



Professor Božo Težak
1907--1980

IN MEMORIAM

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The Proceedings of this Conference were in print when the scientific community was notified of the death of Professor Božo Težak, May 16, 1980. His transition is a great loss to a community which he influenced for a period of 50 years.

Born and educated in Varaždin, a small town in the hilly Croatian hinterland, he studied chemical engineering at the University of Zagreb. His academic year spent (1930) at University College, London, under Professor F. G. Donnan, directed him firmly into the field of physical chemistry of electrolyte solutions. He pursued his particular ideas in colloid science during his entire lifetime even while directing a military chemical defense laboratory in the early 1930's, or as a City of Zagreb civil engineer and founder of the civil defense organisation at the eve of World War II. His activities grew to a full extent after he became professor of physical chemistry at the newly formed Faculty of sciences of the University of Zagreb in 1946, and even more so when he initiated research at the new »Ruđer Bošković« Institute's Department of Physical Chemistry in 1954. His activities in teaching and research were a base from which he recruited most of his collaborators for a host of ventures. And these, influenced almost every facet of science at his University, in his home town, Zagreb, in Croatia, in Yugoslavia, and often beyond.

Professor Težak was a man of many gifts. A scientist, a science editor, an educator, a science manager, a builder, a fighter for many causes, a sharp critic, a visionary, and above all, a man with a deeply engrained sense of humanism. The scientific community will remember him mostly for his contributions to colloid science, where he has been credited as the founder of the Yugoslav School of Colloid Chemistry. Equally, he will be remembered for his pioneering work in scientific documentation and in promoting new modes and techniques of communication. Scientists in this country and abroad now accept *Croatica Chemica Acta* as an established chemical journal. Only few know how much vision, guidance and persistence it required to transform a formerly obscure provincial journal beyond what could be reasonably expected in a small scientific community in a developing country.

Indeed, it was he who always claimed that small countries with little or no tradition in scientific research could turn their apparent and real disadvantages into an asset. The asset has been that of small mass, and thus of small inertia, an asset if a small community is ready to accept new ideas. But to make use of this asset it required his unfailing sense of how the experiment should be designed and executed. He used the same philosophy whether performing an experiment in a test tube by rapidly mixing the precipitating

II

solutions, or within a community of scientists with diverse backgrounds and ideas, different and disparate opinions, and of limited experience and technical means. He believed that things best happen »in statu nascendi«, even if they are difficult to interpret. He strived to identify the controlling ingredient, and then used it intelligently to achieve the goal: the formation of a new phase.

For all what it seems, his life philosophy was not an easy going one. It required gifts of intelligence, stamina, devotion, character, and honesty. It comes as no surprise that he had won many battles but had also lost some. He befriended many, and antagonized quite a few. However, even those of his contemporaries who opposed his actions, or differed from him both in what approach should be chosen and what prime goals identified, respected his visionary gifts, his idealism, and his intellectual integrity.

We know that his shoes are too large to fill, his steps too long to match. He was a person who would rather light a candle than curse the dark. He will be remembered as the man who helped find the path when lights were dim, the forrests dense and the horizon invisible. His legacy is not one of recipes, nor of unified thinking, or of final decisions. His is a legacy of intellectual independence and of alternatives both in theory and in practice. His is also a legacy of unwavering optimism, and it is in this best of his personal qualities that his transition will be most deeply felt.

V. PRAVDIC