

# European Community

## News Release

EUROPEAN SCIENTISTS TO TELL OTTAWA PUBLIC ABOUT

GIOTTO SPACE PROBE'S ENCOUNTER WITH HALLEY'S COMET

FRIDAY MAY 23, 3:30 P.M., NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL AUDITORIUM

On the night of March 13, 1986, Europe's GIOTTO spacecraft reached the climax of its astonishing 8-month, 700 million kilometer journey - a 4-hour encounter, at a 750-kilometer distance, with Halley's Comet.

With 76 years to go before the comet first identified by Edmond Halley in 1705 returns to our region of the Galaxy, this space probe by the European Space Agency - a body consisting of 9 of the European Community's 12 Member States plus Sweden and Switzerland - could hardly afford to fail!

Yet fail it nearly did. Right to the last few moments, scientists feared it had suffered the same crippling dust storm damage suffered by the Soviet VEGA-2 probe at an 8,350 kilometer distance from the planet before GIOTTO's voyage. GIOTTO's camera appeared to have been disabled by dust particles striking at 50 times the speed of a bullet.

But exultant scientists were spared this failure at the final, crucial moment of encounter, when contact with the probe was re-established.

Because the recorded results of this historic encounter are so fascinating to laymen as well as to scientists, the Delegations of the European Communities in Canberra and Tokyo have cooperated with scientific bodies in those capitals to sponsor explanatory presentations by three senior European scientists intimately involved with the GIOTTO project.

Now the Ottawa Delegation of the European Communities is cooperating with the National Research Council of Canada in bringing this team to Canada's capital to make the same presentation that has been so successful elsewhere. The scientists are:

 **Delegation of the Commission  
of the European Communities**  
Press and Information Service

- \* Dr. Ian Axford, Director at the Max Planck Institut fuer Aeronomie in Lindau, Federal Republic of Germany since 1974, author of some 180 publications on astronomy, space science, astrophysical and space plasmas.
- \* Dr. Horst Uwe Keller, principal investigator for Halley Multi-colour Camera on GIOTTO and scientific staff member of the Max Planck Society, author of about 52 publications on comets and the interstellar medium.
- \* Dr. Ruediger Reinhard, scientist at the Space Science Department of the European Space Agency in The Netherlands, study scientist and project scientist for the GIOTTO mission, with numerous publications on interplanetary and solar phenomena.

These senior European scientists will give an overview of the GIOTTO and preceding international missions to Halley, as well as interpretations of the GIOTTO and VEGA images and analysis of some of the tests on board the probes.

While it is expected that this event will be heavily attended by Ottawa's scientific and government community, it is hoped that newspaper advertising will draw a general audience as well. The NRC auditorium is large and comfortable.

MEDIA ARE ESPECIALLY URGED TO ATTEND.

Date: Friday, May 23, 1986.

Time: 3:30 p.m. - and lasting about 2 hours.

Place: National Research Council,  
100 Sussex Drive (opp. External Affairs),  
OTTAWA

For further information, contact Mr. David Levy at the Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, Press & Information Service: 238-6464

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