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Foreword

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FOREWORD

The Seventh Winter European Liquid Crystals Conference was held in Courmayeur, Italy, 11—16 March 1991. The beautiful scenario of the Mont Blanc mountainscape and a seemingly made-to-order week of perfect sunshine certainly helped in making us all happy to be there.

The conference's most unique feature was the large participation of scientists and researchers from Eastern European countries: a full one-third of the approximately 200 registered participants came from Eastern Europe. Particularly important was the participation of young researchers. We feel the ECLC 91 was the first truly European scientific conference in the new unified Europe, which is shaping up after the fall of the Berlin wall.

Another interesting feature of ECLC 91 was the involvement of the Aosta Valley regional government and industry in the organization and financing of the conference. Thus, ECLC 91 was an event in which the relevance of liquid crystals research to economic and industrial development was concretely shown through their cooperation in working towards the goal of organizing a successful conference.

The conference was divided into approximately four main scientific areas: surfaces and interfaces, molecules and microscopic properties, metallo-organic compounds, and applications. The majority of papers presented were in the more classical fields of surfaces and interfaces, and molecules and microscopic properties. However, some very interesting contributions came from "frontier" areas, such as Langmuir-Blodgett films and biological polymers. Technical applications were well represented, particularly in many contributions from the scientists of Eastern Europe. The new field of metallo-organic liquid crystals was shown to be quite promising. All in all, the conference proved that liquid crystals is a mature field in which more and more research is being devoted to more complex molecular systems. At the same time, this research maintains the interdisciplinary and unitary attitude in which fundamental issues and practical applications in physics, chemistry, biology and engineering are brought together in a common research endeavor: a style of work, a way of studying nature and of creating culture which this year was recognized with the Nobel Prize in physics, awarded to Pierre Gilles de Gennes. It is to him and all those who have built up the field of liquid crystals research throughout the years that I dedicate these proceedings.

The success of ECLC 91 would not have been possible without the help of the Aosta Valley regional government and TECDIS spa. Particular thanks are due to Mr. Minuzzo of TECDIS, who was essential in the organization of the conference. The staff of the Courmayeur Tourism Office was always cheerful and competent in confronting the day-to-day affairs and problems of the conference, and my thanks especially to Ms. F. Pizzorno. Both in the preparation of the conference and of these proceedings, I have had the collaboration of Ms. D. Lorenzelli. Finally, I wish to thank G. Barbero, R. Bartolino, L. Chapoy, E. Chiellini, F. Rustichelli, A. Strigazzi, and C. Zannoni, the members of the organizing committee, who also served as co-editors of these proceedings.

Marco Fontana