, pointed out that a talented young colleague had recently started a new Microwave Laboratory at the “École Polytechnique Fédérale” of Lausanne, about 25 kilometers from Montreux, and that he would probably be more than happy to organize the event... This is why, on February 26, 1973, I received an unexpected phone call from Professor Jean Van Bladel, inviting me to organize a future European Microwave Conference in Montreux... I had attended the 1969 and 1971 Conferences, but had never dreamed that one day I would organize a similar event. For a young professor building up a new microwave laboratory, this was indeed “an offer that one couldn't refuse.”

II. IF YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM, JOIN THEM!

Of course, I accepted the offer, got in touch with the MTO, more particularly with Mr. Robin McKenzie Smith, head of the MTO Conference Department. On 16 March, 1973 we both flew to London to attend the first organizational meeting, chaired by Professor Eric Ash, with Professor Van Bladel and representatives of the IEE. We then met MM. Roger Marriott and Gordon Saville, directors of MEPL. Consultations took place between the various parties involved, other meetings followed, and it was finally agreed that we would join forces, and we selected Montreux for the first joint event, to take place in September, 1974.

But then a big problem came up: who would be in charge of what? Of course I would take care of the Conference, following more or less the principles set up in London and Stockholm. And I would be quite happy to have a professional partner to take care of administrative and financial aspects. But who would be this partner? The MTO had offered to organize the complete event, and really intended to do it — MEPL was an organizer of conferences and exhibitions, and also intended to do it! Painful discussions were held, we tried to work out some compromise and distribute different tasks between the two, but just got nowhere. Very late on the evening of 23 May 2003, after hours of hopeless discussions, Mr. Mackenzie Smith (MTO) left the room in disgust, stating that nothing would come out on that evening — and within the next hour the remaining participants had set up the long-term agreement that formed the basis of subsequent European Microwave Conferences! On the next morning, the people of the Montreux Tourist Office were really upset when they found out that the MTO was no longer directly involved, and from then on they were somewhat less than helpful, and even created some problems.

At this point it became necessary to obtain the support of professional societies for the Conference. The representative of the Swiss Electrotechnical Association, representing the Convention of European Associations of Electricians (EUREL) was not too keen about it, because a commercial outfit would organize the event, but he reluctantly agreed to support it (it took some time to get an answer). And at the Boulder Symposium of the IEEE Group on Microwave Theory and Techniques, I obtained the support of the IEEE G-MTT for the conference — and was advised to be extremely careful: commercial aspects of the exhibition should not interfere at all with the technical conference program. At that time, IEEE bylaws did not permit to support commercial events.

III. THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IS CREATED

In 1973, the Microwave'73 exhibition with conference was held in Brighton, and the Third European Microwave Conference in Brussels. The two events were well attended and highly successful, and the coexistence of two microwave events did not appear to be detrimental to either one.

A new situation had arisen for the European Microwave Conference: from then on it was no longer alone. A long-standing collaboration was now established with the commercial organization MEPL, and there was therefore a need to

have some kind of long-term governing body to officially represent the Conference. This is why, in Brussels, the Management Committee was created. It was a great honor for me to be elected as its first chairman — and I remained in this position for three crucial years, until 1976. An elaborate scheme was elaborated to have a balanced representation of the whole Europe, and the first members were:

Professors H. Barlow, J. Van Bladel, E. A. Ash, P. de Santis, A. Smolinski, T. Berceli, J. O. Scanlan, Drs. H. J. Schmitt, J. Deutsch, H. Steyskal, M. T. Vlaardingerbroek, MM. J. Le Mezec and B.V. Arkinson, Secretary of the Committee.

At the time, the idea that we would collaborate with the commercial organization MEPL was unpalatable to some colleagues, who feared that commercial aspects would impact the technical program. Elsewhere, at some exhibitions with conferences, exhibitors registering for a booth were apparently offered the possibility to present technical contributions — such conferences lost any scientific significance. We clearly stated that our technical conference program would be under the sole responsibility of a Technical Program Committee appointed by the Management Committee, without any connection with MEPL. On the other hand, of course, the exhibition would remain under the sole responsibility of MEPL.

IV. BIRTH OF THE E_uMC

The first three European Microwave Conferences had been simply labeled “EMC.” Evidently, at that time microwave engineers had not heard of ElectroMagnetic Compatibility, which has as official acronym EMC. Conferences on this very topic were already held in Montreux (they were later on moved to Zürich). We obviously could not have two different conferences sharing the same acronym, as this would cause confusions. For this reason, I coined the acronym E_uMC, which has been in use ever since (I should have patented it, I would be rich now cashing royalties!).

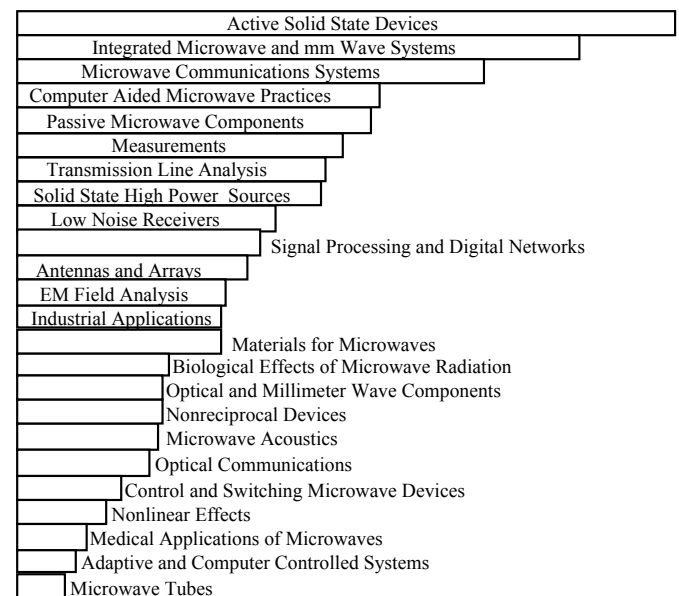


Fig. 2 Results of the survey conducted in Brussels in 1973

As a first step in the preparation of the 4th EuMC, I wanted to get some idea about which topics were most significant at that time. I conducted a survey during the Brussels Conference. Participants were invited to indicate their preferences, and the results are presented in graph form (how do they compare with today's interests?). As can be seen, there was little demand for microwave tubes, so I proposed to let them out of the next conference. This drew an immediate reaction because, some years before, when the MOGA conference series had ended, it had been agreed that microwave tubes would be included in future EuMCs, (of this I had not been informed...) — so we had to include microwave tubes in our call for papers.



Fig. 4 Vintage paddlewheel steamboat on Lake Geneva

4th EUROPEAN MICROWAVE CONFERENCE *microwave '74*

September 10-13, 1974

**MAISON DES CONGRÈS
MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND**

CONFERENCE TOPICS:

- ACTIVE SOLID STATE DEVICES
- MICROWAVE, MILLIMETER WAVE AND OPTICAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS (INCLUDING LOW NOISE RECEIVERS)
- PASSIVE MICROWAVE COMPONENTS, COMPUTER AIDED PRACTICES AND MEASUREMENTS
- HIGH POWER MICROWAVE SOURCES : SOLID STATE AND TUBES
- ANTENNAS AND ARRAYS
- MICROWAVE SIGNALS PROCESSING DIGITAL NETWORKS AND INTEGRATED SYSTEMS
- INDUSTRIAL APPLICATIONS OF MICROWAVES

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF PAPERS:
Before March 1, 1974**

ADDRESS FOR SUBMISSION OF PAPERS:

PROF. F. GARDIOL, CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN,
DÉPARTEMENT D'ÉLECTRICITÉ EPF-L
CHEMIN DE BELLERIVE 16, CH-1007, LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND
TEL. (021) 26 46 21. TELEX. 24478

REGISTRATION & EXHIBITION ENQUIRIES:

MICROWAVE EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLISHERS LTD.,
21 VICTORIA ROAD,
SURREBITON,
SURREY,
ENGLAND.
TELEPHONE: 01 390 0206/7
CABLES: SAVEXHIBIT LONDON

REMINDER

Fig. 3 Call for Papers for the 4th European Microwave Conference

The call for papers triggered an enthusiastic response: we received some 350 proposals, from 25 countries, most of them before the 1 March 1974 deadline. An “army” of 74 microwave reviewers (known as “representatives of the Technical Program Committee”) evaluated the contributions. Knowing that author's names are often the primary criteria for selection, the evaluation process was carried out anonymously — supposedly based on technical merit only. Several reviewers tried to “guess” the author's names, sometimes with amazing accuracy, other times with puzzling results (of course, if five or more references contain the name of one particular author, there are good chances that he also the one who submitted that paper).

With two lecture halls, the convention center of Montreux could only host two parallel sessions. And, during the four days of the conference, participants would also like to visit the exhibition, enjoy the magnificent scenery around Montreux and meet friends — we considered therefore that the technical program should consist of around 100 contributed papers. A very drastic selection had to be made! We also wanted to make sure that participants would only hear new, original material! To avoid duplications, we collected programs of a dozen previous events, and even obtained lists of rejected papers! My main collaborator, Dr. Munikoti S. Ramachandraiah handled most of this task. He enjoyed a photographic memory and could tell right away who presented a paper within the last three years and where he did it! (at that time our computer would not help with this task). The technical program committee could then weed out potential rehash. (a university group submitted twelve very thin tutorial papers, none of which could be accepted).

The Technical Program Committee met in Lausanne on 1 and 2 April 1974. It consisted of Mr. W. Klein, Director at Swiss Post Office Communications, Drs. A. D'Ambrosio, J. E. Carroll, J. Deutsch, J. R. James, J. Magarshack, Professors F. Borgnis, H. J. Collins, G. Epprecht, P. G. Fontolliet, and G. F. Koch — in addition to Dr. Ramachandraiah and myself.

Two busy days were barely sufficient for the selection and a program with 22 sessions was established. We accepted 119 contributions, and selected nine eminent specialists to present invited “State-of-the-Art Reviews.”

One disgruntled author phoned the Secretary every day for a full week, he couldn't admit that we rejected his contribution, as it had been accepted at two other leading symposia!

V. SEPTEMBER 1974: 4TH EUMC AND MICROWAVE'74

On Monday 9 September, eve of the opening, the EuMC Management Committee met to review recent developments and preparations. The welcome banquet, offered by MEPL followed the meeting. A storm broke up just then, opening a period of beautiful weather that lasted during the whole week.

On the morning of Tuesday 10 September 1974, the Lord-Mayor of Montreux, Mr. J. J. Cevey officially opened the conference. In his Opening Address, Mr. W. Klein, Director of Communications R&D at the Swiss Post Office, outlined the importance of Microwaves for Communications and the microwave links installed within Switzerland.

The conference started every day with a session devoted to invited papers: Active Semiconductor Devices, Industrial Applications, Microwave Acoustics, ESM Receiving Systems, Improved Feed Systems, Dielectric Waveguides, The Impact of Microwave CAD, Digital Satellite Communications, and Radar, Present and Future. Parallel sessions then followed, devoted to semiconductor devices (5), communications (4), antennas and arrays (3), while single sessions covered respectively passive devices, measurements, microwave tubes, industrial applications and microwave CAD.

A closed circuit TV proved most valuable to inform participants: it showed which papers were in progress in the two lecture halls — one could then “hop” from one session to the other (old-timers may recall that at the first EMC in London, it took some 15 minutes to walk from one lecture hall, at Savoy Place, to the other, on Birdcage Walk!). The TV circuit also circulated messages in an unobtrusive manner. I am particularly grateful to my team at the EHF laboratory of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology: its members were running around the place all the time, helping to settle the many little problems that always crop up during an event. For instance, we found with surprise that the young apprentices supplied as “projectionists” to MEPL by the Montreux Congress Center merely knew a few English words— two EHF collaborators had to stand by to translate requests from the attendance.



Fig. 5 The merry international team of the EHF Laboratory in 1974. From left to right: Tarik Kardiçali, Olivier Parriaux, Vicko Andriamiharisoa, Dr. Munikoti Ramachandraiah, Jean-François Zürcher, Mrs. Wend Bernheim and Marc Decréton

The trade show Microwave’74 was located on the lower floors of the building. Conference participants could thus get acquainted with the most advanced developments in microwave equipment, hardware and systems. One hundred companies from eight countries were there to present their more recent products to some 2500 visitors.

A conference also provides personal contacts with fellow engineers, in particular across the specialization boundaries. It provides opportunities for theory buffs to meet hardware specialists (and vice—versa), hopefully helping to close a gap that too often separates basic theory from practical applications. The setting of the “Maison des Congrès”, in which all sessions took place, and in which ample space was available for encounters, proved particularly favorable for interactions.



Fig. 6 Professor Fred Gardiol, between two specialists of the English Electric Valve Company Ltd., examines a microwave power tube, while Roger Marriott, at right, looks thoughtful — or maybe worried? (courtesy EEV)

The magnificent weather that we enjoyed during the whole week played a significant role in the success of the event — even though it meant that some participants tended to be more often outside of the lecture halls than inside. The township of Montreux and the Canton Vaud (State) invited the conference speakers and the members of commissions to an evening wine party in the historical castle Chillon: it was particularly impressive to board a paddlewheel steamboat around sunset, and reach the castle just as night was falling. The consulate of Great Britain offered another cocktail party, this one to all the participants.

And on another evening, a scrumptious buffet dinner had been organized on the terrace and inside of the Montreux Grand Hotel. A Swiss flag was being tossed up in the air at the sound of alphorns — typical Swiss folklore. I was watching with some apprehension as the flag was flying between the magnificent crystal chandeliers of the ballroom...



Fig. 7 The magnificent castle Chillon, close to Montreux



Fig. 8 Mrs. Alix Wend Bernheim and Mrs. Irène Gardiol hold the booth of the Ladies Program

Last but by no means least, my secretary and my wife organized an impressive “ladies program,” which was well attended — but not only by ladies! (such excursions now form part of a “companions program”). Many attendees keep vivid memories of the different excursions, more particularly of the fabulous ascent by cable cars to the top of the “Aiguille du Midi,” facing the “Mont Blanc,” which is the highest mountain of Europe.



Fig. 9 Close-up view of the Mont Blanc, the top of Europe

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

For the Chairman, the week had been particularly busy and rather tiring — I was Chairman of the 4th EuMC, but also, at the same time, of the EuMC Management Committee (with many meetings), and I found that at times this was quite a lot to handle. In the following events the two functions were separated, making the load less heavy. During the whole week, I had been so busy with various encounters, committee meetings, celebrations, at the same time having to take care of minor difficulties and to anticipate potential problems, that I could not really enjoy the conference that I was chairing. I managed once to attend a technical session, but found out that I had so many other items on my mind that I could not concentrate on what the speaker was saying... Of course at the same time I was also quite happy that everything had run so smoothly, and that so many people looked genuinely pleased.

The collaboration with MEPL had worked out without a hitch, and the misgivings that had been voiced out before the event proved completely unfounded. I liked very much my situation, in which I did not have to worry about administrative and financial aspects, and I did not notice any interference between the exhibition organizers and the technical program. I greatly thank MM. Marriott and Saville, who took great care to ensure the success of both the conference and the exhibition, and were quite generous with the various committees involved in the organization of the conference. The EuMC Management Committee was also quite happy to receive royalties, and these were used to set up an European Microwave Prize to reward the best technical presentation in future conferences.

Roger Marriott was quite discreet about financial matters, but I was told that MEPL found that rental costs had increased significantly between the original contracts of 1973 and the actual event, while unforeseen additional expenditures tended to crop up — thanks to the MTO. Over the years, the European Microwave Conference went to many places within Europe, but it did not come again to Montreux...

Organizing a successful conference like I did in 1974 in Montreux presents both positive and negative aspects. Most participants retain in their minds a positive image, and they look forward to attending the next year’s event, while new ones wish to join them. The next chairman gets an idea of what can be made, upon which he can build up his own program. This was particularly true after the 4th EuMC, because Brian Atkinson, the very cautious secretary of the EuMC Management Committee, wrote up detailed bylaws and guidelines, which were to be updated every year.

But herein lies also a drawback and a potential hazard, because one “doesn’t change a winning scheme.” I had enjoyed a lot of freedom while organizing the program for the 4th EuMC, because I was facing a new situation, stepping on an as yet uncharted path. However, the next chairmen would be tied up by the strict rules that had been set up after the Montreux Conference, even though they may well be in very different situations! Some would appreciate solid guidelines to provide some kind of security, while some might like more freedom to experiment with their own ideas and new schemes. My feeling is that the EuMC Management Committee would be quite conservative at times, and some events looked like reruns of previous ones — after some years, this tends to reduce interest, and changes must then be made.

The collaboration with MEPL was continued for many years, but some particular situations raised difficulties: the French invited the 1976 Conference, but for them it was unthinkable to have a British exhibition on French soil... Later on, invitations came from behind the Iron Curtain, but one could not ship sensitive microwave equipment for the exhibition over to the other side. An alternate scheme was therefore worked out: one year an EuMC with exhibition, and the next one without — in this year MEPL would organize an alternate exhibition “Military Microwaves” in Great Britain. In 2009, the Joint Microwave Conference with Exhibition scheme that was started in Montreux in 1974 remains alive and well— but by now it has become so much larger.