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Preface

This issue contains the invited lectures and some of the oral and poster contributions presented at the Joint Meeting of Physical Chemistry devoted to "Intra- and Inter-Molecular Photoprocesses of Conjugated Molecules" (Riccione, 14–18 July 1996). Each year, a meeting of this series, devoted to a specific subject of Physical Chemistry, is organized in turn by the British, French, German and Italian Divisions of Physical Chemistry of the National Chemical Societies.

The subject of the 1996 Meeting, organized by the Italian Division of Physical Chemistry, was related to a number of scientific events, namely the Symposia on *cis–trans* Isomerization (Ottawa, 1975) and on Internal Rotation in Excited Aromatic Molecules (Cambridge, 1978) and the Euchem Conference on Photoisomerism and Rotamerism in Organic Molecules (Assisi, 1988). The present meeting extended the scope of the previous ones, aiming to cover a wider range of subjects related to the photochemistry of a variety of compounds characterized by a conjugated framework. Its focus was a comprehensive theoretical and experimental approach to the photoreaction pathways and excited state properties of these molecules. Interest in them arises from their role as models in the study of ultrafast kinetics and for their widespread applications in technology and biology.

Excited-state properties, mechanisms of radiative and non-radiative relaxation processes, fast kinetics and spectroscopies, non-linear optical properties, electronic energy hypersurfaces and solvent effects were the main themes of the meeting. Addressing these research topics with an audience of physical chemists provided the interplay between theory and experiment and the analysis of the state-of-the-art about photochemical theoretical models and their possible extension to more complex systems. A particular emphasis was placed on the fundamental nature of the electron transfer processes in chemistry and biochemistry. In fact, unlike the previous symposia mentioned above, which were focused more on the study of the mono-molecular processes of stilbene-like compounds and polyenes, the 1996 meeting shifted the focus onto bi-molecular processes, particularly the elementary steps of the electron transfer processes. Moreover, static and dynamic effects of the solvent attracted wide attention, from both the experimental and theoretical viewpoints.

The scientific programme consisted of seven invited lectures, 35 invited oral contributions and 40 contributed posters. Nearly 140 participants from 20 countries took part in the scientific sessions and contributed to the active discussion and fruitful exchange of information.

We wish to express, also on behalf of the Organizing Committee, sincere thanks to all the authors and reviewers for their collaboration. We would also like to acknowledge the organizational support of the Chemistry Departments of the Universities of Bologna, Modena and Perugia and the generous financial support of the Italian Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche and the European Economic Community. Last, but not least, we also thank the Editors of this journal for having offered the opportunity to share the results of our meeting with the scientific community.

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