



PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY COLLOQUIUM

Dr. Frank Close
University of Oxford

**“Half Life – the divided life of Bruno
Pontecorvo, physicist and spy?”**

Abstract

Bruno Pontecorvo is associated with the idea of solar neutrinos, neutrino oscillations and neutrinos from supernovas. He might have won a Nobel Prize had he not disappeared through the Iron Curtain in 1950, half-way through his life. One of the most brilliant scientists of his generation he had worked at Chalk River on the Anglo-Canadian arm of the Manhattan Project and quietly discovered a way to find the uranium coveted by nuclear powers. Yet when he disappeared, MI5 insisted he was not a threat. Now, based on unprecedented access to archives, letters, surviving family members and scientists, Frank Close exposes the truth about Pontecorvo, assesses his work on the neutrino, and reveals the reason for his sudden flight from Harwell to the USSR, six months after the arrest.