JUN 12 1966

COO-818-64

MASTER

CONF-650111-7

OCT 7 1965

Informal Conference on Experimental Neutrino Physics, CERN, January 1965

Interaction of Muons Produced by Atmospheric Neutrinos¹

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IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE ABSTRACTS

This paper is a status report on the Case-Wits experiment³ to detect the high energy neutrinos produced in the earth's atmosphere by the interaction of primary cosmic rays. Our interest is at least twofold: to study these neutrinos which are a background for other perhaps more interesting high energy neutrinos of extraterrestrial origin and to learn whether the interaction cross-section increases in a significant way with energy in a range not available at current electronuclear machines.

The design of the experiment depends quite obviously on the characteristics of the atmospheric neutrino flux as well as the minimum expected interaction cross-section. Fortunately the neutrino spectrum is reasonably well known,⁴ perhaps to within 20%, so that the primary uncertainty lies

¹ Work supported in part by the United States Atomic Energy Commission. We wish to express our thanks to the Directors of the East Rand Proprietary Mines for their generosity in making the underground laboratory site available to us.

² Presented paper at CERN.

³ Plans for this experiment were first described in a paper presented at the Jaipur Conference on Cosmic Rays, Jaipur, India - December, 1963.

⁴ Proc. Int'l. Conf. on Instrumentation for High Energy Physics, p. 209, Berkeley (1960). G. T. Zatsepin and V. A. Kusmin, JETP 39, 1677 (1960), and others.

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in the cross-section. If we conservatively assume the elastic value of 10^{-38} cm^2 , the detector mass required for several events a year is several thousand tons. The signal in such an experiment as we describe is that of the energetic product muon.

$$\nu_{\mu} + \text{Nucleus} \rightarrow \text{Nucleus}' + \mu$$

An enhancement of the cross-section by inelastic processes such as the production of multiple pions or by an intermediate boson would of course raise the counting rate but we do not rely on this possibility to produce a detectable result.

Our approach* is to use a rock target and detect the muons produced in the rock by a large area (100 m^2) scintillation detector. To eliminate the background due to natural radioactivity we use energy discrimination on the pulses. Cosmic ray muons are reduced first by going very deep underground (8400 m.w.e., 10,492 ft. below the surface) and then by looking at zenith angles $> 45^\circ$. Since the total number of cosmic ray muons expected to traverse our detector is estimated to be $\sim 300/\text{year}$, the number inclined at $> 45^\circ$ at these great depths is quite reasonably expected to be $\sim 1/\text{year}$. In any event we expect to measure the total muon flux as well as something about its angular distribution so as to check this point directly.

We have built and installed a detector array composed of 36 liquid scintillation elements like that shown in Figure 1. This element consists

*For some time - since 1960, we had been considering an experiment in which cosmic ray muons would be eliminated by an anticoincidence arrangement. The simpler scheme adopted here occurred to us when we learned in 1962 of the extremely low levels indicated by Tata results at 8400 m.w.e. in the Kolar Gold Fields.

of a plexiglass box 5.5 m long x 60 cm high x 12.5 cm deep, filled with a mineral oil based scintillator, viewed from the ends by four, five inch photomultiplier tubes. Each element is housed in a separate, reasonably light tight enclosure. Figure 2 shows an end view of the array in place in the tunnel. It is three elements high and six long, or 18 on each side of the tunnel. Figure 3 illustrates a kind of event to which the detector is sensitive. Depicted is an energetic neutrino interacting in the surrounding rock producing a muon which penetrates the rock and two detector elements. Such an event would result in an eightfold coincidence between

Fig. 3 Sketch of Imagined Neutrino Induced Event

The data are to be recorded by two systems so as to avoid error and give us the necessary confidence in our results. In one system we photograph the pulses from each photomultiplier tube when a suitable coincidence occurs. In the parallel system we store the pulse height information on capacitors which are then interrogated and recorded on a pulse height analyzer. The system has been in partial operation for a few months with too little run time to allow any significant conclusions to be drawn from the

absence of neutrino produced muons to date (20 January, 1965).

Note added after conference: On February 23, 1965, after running with a steadily increasing detector area, an eightfold coincidence of the type expected from a muon produced by a horizontally directed neutrino was observed. The data do not readily admit of other interpretations.