Commissioning of SPIRAL, M. LIEUVIN and the SPIRAL GROUP, GANIL - SPIRAL (Systeme de Production d'Ions Radioactifs Accélérés en Ligne) will use the high intensity heavy ion beam available at GANIL (up to 2.1013 pps from C to U at a maximum energy of 96 A.MeV), to produce exotic nuclei. This production will, in a first phase, mainly use the projectile fragmentation (ISOL method). After ionisation using a permanent magnet ECR source, the radioactive beam will be injected and accelerated in a K265, room-temperature, compact cyclotron (CIME). The energy at the output of the cyclotron will be adjustable between 1.7 and 25 A.MeV. The construction planning foresees to deliver the first radioactive beam for physics in late 1998. Preliminary tests of the source, of the injection line and of the cyclotron started in the last days of 1997 with a stable beam. This paper reviews the first results of these tests, insisting on some special issues of the acceleration of radioactive beams. Preliminary plans for future development (SPIRAL phase 2) are also presented.