

Introduction

This issue of the *Journal of Organometallic Chemistry* is dedicated to Professor Lamberto Malatesta in recognition of his scientific contributions in the field of organometallic chemistry. Professor Malatesta initiated his scientific career as lecturer in analytical chemistry in 1941 at the University of Milan, where he became professor in 1947. The fifties have been particularly fertile for Italian chemistry: while Professor Natta was working on the stereospecific polymerization of olefins at the Polytechnic Institute in Milan, Professor Malatesta was carrying out pioneering research on low-valent metal complexes at the nearby University in the same town. His discoveries, although of less immediate application to industrial development, provided the basic knowledge for the understanding of several phenomena in catalysis.

Professor Malatesta's research interests were initially concentrated mainly on the synthesis of transition metal complexes containing isocyanides with or without other ligands. At that time such compounds had not been even postulated, but he and his coworkers were able to obtain zerovalent complexes of chromium, molybdenum, tungsten and other metals, and monovalent compounds of manganese and cobalt. The National Research Council of Italy (C.N.R., Roma) recognized the importance of the work by Professor Malatesta and his school and in 1968 a research centre was established at the Istituto di Chimica Generale ed Inorganica of the University for the synthetic and structural studies of low-valent metal complexes ("Centro di Studio per la Sintesi e la Struttura dei Composti dei Metalli di Transizione nei Bassi Stati di Ossidazione"). With a financial support of C.N.R., Professor Malatesta was able to develop a flourishing school of inorganic chemistry, which expanded its research interests to include the use of modern techniques for the study of metal complexes, and into new areas, such as that of metal clusters, notably those of gold. A very important feature of Professor Malatesta's attitude towards his students has been his unfailing respect for each person's own particular scientific interests, which opened the way for promotion of able workers within the Institute: it will suffice to mention the case of Professor Paolo Chini, who was given the opportunity to establish his reputation through his highly regarded contributions to metal cluster chemistry.

The influence by Professor Malatesta's work on industrial chemistry was also considerable, the new concepts introduced by Malatesta's school soon becoming an essential part of the knowledge required by industrial chemists for the development of new catalytic processes. In this connection, it is coincidental that another of his former students, Professor Renato Ugo, who is well known for his research in catalysis, is presently involved with the supervision of industrial research work.

Professor Malatesta published about one hundred research papers and two

monographs: "Isocyanide compounds of metals" (with F. Bonati), J. Wiley, London, 1969, and "Zerovalent Compounds of Metals" (with S. Cenini), Academic Press, London, 1974. He has also published some textbooks for university chemistry courses.

In 1964 he received the Prize of the President of the Italian Republic for science. He was President of Società Chimica Italiana in 1970/73 and in 1981/83, and Editor of Gazzetta Chimica Italiana from 1970 to 1981. Also he was President of the national Committee on chemistry of the National Research Council. He is a member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, of Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere and honorary fellow of the Chemical Society (London). He has been very active in IUPAC, initially from 1954 to 1969 as a member of the Committee on inorganic nomenclature, then as a member of the Inorganic Division (1969/71), and later as Secretary (1971/73), Vice President (1973/75) and finally President (1975/77) of that Division. Professor Malatesta is presently Director of the Department of Organometallic and Inorganic Chemistry of the University of Milan.

Last but not least, Professor Malatesta's human qualities must be mentioned. He encouraged the independent advance of his students, reflecting his awareness of the importance of the intellectual freedom of the individual. An inherent modesty is one of Professor Malatesta's most attractive attributes.

Professor Malatesta's friends and colleagues will join in expressing the hope that his intellectual activity will continue to bear fruit for many years to come.

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