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Preface

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PREFACE

The 8th International Conference on the Chemistry of Selenium and Tellurium (ICCST-8) was held Águas de São Pedro at the São Paulo State, Brazil, from August 6 to 11 of 2000. In view of the origins of the Brazilian chemical community, this event represents an important milestone for the Brazilian chemists dedicated to this field. The first Brazilian University was founded only in 1934. It was the University of São Paulo. Several great European scientists, accepted the invitation to join the new University. One of the scientists who accepted to come to Brazil was Professor Heinrich Rheinboldt, from Bonn University, who has an academic and familiar history linked to the most important chemists of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. With Rheinboldt's arrival to Brazil, the chemistry in this country was born. He chose the selenium and tellurium chemistry as the subject of his research in his new country, mainly because this branch of chemistry was not extensively explored in the rest of the world at that time. The first years of the new University as well as those of Rheinboldt's laboratory were not easy, especially in view of the lack of scientific tradition in Brazil. However, Rheinboldt and his team created a new branch of chemistry during the time he lived and in the year of his death he published a chapter of Houben Weyl devoted to selenium and tellurium, in which he reported the accumulated knowledge on this field (Heinrich Reihnboldt, *Selenium and Tellurium Chemistry*, in Houben Weyl, *Methoden der Organischen Chemie*, Vol. IX, Thieme Verlag, Stuttgart, Germany 1955). Rheinboldt's school had a deep influence in the development of chemistry in this country and many chemistry departments in Brazil can trace back their origins to Rheinboldt's group. From the Rheinboldt's students only Nicola Petragnani, who finished his Ph.D. thesis after his supervisor's death, continued working with selenium and tellurium chemistry, initially as an assistant to Professor Marcelo de Moura Campos. During the 60's Petragnani worked intensively on selenium and tellurium synthetic organic chemistry. Among the several reactions developed by Petragnani at that time I would like to mention the selenium and tellurium promoted cyclization of unsaturated substrates (M. de Moura Campos and N. Petragnani, *Chem. Ber.* 1960, **93**, 317). This fact is very often omitted in texts dedicated to organoselenium chemistry, which report the discovery of this reaction as occurring about fifteen years later. Recently this reaction had a revival due to the work of several groups around the world. At the beginning of the 70's a number of facts occurred which allowed the selenium and tellurium chemistry to reach its present status. In 1971 it was initiated a series of conferences dedicated to the chemistry of selenium and tellurium. Dr. Wolfgang Günther was the first chairman of this series of conferences. By the same time Dr. Günther co-edited an excellent book on the organic chemistry of selenium (*Organic Selenium Compounds: Their Chemistry and Biology*; Daniel L. Klayman and Wolfgang H.H. Günther, Eds., Wiley Interscience, New York, 1973) and Professors Irgolic and Zingaro published a very comprehensive book on the chemistry of tellurium (K.J. Irgolic and R.A. Zingaro, *Organometallic Reactions*; E. Becker, M. Tsutsui, Eds., Wiley, New York, 1971). In 1972 an accidental discovery, the selenoxide syn elimination (D.N. Jones, D. Mundy, R.D.J. Whitehouse, *J. Chem. Soc., Chem. Commun.*, 1970, 86), drew the attention of the organic chemistry community to the synthetic potential of the organoselenium compounds, and this branch of chemistry had an explosive growth during the next years (*Organoselenium Chemistry, A Practical Approach*, T.G. Back, Ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999). From those days to

present the chemistry of selenium and tellurium developed enormously and not only in the field of the organic synthesis, but also in material sciences, medicine and biology. In the same way as the chemistry of selenium and tellurium, chemistry in Brazil grew enormously from the very modest beginning at Rheinboldt's laboratory, and nowadays the Brazilian Chemical Society has about 3000 associates, who work in the most diverse fields of the chemical research.

As the ICCST series played an important role in the development of the chemistry of selenium and tellurium, during the ICCST-8 I asked Dr. Günther to write a retrospective of the conference series. He kindly accepted the task, and the first article of this Proceedings is Dr. Günther's nice personal account on the proceedings conferences.

I have to thank many individuals and institutions that contributed for the success of the ICCST-8. A especial thank is directed to my supporting permanent staff, Mr.s Nanci Camargo and Alexandre Sardeli Guarezemini, and to my students who did an excellent organizational work.

The ICCST-9 is scheduled to take place in Bombay, India in the year 2004, with Prof. Harkesh Singh as the chairman. I wish success to our colleagues who accepted the task to organize the next conference.

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the University of São Paulo