

Preface

During the 1950s, Italy participated in the renaissance of inorganic chemistry (mainly focussed on coordination chemistry), in particular through the contribution of some young University professors: Luigi Sacconi in Florence, Lamberto Malatesta in Milan, Guido Sartori in Rome and Ugo Croatto in Padua. It is worth noting that the Fourth International Conference on Coordination Chemistry was held in Italy (Rome, 1957). The Word diffused quite rapidly all over the country because young and brilliant members from the most important groups obtained their chairs and moved to more peripheral Universities, in particular in the South of the peninsula and in the islands. In the late 1960s, another factor, of social rather than of scientific nature, contributed to the development of Italian inorganic chemistry. In fact, due to the post-war baby boom and to the increased wealth of Italian families, relatively higher numbers of young people could attend University, and, in a few years, the number of students increased by an order of magnitude or more. This event created serious problems in the organization of academic teaching and quite a large number of young lecturers had to be recruited in a very short time. Inorganic chemistry profited to a much larger degree from such an opportunity, compared to other scientific disciplines, e.g. organic chemistry. This is because there was a tradition going back over a hundred years that basic chemistry was (and still is) taught in conjunction with inorganic chemistry—*Chimica Generale e Inorganica*. Such a circumstance created a lot of teaching positions in the undergraduate courses of biology, physics, geology, pharmacy, medicine, engineering, agricultural sciences. Thus, many young researchers entered the field of inorganic chemistry and contributed to the expansion of the discipline, which, in the following decades, developed along new lines. In particular, while the traditional themes of coordination chemistry and metallorganic chemistry continued to be cultivated at a positive level, most inorganic chemists of the new generation passionately and powerfully con-

tributed to the development of new emerging disciplines, which included: inorganic biochemistry and inorganic medicinal chemistry, materials chemistry, the inorganic side of supramolecular chemistry etc. Further, several centres of excellence dedicated to these areas were being established in Italian Universities. During these years, the reputation of Italy as a major contributor of excellence to the field of Inorganic Chemistry grew rapidly. This special issue, with its 20 chapters, takes a snapshot of the very articulated structure of today's Italian inorganic chemistry. It is not accidental that most of the corresponding Authors of the following chapters belong to the lucky group of researchers recruited around the 1970s (and they are, alas!, turning sixty or more). The past was glorious, the present is good. . . , what is the future of Italian inorganic chemistry? During the last 2 decades, the Ministry of Universities was stingy in authorizing new positions, in particular in chemistry and other scientific disciplines, which is the bad news. The good news is that the young researchers who now enter Academia are the result of severe selection and are all strongly motivated. Some of them have contributed as co-authors to this volume. Unfortunately, contributions by other active and brilliant researchers of the younger generation could not be included for reasons of space. In any case, there exists the promise of a bright future for inorganic chemistry in Italy.

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8 March 2006

Available online 17 March 2006