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Phase and amplitude fluctuations near $T_I$ in the incommensurate phase of Rb$_2$ZnCl$_4$ : Mn$^{2+}$ through E.P.R. investigations

A. Kaziba and J. C. Fayet
Laboratoire de Spectroscopie du Solide (*), Faculté des Sciences, Route de Laval, 72017 Le Mans Cedex, France

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Résumé. — Un traitement numérique des spectres expérimentaux de la sonde Mn$^{2+}$ nous a permis d'éliminer la structure hyperfine et de révéler la forme des raies de structure fine dans la phase incommensurable au voisinage de $T_I$. Nous l'analysons par un modèle simple mettant en jeu l'amplitude critique, la phase locale de la modulation statique et les densités spectrales de leurs fluctuations. Nous concluons à l'existence de fluctuations de phase de grande amplitude, près de $T_I$, qui se durcissent pour atteindre un régime stationnaire au-dessous de $(T_I - 4 \text{ K})$ caractérisé par une densité spectrale substantielle dans le domaine de fréquence $10^{10} \text{ s}^{-1}$.

Abstract. — A computer treatment of the experimental spectra of the Mn$^{2+}$ probe enables us to eliminate the irrelevant hyperfine structure and to reveal the shape of the fine structure lines in the incommensurate phase near $T_I$. We analyse it by a simple model taking into account the critical amplitude, the local phase of the modulation wave and the spectral densities of their fluctuations. We conclude with the existence of large phase fluctuations near $T_I$ which tighten to reach below $(T_I - 4 \text{ K})$, a stationary regime marked by a substantial spectra density in the $10^{10} \text{ s}^{-1}$ frequency range.

Introduction.

Rb$_2$ZnCl$_4$, like other compounds in the A$_2$MX$_4$ series including K$_2$SeO$_4$, exhibits $P_{mm}$ symmetry in the high temperature normal phase and, at $T_1 \approx 30 \text{ °C}$, undergoes a structural transition to an incommensurate phase characterized by a wave-vector $k_1 = \frac{1}{2} (1 - \delta) a^*$ [1-3].

According to a simple model, one component of the order parameter — the phase of the modulation — would exhibit a characteristic excitation spectrum associated with a « pseudo-acoustic » phonon: the phason mode with a zero gap at $q = k_1$. Actually, this mode has been directly observed in K$_2$SeO$_4$ [4, 16] by inelastic neutron scattering, but far from $T_1$ and far from $k_1$. In Rb$_2$ZnCl$_4$ and related compounds, overdamping and probable order-disorder character of the transition make inelastic scattering inefficient for accurate investigations. Diffuse X-ray Bragg scattering in Rb$_2$ZnCl$_4$ permitted to locate an upper limit of the phason gap at $1.2 \times 10^{16} \text{ s}^{-1}$ [3].

Unlike a true acoustic phonon with $\omega \rightarrow 0$ as $q \rightarrow 0$, low frequency phase fluctuations centred at $q \neq 0$ induce a modulation of the local crystal field [5]. Consequently, they can strongly influence the magnetic resonance line of a spin probe at some crystal site of the incommensurate lattice. For instance, they are responsible for drastic motional averaging effects leading to a persistent « commensurate-like » N.M.R. [6] or E.P.R. [7] line below $T_I$, or for an anomalously high value of the effective critical exponent $\beta$ [8], and also for a particular behaviour of the relaxation time $T_{1, ph}$ which monitors the spectral density $J_{1, ph}$ for $\omega = \omega_t \approx 10^8 \text{ s}^{-1}$ in N.M.R. spectroscopy [9]. By measuring the spin-lattice relaxation time $T_{1, ph}$ in $\text{N(CH}_3)_4 \text{ZnCl}_4$ [10], Rb$_2$ZnCl$_4$ [9] and Rb$_2$ZnBr$_4$ [6] above and below the lock-in transition at $T_c$, Blinc was able to locate the phason gap, in these incommensurate phases in the $10^{11}$-$10^{12} \text{ s}^{-1}$ frequency range.

In this paper we attempt to complete the analysis of the critical amplitude of the modulation and of the spectral density of fluctuations by considering the line shape of an E.P.R. probe: the Mn$^{2+}$ ion substituted for Zn$^{2+}$. We assume that the probe which fits the host closely, correctly mirrors the essential qualitative features of the bulk. We shall also emphasize that the E.P.R. measurements show important modifications of the E.S.R. line in a small temperature range around $T_I$. We shall follow the...
underlying phenomena by varying the temperature smoothly.

1. Theoretical background.

The critical displacement field in a 1-D modulated structure can be represented by

\[ u_i^c = A_i (a_i^c \cos \theta \cos \phi_i + b_i^c \sin \theta \sin \omega_i) \]

where \( A \propto (T_c - T)^{\beta} \) is the critical amplitude (\( \beta = 0.36 \)); \( \alpha = x, y, z \). The index \( i \) indicates the type of the atom \( i \). \( a_i^c \) and \( b_i^c \) represent the eigenstates of two displacement modes coupled in quadrature. \( \theta \) is the coupling parameter. This coupling is generally involved in an incommensurate phase [11, 12]. \( \phi_i \), the local phase of the static modulation, is given by \( \phi_i = k_i \cdot r_i + \phi_0 \). \( \phi_0 \) is constant in the plane wave regime; \( k_i \) is the incommensurate wave vector.

Let us consider a spin probe at site \( i \) with \( S > 1/2 \) and with an isotropic invariant \( g \) factor. A resonance line centred at \( H = H_0 \) in the normal (N) phase is shifted by the modulation wave according to [13] :

\[ \Delta H(\phi_i) = A_1 h_1 \cos (\phi_1 + \phi_2) + A_2 h_2 \cos 2(\phi_1 + \phi_2) \]

which is nothing but a power expansion limited to second order with respect to the amplitude of the modulation. It is worth outlining the mechanisms which are responsible for the local line shift \( \Delta H(\phi_i) \). The displacements of atom \( i \) and atoms \( j \) within the range of the probe modify the spin-lattice interaction to first and second order, according to

\[ \Delta \mathcal{E} = \sum_k \mathcal{E}_k^1 u_k^1 + \sum_{k,k'} \mathcal{E}_{k,k'}^2 u_k^1 u_{k'}^1 = \]

\[ A_{11} \mathcal{E}_1 + A_{12} \mathcal{E}_2 \]

\( K, K' = i, j \). (1)

It is essential to note that sine and cosine functions with different phases are involved in this expression.

The \( \mathcal{E}_k^1 \)'s and \( \mathcal{E}_{k,k'}^2 \)'s represent spin operators involving the microscopic details of the interaction with the individual atomic displacements. The spin-Hamiltonian in the incommensurate phase is given by

\[ \mathcal{E}(T < T_c) = \{ g\beta \mathbf{H} \cdot \mathbf{S} + \mathcal{E}_0(T) \} + \Delta \mathcal{E} \]. (2)

The first term \( \{ \ldots \} \), associated with the normal phase, defines a set of eigenstates with different phases involved in this expression.

The critical terms \( \mathcal{E}_k^1 \)'s and \( \mathcal{E}_{k,k'}^2 \)'s with different local phase factors : \( \cos \phi_k, \sin \phi_k \), such a sum of terms can be set in the form given in (1) through a convenient choice of \( \phi_i \). The parameter \( h_1 \) depends on \( H \) but does not depend on \( T \). The linear term can be forbidden by symmetry for \( H \) along symmetry elements of the (N) phase. Then \( \mathcal{E}_k^1 \) has no diagonal matrix-elements on the \( \mathcal{m} \) basis. Therefore, at first order, \( \mathcal{E}_k^1 \) cannot be responsible for any secular effect.

Similarly, the quadratic line shift in (1) involves off-diagonal elements of \( \mathcal{E}_k^1 \) at second-order perturbation and diagonal matrix elements of \( \mathcal{E}_{k,k'}^2 \) at first-order perturbation. A convenient choice of \( \phi_2 \) leads to the expression in (1), with \( h_2 \) and \( h_2' \) depending on \( H \) but independent of \( T \). It turns out that the local line shift cannot be easily connected to the local phase \( \phi_i \) except under particular circumstances. If Local and Single Mode contributions are dominant (L.S.M. approximation), we obtain \( \phi_1 = \phi_2 \). The quadratic shift is reduced to \( A_2 h_2 \cos^2 \phi_i \). i.e. \( h_2 = h_2' \), or \( \left| h_2 + h_2' \right| = 1 \). This ratio can be used as an estimation of the validity of the L.S.M. approximation.

Finally, the shape of the experimental line is given by

\[ F(H) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left\{ \frac{H - H(\phi_i)}{L} \right\} d\phi_i \]

and is marked by singularities located at \( H = H(\phi_i) \) such that \( \frac{dH(\phi_i)}{d\phi_i} = 0 \). \( f \) and \( L \) represent background line shape and line width which are irrelevant to the phase transition.

If the linear term is dominant, we obtain two symmetrical singularities at \( H = H_0 \pm A h_1 \) associated with \( \phi_1 + \phi_2 = 0, \pi \). If the linear term is forbidden, we obtain two singularities located at \( H = H_0 \pm A h_2 \) corresponding to \( \phi_1 + \phi_2 = (0, \pi) \), and \( \left( \pm \frac{\pi}{2} \right) \) respectively.

Much more complicated line shapes are obtained generally. They have been discussed [13] and experimentally obtained [7] elsewhere.

We have not yet considered amplitude and phase fluctuations, which may affect the E.P.R. spectra near \( T_1 \). We shall therefore set \( A(t) = A(T) + \delta A(t) \) and \( \phi(t) = \phi_1 + \delta \phi(t) \). \( \delta A \) and \( \delta \phi \) represent fluctuations with a correlation length much larger than the range of the probe. Now we have to deal with a local time-dependent spin-Hamiltonian :

\[ \mathcal{E}(\phi_1, t) = \langle \mathcal{E}(\phi_1, t) \rangle + \{ \mathcal{E}(\phi_1, t) - \langle \mathcal{E}(\phi_1, t) \rangle \} \].

The time averaged term determines the centre of the local line. The time dependent term \( \{ \ldots \} \) defines the local line shape and the local line width through secular and non secular mechanisms. The non-secular line broadenings are closely related to the relaxation times \( T_{1, A1} \) and the relaxation paths may be very complicated [13].
For our purpose we shall limit ourselves to simplified situations corresponding to particular experimental conditions.

a) Let us consider large phase fluctuations with a Gaussian probability distribution characterized by $\langle \delta \phi_0 \rangle = \sigma^2$. Let us assume motional averaging, i.e. fast enough fluctuations.

The averaged local line shift is derived from [13]

$$\langle \Delta H(\phi_i) \rangle = A h_i e^{-\sigma^2/2} \cos (\phi_i + \phi_1) + A^2 \left\{ h_2^2 + h_2 e^{-2\sigma^2} \cos 2(\phi_i + \phi_2) \right\}$$.

In the thermodynamic limit, not too close to $T_1$, we may set [8] $\sigma = \sigma_0^2 (T_1 - T)^{-\beta}$.

The effect of these fluctuations is a reduction of the local line shift particularly for the quadratic contribution. This may lead to an apparently anomalously large value of the critical exponent $\beta$ [8] or, ultimately to a « commensurate-like » line below $T_1$ [6, 7]. Practically, this may preclude an accurate determination of $T_1$ with the resonance measurements.

b) Let us assume that the L.S.M. approximation is valid. For a small amplitude of the modulation wave we obtain

$$\mathcal{K}(\phi_i, t) = g \beta \mathbf{H} \cdot \mathbf{S} + \mathcal{X}_0 + (A + \delta A) \mathcal{X}_1 \cos (\phi_i + \delta \phi)$$

$$= \left\{ g \beta \mathbf{H} \cdot \mathbf{S} + \mathcal{X}_0 + A \mathcal{X}_1 \cos \phi_i \langle \cos \delta \phi \rangle \right\} + \delta A \mathcal{X}_1 \cos \phi_i - \delta \phi A \mathcal{X}_1 \sin \phi_i - \frac{\delta \phi^2 - \langle \delta \phi^2 \rangle}{2} A \mathcal{X}_1 \cos \phi_i.$$  (4)

When the linear local line shift is forbidden by symmetry, $\mathcal{X}_1$ contributes, to first order, to non-secular broadenings only. We obtain

$$L_{a,4}(\phi_i) = L_{a}(\langle \omega \rangle) \cos^2 \phi_i + L_{a}(\langle \omega \rangle) \sin^2 \phi_i.$$  (5)

The parameters $L_{a,4}(\langle \omega \rangle)$ monitor the behaviour of the spectral densities $J_{1,4,6}(\langle \omega \rangle)$, where $\langle \omega \rangle$ represents the average of energy differences between spin levels involved in the relaxation paths. For our measurements, $\langle \omega \rangle$ is in the range of $10^{10}$ Hz, typically two orders of magnitude larger than the frequency range involved in $T_1$ measurements by N.M.R. spectroscopy [9]. In this mechanism, the amplitude fluctuations contribute to widen the singularity at $\phi_i = (0, \pi)$, and the phase fluctuations affect the singularity at $\phi_i = \left( \pm \frac{\pi}{2} \right)$. We have neglected contributions from $J_{3,4,6}(\langle \omega \rangle)$, which may arise through the term $\langle \delta \phi^2 - \langle \delta \phi^2 \rangle \rangle$. This approximation is valid for either small amplitude fluctuations or for a large damping of these fluctuations as in Rb$_2$ZnCl$_4$.

When the linear local shift is dominant, a similar analysis can be made. The essential difference is a secular contribution of $\mathcal{X}_1$, which now has diagonal matrix elements. In the fast fluctuation regime, we obtain

$$L_4(\phi_i) = L_4(0) \cos^2 \phi_i + L_4(0) \sin^2 \phi_i.$$  (6)

The parameters $L_{4,4}(0)$ involve the diagonal matrix elements of $\mathcal{X}_1$ and the spectral densities $J_{1,4,6}(0) \approx 0$.

The amplitude fluctuations widen the edge singularities at $\phi_i = 0, \pi$. The relevant parameter is the spectral density $J_{1,4}(0)$. The phase fluctuations have their maximum effect for $\phi_i = \pm \frac{\pi}{2}$. We observe the flat part of the incommensurate line. They can hardly be evidenced from a visual examination of the line shape.

It turns out that phase and amplitude fluctuations influence the line shape. The « static » line shape given by expression (3) has to be substituted for by

$$F(H) = \int_0^{2\pi} \left\{ \frac{H - \langle H(\phi_i) \rangle}{L(\phi_i)} \right\} d\phi_i.$$  (7)

The local line position $\langle H(\phi_i) \rangle$ and the phase dependent local linewidth $L(\phi_i)$ include dynamical parameters, as evidenced by the simple model described just above.


We have studied the E.P.R. line associated with the high magnetic field electronic transition $M_{s} = \frac{3}{2}$ for $H \parallel a$ and $H$ in the $a-b$ plane with $\angle (H, a) = 40'$. For these orientations, the Zn$^{2+}$ sites are equivalent in the (N) phase, and the main quadrupolar axis $Z (\perp (Z, a) = 70^\circ$ with $Z$ in the $a-c$ plane above $T_1$ stays in the vicinity of $H$, for limited amplitude of the displacement field in the (INC) phase (near $T_1$). The line does not overlap with other fine structure lines. On the other hand, for this transition the Zeeman effect is predominant and the forbidden hyperfine line ($\Delta M_f \neq 0$) has no significant intensity: the hyperfine structure is a simple sextuplet ($\Delta M_f = 0$) not much influenced by second-order effects and not
very sensitive to the structural phase transition. Therefore, the line shape below $T_1$ is given by

$$F_{\text{exp}} = F_q * S_{\text{hyp}}$$

* denotes a convolution, and $F_q$ represents the distribution of the quadrupolar local line shifts due to the incommensurate modulation. $S_{\text{hyp}}$ is a background hyperfine sextuplet which is nearly the same for all the magnetic field orientations considered. The irrelevant characteristics of $S_{\text{hyp}}$ (line width, line shape and line splittings) can be determined in the uncritical temperature region above $T_1$.

The relevant modifications of the E.P.R. spectra can be monitored by $F_q$. Typical shapes of $F_q$ obtained by a computer deconvolution of $F_{\text{exp}}$ by $S_{\text{hyp}}$ using a fast-Fourier transformation program, are represented in figure 1 for $H \parallel a$, $\pm (H, a) = 40'$ and $\pm (H, a) = 40^\circ 20'$ respectively. This procedure enables us to immediately determine the essential features of the distribution of the local quadrupolar line shift otherwise obscured by the hyperfine interaction (Fig. 1o).

From a visual examination of the curves $F_q(T, H)$ in figures 1, we obtain the following preliminary results.

2.1 $H \parallel a$; $T < T_1 - 4$ K. — $F_q(T)$ exhibits two edge singularities. That of the high field is nearly stationary at $H_0(T < T_1) \approx H_0(T > T_1)$. By cooling, the low-field singularity is progressively shifted to low magnetic fields. For this orientation, the local line shift depends quadratically on the amplitude of the modulation wave according to symmetry. A dominant L.S.M. contribution to the local line shift can be inferred from the nearly stationary position of the high field singularity which would correspond to $\phi_i = \pm \frac{\pi}{2}$. An important feature is the asymmetry of the singularities (Fig. 1a). This cannot be explained by a rigid modulation wave.

2.2 $\pm (H, a) = 40^\circ 20'$. — We obtain two asymmetric singularities. Cooling shifts one to high fields, the other to low fields. The linear shift is dominant for this orientation. A smaller quadratic term is responsible for the asymmetry of the singularities. We apparently obtain a normal and simple result. Actually, the
forthcoming detailed examination of the shape of \( F_q \)
for \( H//a \) and \( \pm (H, a) = 40° 20' \) is the object of the
present paper.

2.3 \( \pm (H, a) = 40° \). — The very small tilt of \( H \) away
from \( a \) induces a small linear contribution to the local
line shift according to symmetry. We obtain three
singularities. With respect to \( H//a \), the third singula-
rity occurs essentially through a linear splitting of the
low-field singularity (\( \phi = 0, \pi \)) by the linear term.
We shall not discuss this result, which shows the reli-
ability and the sensitivity of the deconvolution proce-
dure, further, except to note that this procedure leads
to a loss of resolution. Indeed, to avoid spurious signals
arising from recording noise and from the tails of the
experimental lines, we had to use a filtering function
to cut off the high « frequency » components of the
Fourier transforms. Therefore, we have used a second
procedure based upon the theoretical model outlined
in section 1. The parameters defining the local line
shift and the local line width were adjusted to obtain
an accurate reconstruction of the experimental line
with the help of a convolution program.

At low temperature, the local line shifts are large,
and there is no problem about the resolution. The two
procedures give consistent results for \( F_q \). Near \( T_c \), the
deconvolution procedure is inoperative due to the
loss of resolution. The second procedure enables us to
make a more accurate analysis of the quadrupolar line
shape, but through a theoretical model.

A different experimental difficulty arises in the
determination of the critical temperature \( T_c \), whatever
the sensitivity of the paramagnetic probe. Indeed, it is
now well-known [6-8] that the phase fluctuations with a
large amplitude near \( T_c \) average the « incommensur-
ate » resonance line, more or less. This effect delays
the appearance of clearly resolved edge singularities
which identify the incommensurate phase. Therefore,
to determine \( T_c \), we have used the experimental
line corresponding to the electronic transition
\( M_s = -1/2 \rightarrow 1/2 \), for which the « forbidden » hyper-
fine (\( \Delta M_s = \pm 1, \pm 2 \)) lines have the largest intensity
and are very sensitive to the tilts of the quadrupolar
axes induced by the breaking, below \( T_c \), of the point
symmetry of the \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) sites [14]. For \( H//a \), these
« forbidden » hyperfine lines exhibit a sharp increase
at a temperature \( T'_c \) which can be determined with an
accuracy of 0.1 K. We have set \( T'_c = T_c \) by postulating
that the behaviour of the forbidden lines was not
affected by the critical dynamics. \( T'_c \) is the highest
temperature for which we were able to detect the phase
change. We found that \( T'_c \) was dependent on the
Bridgmann badges from which we obtained the E.P.R.
samples.

To summarize, all the details about the quadru-
polar local shifts and the local lines widths have been
obtained with the help of a computer treatment of the
experimental signal to eliminate the hyperfine struc-
ture which obscures the essential features of the dependence on temperature of the quadrupolar effects.

The deconvolution procedure is rapid and independent of any theoretical model, but a low resolution makes it inefficient near $T_1$. The convolution procedure permits a more accurate investigation near $T_1$, but it requires the help of some theoretical model. The validity of this model can be checked at low temperatures where the resolution of the deconvolution procedure is sufficient. The two procedures are therefore complementary.

3. Results of the E.P.R. spectra simulations

3.1 $\mathbf{H \parallel a : Sample A}$. — For this sample, we have found $T_1 = T_1 = 302.7 \text{K}$. Below $T_1 - 4 \text{K}$, the deconvolution procedure indicates two well-resolved singularities (Fig. 1a). The distance between the singularities does not obey the critical law $\Delta H_0 \propto (T_1 - T)^{2(\beta = 0.36)}$. Moreover, the high-field singularity ($\phi = \pm \frac{\pi}{2}$), the position of which is smoothly dependent on $T$, is less sharp than the low-field singularity (Fig. 1a). Guided by the theoretical model of § 1, we have set

$$L_0(\phi) = L_0^H \cos^2 \phi_i + L_0^L \sin^2 \phi_i \quad (\text{P for } \mathbf{H \parallel a})$$

$$\Delta H(\phi) = g_2^2 + g_2^2 \cos 2 \phi_i$$

$$F_q(H) = \int_0^{2\pi} f \left( \frac{H - \Delta H(\phi_i)}{L(\phi_i)} \right) d\phi_i$$

with $f$ intermediate between a Lorentzian and a Gaussian line shape.

Fitting the parameters $L_0^H$, $L_0^L$, $g_2^2$ and $g_2^2$, we could accurately reconstruct the shape of $F_q$ obtained by deconvolution below $T_1 - 5 \text{K}$, and we found $L_0^H < L_0^L$.

To obtain more resolution near $T_1$, we have used the same model, but we have fitted the parameters by using a convolution procedure for the temperature range ($T_1, T_1 - 20 \text{K}$). The experimental spectra is given by (Eq. (8)).

In this way we were able to determine an « edge singularities » structure for $F_q$, i.e. $g_2^2 \neq 0$, up to $(T_1 - 1 \text{K})$. Above this temperature we were unable to discriminate between an « incommensurate » and a « commensurate-like » line shape.

The positions of the singularities given by $g_2^2 \pm g_2^2$ are represented in figure 2 down to $(T_1 - 17 \text{K})$. We have also represented the centre of the commensurate line above $T_1$.

The fit of the local line width parameters indicates that $L_0^L$ decreases continuously below $T_1$, and that $L_0^H$ increases up to a stationary value below $(T_1 - 3 \text{K})$. A crossover $(L_0^L > L_0^H) \rightarrow (L_0^L < L_0^H)$ occurs at nearly $(T_1 - 4 \text{K})$. The behaviour of $L_0^L$, which represents the local line width for $\phi_i = \pm \frac{\pi}{2}$, has a particular interest.

Fig. 2. — Temperature dependence of the « edge singularities » for $\mathbf{H \parallel a}$ (sample A). The straight line which represents the non critical thermal drift above $(T_1 + 8 \text{K})$ has been extrapolated to low temperatures to serve as a base line. The full curves represent the calculated positions in the case of large phase fluctuations (see text).

Indeed, line widths generally decrease below the critical temperature.

To confirm this point, we carefully reexamined the line shape applying the deconvolution procedure using a broad-band filtering function to improve the resolution. The counter part was an important noise on the base line (Fig. 3). Nevertheless we could unambiguously observe the broadening of the singularity at $\phi_i = \pm \frac{\pi}{2}$, the sharpening of the singularity at $\phi_i = 0, \pi$, and the crossover near $T = (T_1 - 4 \text{K})$, all this independent of any theoretical model.

3.2 $\mathbf{H \parallel a \, \, \text{and} \, \, \mathbf{H, a} = 40^\circ 20' : Sample B}$. — In a second set of experiments we observed the line shape for $\mathbf{H \parallel a}$ and $\mathbf{H, a} = 40^\circ 20'$ in order to study the linear shift and the quadratic shift in the course of the same temperature treatment for the same sample.

For the sample which was used, we found $T_1 = T_1 = 31.8 \text{OC}$. Moreover, the temperature range of investigation was limited to $T > (T_1 - 8 \text{K})$ due to large linear local line shifts. Indeed, below this temperature, the line corresponding to the fine structure $1/2 \rightarrow 3/2$ tends to overlap with the line $3/2 \rightarrow 5/2$ for $\mathbf{H, a} = 40^\circ 20'$, precluding a valid treatment of the signal.

For $\mathbf{H \parallel a}$, we observed the same qualitative features as for sample A. The results of the fit of $L_0^L$ and $L_0^H$ are represented in figure 4. The positions of the edge singularities are reported in figure 5.

For $\mathbf{H, a} = 40^\circ 20'$, using the model

$$\Delta H(\phi_i) = g_4^1 \cos \phi_i + g_4^2 \cos^2 \phi_i$$

(d for deviation from $\mathbf{H \parallel a}$)

$$L_0^L(\phi_i) = L_0^L \cos^2 \phi_i + L_0^L \sin^2 \phi_i$$

we could obtain an accurate computer reconstruction of the experimental line shape. We obtained no
significant improvement by introducing non-local effects (i.e. \( \phi_1 \neq \phi_2 \)). The phase-dependent line width was necessary to obtain a satisfactory computer reconstruction of the experimental lines.

The results for \( g_1^d \) and \( g_2^d \) are represented in figure 6.

**Fig. 3.** — Resonance field distribution near \( T_1 \), obtained by a computer deconvolution (sample B) with a broad band filtering function. The external magnetic field is directed along \( a \). Full arrow : singularity for \( \phi = \pm \frac{\pi}{2} \); Open arrow : singularity for \( \phi = 0, \pi \). The base line is spoiled by random oscillation due to broad band filtering, which does not prevent us from distinguishing, a crossover between the widths of the singularities. The same features are observed for sample A.

**Fig. 5.** — Evolution of the line positions with temperature, \( H \parallel a \) (sample B). + : Positions obtained by the spectra simulation. (---) : Fitted positions with the model based on large phase fluctuations and motional averaging. ——— —— : Thermal drift above \(( T_1 + 8 \text{ K}) \) extrapolated to low temperatures.

**Fig. 6.** — Temperature dependence of the position parameters obtained by fitting the experimental spectra : \( \blacklozenge \) : \( g_1^d \); \( \blacktriangle \) : \( g_2^d \). Full line : static critical behaviour : \( g_1^d \propto ( T_1 - T )^{0.36} \) according to the theory. Slashed line \( g_1^d \propto \epsilon^\phi \exp \left( - \frac{\phi_0}{4} \right) \epsilon^{-\phi} \) according to the motional averaging model : \( \langle \phi^2 \rangle = 2.5 \times 10^{-2} \).

**Fig. 4.** — Temperature dependence of the line widths for \( H \parallel a \) (sample B). \( \blacklozenge \) : Critical broadening above \( T_1 \); \( \blacklozenge \) : \( T_1 - 1 \text{ K} < T < T_1 \) : width of the « commensurate-like » line. \( \blacktriangle \) : \( T < T_1 - 1 \text{ K} \) line width of the low magnetic field singularity (\( \phi + \phi_2 = 0, \pi \)). \( \bullet \) : \( T < T_1 - 1 \text{ K} \) line width of the singularity at \( \phi + \phi_2 = \pm \frac{\pi}{2} \).
The parameters of the local line width $L_d^A$ and $L_d^B$ are represented in figure 7, where we have also represented the line width above $T_1$.

The parameter $g_1^A$, which is the dominant contribution, will be used to study the thermal behaviour of the linear line shift.

4. Discussion.

4.1 $H \parallel a$. — For $H \parallel a$ and from $(T_1 + 20$ K) to $(T_1 + 8$ K), the centre of the line exhibits a linear thermal drift towards high magnetic fields which can be associated with the lattice contraction and other irrelevant thermal effects. We have extrapolated this linear thermal drift to low temperatures and used it as a base line to evaluate the specific effects of the modulation wave below $T_1$ (Fig. 2).

From $T_1 + 8$ K to $T_1$, the centre of the line is stationary. Indeed, the irrelevant thermal drift to high fields is compensated for by critically increasing fluctuations of the ordering coordinate. More details about the critical behaviour above $T_1$ have been given in reference [15].

At $T_1$, the centre of the line exhibits an evolution towards low fields.

Below $T_1 - 1$ K, the computer reconstruction of the experimental line shape is significantly improved by using a « two-edge singularities » structure. The position of these singularities with respect to the base line (Fig. 2) can be satisfactorily accounted for by the law

$$\Delta H(\pm) = Ce^{2\beta}(0.8 \pm e^{-(\phi^2 - 2\phi)})$$

with $\phi^2 = 3.2 \times 10^{-2}$ and $\varepsilon = \frac{T_1 - T}{T_1}$ in accordance with an averaging and a Gaussian distribution of phase fluctuations.

For $(T_1 - 1$ K), we find $(\langle \delta \phi^2 \rangle)^{1/2} = 57^\circ$ in agreement with the N.M.R. results through the same theoretical model for samples grown from aqueous solutions.

On the other hand, the ratio $\frac{g_2^A + g_2^B}{2 g_2^B} = 90\%$ indicates that the L.S.M. contributions are more likely dominant. These results support the validity of the simple model for line broadenings described in section 1.

Then, the increase of the local line width parameter $L_d^B$ from $(T_1 - 1$ K) to $(T_1 - 4$ K) would indicate a progressive increase of the spectral density $J_1(\langle \omega \rangle)$ $(\langle \omega \rangle \approx 10^{10}$ Hz) up to a stationary and substantial value. This is an unusual behaviour.

In contrast, the local line width parameter $L_d^A$ evidences a normal decrease associated with a fast hardening beyond $10^{10}$ Hz of amplitude fluctuations, as in any normal soft mode. Below $(T_1 - 10$ K), the parameter $L_d^A$ exhibits a stationary value at 10 G above the irrelevant background estimated at $T_1 + 20$ K.

A previous analysis of the line widths above $T_1$ for $H \parallel a$ shows that nonsecular broadenings are also dominant in this temperature range [15].

For sample B, we found a different critical temperature $- T_1 = 305$ K — and a slightly different amplitude of phase fluctuations $- (\langle \delta \phi^2 \rangle)^{1/2} = 50^\circ$ — with the ratio for the L.S.M. contribution being 85 %. The critical temperature seems very sensitive to defects or internal strains, but the essential qualitative features of the spectra are the same in crystals A and B.

4.2 $\gamma (H, a) = 4\gamma 20$. — The behaviour of the linear shift $g_1^A$ does not deviate significantly from a static critical behaviour, $g_1^A \propto (T_1 - T)^\beta$. We found $\beta = 0.38 \pm 0.04$, which compares with the theoretical value $\beta = 0.36$ (Fig. 6).

Assuming averaging of phase fluctuations with a mean square amplitude $(\langle \phi^2 \rangle)^{1/2} = 2.5 \times 10^{-2}$ as estimated above for $H \parallel a$, we would obtain

$$g_1^A \propto e^\delta \exp\left(-\frac{\langle \phi^2 \rangle}{4} \varepsilon^{2\beta}\right); \delta = \frac{T_1 - T}{T_1}.$$ 

The results are plotted in figure 6. They show a significant departure from the experimental results in the temperature range $(T_1, (T_1 - 2$ K)). Therefore, the motional averaging model does not apply to the linear shift, while it does apply to the linear quadrupolar shift in N.M.R. experiments [8].

We may overcome the inconsistency of these results by assuming that for $\gamma (H, a) = 4\gamma 20'$ and $T_1 - 2 < T < T_1$, the phase fluctuations are too slow to fulfil the averaging conditions. Indeed, the energy differences involved in the linear shift are much larger than for $H \parallel a$. A mean characteristic frequency of about $1.5 \times 10^8$ Hz is not sufficient to average the singularity positions for $\gamma (H, a) = 4\gamma 20'$, although it is for $H \parallel a$ a fortiori for N.M.R. experiments.

The local width parameter $L_d^A$ (Fig. 7) exhibits the same qualitative feature as $L_d^B$ (Fig. 4). This indicates
that both secular and non secular line broadenings due to amplitude fluctuations decrease on cooling as for a normal soft mode. On the other hand, the parameter \( L^*_d \) (Fig. 7) is nearly stationary in the temperature range considered. Below \((T_1 - 4 \, K)\), \( L^*_d \) and \( L_d \) have nearly the same values.

It is worth noticing that the behaviours of \( L^*_d \) and \( L_d \) compare to the behaviours of \( T_{1,\phi} \) and \( T_{1,\phi}^* \) respectively for \(^{87}\text{Rb} \) [9]. Particularly \( T_{1,\phi}^* \) which corresponds to \( \phi = \frac{\pi}{2} \) and \( \omega_0 = 10^8 \, \text{Hz} \) is stationary. This indicates that \( J_{1,\phi}(\omega_0) \) is constant. In our case, the behaviour of \( L^*_d \) indicates that \( J_{1,\phi}(\omega_0) \) increases from \( T_1 \) to \((T_1 - 4 \, K)\).

Therefore, near \( T_1 \), we have to invoke a secular contribution to \( L^*_d \) arising from large and slow fluctuations. Their decrease by cooling can be compensated for by the rise of nonsecular broadenings evidenced by \( L_d \).

To examine our results in the phaseon framework, let us introduce a gap \( \omega_{\phi_0} \), a damping \( \Gamma_\phi \), and a dispersion \( \omega_\phi(q) = \omega_{\phi_0} + V_\phi^2(q - k_1)^2 \) which is linear for a zero gap or quasi-linear for large \( |q - k_1| \). The spectral density [9] is monitored by

\[
J_{1,\phi}(\omega) \propto \text{Im} \left\{ \frac{\omega_{\phi_0}^2}{\omega^2 - 1 + i \frac{\Gamma_\phi}{\omega}} \right\}^{1/2}
\]

which is the sum of the contribution of modes within a sphere of the half-Brillouin zone \( R < \frac{\pi}{a} \) centred at \( K_1 \). We have assumed an isotropic dispersion, \( \Gamma_{\phi(q)} = \Gamma_\phi \) and \( \omega_\phi(q = R) = \omega_\phi \Gamma_\phi \). It designates the imaginary part.

In \( K_2\text{SeO}_4 \) [16], inelastic neutron scattering has been consistently interpreted by assuming \( \Gamma_\phi \simeq 3 \times 10^{11} \, \text{s}^{-1} \) and \( \omega_\phi \) in the range \( 10^{11} \, \text{s}^{-1} \). These results hold for \((T_1 - T) > 8 \, K\) and for \( |q - k_1| > 3 \times 10^{-2} \, \text{a}^* \).

In \( \text{Rb}_2\text{ZnCl}_4 \), the relaxation time \( T_{1,\phi}(^{87}\text{Rb}) \) [17], with \( \omega_1 \simeq 10^8 \, \text{s}^{-1} \), monitors the ratio \( \Gamma_{\phi}/\omega_{\phi_0} \), which was found constant in the whole incommensurate phase, except near the lock-in transition at \( T_c \). The increase of \( T_{1,\phi} \) near \( T_c \) was interpreted as a consequence of the multi-soliton regime, the phason mode being « acoustic-like » for \( |q - k_1| > \frac{\pi}{b} \) and « optic-like » for \( |q - k_1| > \frac{\pi}{b} \). \( b \) represents the distance between solitons which can be pinned to impurities and defects. As \( T \to T_c \), \( b \) increases, and the phason transforms progressively into an intrinsic optic-like mode below \( T_c \) with a gap of about \( 10^{17} \, \text{s}^{-1} \). By assuming that the damping parameter does not exhibit any drastic change from the incommensurate to the commensurate phase, the change of \( T_{1,\phi} \) would indicate a gap \( \omega_{\phi_0} \) at about \( 10^{12} \, \text{s}^{-1} \) in the incommensurate phase.

E.P.R. measurements show a substantial non-secular line broadening for \( \phi = \frac{\pi}{2} \) — that is, a short \( T_{1,\phi} \) arising from large \( J_{1,\phi}(\omega_0) \) below \((T_1 - 4 \, K)\). Setting \( (\Gamma_{\phi}/\omega_{\phi_0}) = 10 \, \Gamma_\phi \) and \( \omega_\phi \) represent respectively the damping parameter and the gap of the phason mode.

From \((T_1 - 4) \, K \) up to \( T_1 \), a sharp decrease of both \( \Gamma_\phi \) and \( \omega_{\phi_0} \) would be necessary to account for the decrease \( J_{1,\phi}(\omega_0) \). Physically, a decrease of \( \omega_{\phi_0} \) can be associated with a depinning of the modulation wave. Indeed the local pinning potentials depend on the critical amplitude. A decrease of \( \Gamma_\phi \) near the transition is unexpected, however, and the overdamped phason scheme does not hold. Obviously this model is not adapted to mirror the large phase fluctuations, pinning phenomena and floating modulation wave, occurring in this temperature range [6-8].

For the present time, avoiding any detailed explanation, we may invoke a « central peak » below \( T_1 \) for the phase fluctuations, continuing the central peak for the ordering coordinate above \( T_1 \) [15]. In any case, we believe that no definite explanation can be proposed without more experimental investigation of the spectral densities of phase fluctuations. The present work indicates the possibility of doing that by multiplying the E.P.R. measurements from S band (\( 10^9 \, \text{s}^{-1} \)) to the Q band (\( 3 \times 10^{10} \, \text{s}^{-1} \)). Then the local measurements by N.M.R. and E.P.R. would permit coverage of the range \( 10^8-3 \times 10^{10} \, \text{s}^{-1} \), all of them being consistently based on the same principle : the modulation and the fluctuations of the quadrupolar spin lattice interaction. Of course, one has to assume that the \( \text{Mn}^{2+} \) probe is a neutral one.

![Fig. 8.](image-url) — Graphs of the spectral density, \( J_{1,\phi} \), of the phase fluctuations associated with a soft overdamped mode \( \Gamma_{\phi}/\omega_{\phi_0} = 10 \, \Gamma_\phi \) and \( \omega_\phi \) represent respectively the damping parameter and the gap of the phason mode.
References