

Professor Jan Michalski



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Jan Michalski, the co-founder and former director of the Centre of Molecular and Macromolecular Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, was celebrating his 80th birthday and the 55th anniversary of scientific work last year. Michalski has exerted significant influence on the development of organic chemistry of phosphorus. He belongs to the best-known and respected Polish chemists.

Jan Michalski was born on June 7th, 1920 in Łódź. In 1938 he enrolled in the Warsaw Technical University. The outbreak of the II-nd World War interrupted his studies. He continued them at the clandestine Warsaw University and took his M.Sc. in

1945 at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and returned to Łódź, becoming a research assistant at the Department of Chemistry of the Technical University. In 1947 Jan Michalski went to England, spending two and a half years at the famous University Chemical Laboratory in Cambridge, doing research under the supervision of Lord Todd. He received his Ph.D. from this University in 1949. On his return to Poland, he joined the Department of Chemistry at the Technical University of Łódź, becoming an associate professor in 1954 and a full-professor in 1958. In 1962 Jan Michalski was elected as a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

He has published or copublished over 400 original research papers. A very large number (28) of Ph.D. thesis were completed under his supervision. Nine of his former Ph.D. students became professors in this country and abroad.

Michalski's extensive studies led to discoveries of many new classes of organophosphorus compounds, especially those containing a combination of phosphorus, sulphur and selenium. New reactions and structures discovered by him were the basis to his well-known studies on phosphorus stereochemistry. He has also made an important contribution to molecular rearrangements in phosphorus chemistry. Furtheron he has contributed to the chemistry of alkylpyridines, pyridine N-oxides, and vinylpyridines as well. He created the Łódź School of Phosphorus Organic Chemistry.

Michalski's scientific work was honoured both at home and abroad. He was twice elected an Overseas Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge (1964 and 1969) and is a Foreign Member of the French Academy of Sciences (Institut de France). He is an honorary member of several scientific societies and a member of the Editorial Boards of many leading chemistry journals. Jan Michalski received an honorary doctorate at the Technical University of Łódź (1987), was awarded the Medal of the City of Paris for Creative Research in Organophosphorus Chemistry (1964), the Copernicus Medal of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1979) and the Śniadecki Medal of the Polish Chemical Society (1976), and State prizes twice.

This special issue, dedicated to Professor Jan Michalski, contains extended versions of the lectures delivered at the International Symposium "Perspectives in Organic and Bioorganic Chemistry" organized on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

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