

## The Curve is Exponential

"I couldn't see the instruments," said Weil. "I had to watch Fermi every second, waiting for orders. His face was motionless. His eyes darted from one dial to another. His expression was so calm it was hard. But suddenly, his whole face broke into a broad smile."

Fermi closed his slide rule—

"The reaction is self-sustaining," he announced quietly, happily. "The curve is exponential."

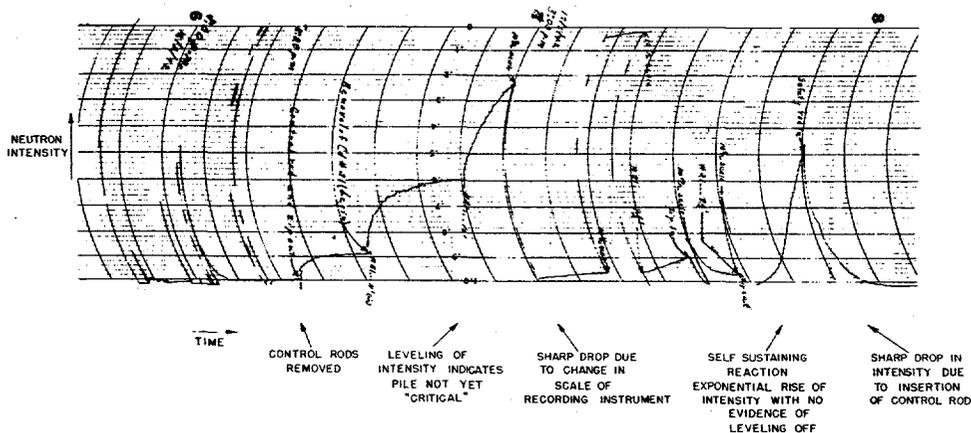
The group tensely watched for twenty-eight minutes while the world's first nuclear chain reactor operated.

The upward movement of the pen was leaving a straight line. There was no change to indicate a leveling off. This was it.

"O.K., 'Zip' in," called Fermi to Zinn who controlled that rod. The time was 3:53 p.m. Abruptly, the counters slowed down, the pen slid down across the paper. It was all over.

Man had initiated a self-sustaining nuclear reaction—and then stopped it. He had released the energy of the atom's nucleus and controlled that energy.

DEC. 2 1942 START-UP  
OF  
FIRST SELF-SUSTAINING CHAIN REACTION  
NEUTRON INTENSITY IN THE PILE AS RECORDED BY A GALVANOMETER



*The "birth certificate" of the Atomic Age. The galvanometer chart that indicated the rise in neutron intensity associated with the first controlled chain reaction.*