

BOOK REVIEW

Végh Ferenc: A Budapesti Műszaki Egyetem Általános és Analitikai Kémia Tanszékének tudományos munkássága (1847—1971)

(Scientific activity of the Department of General and Analytical Chemistry, Technical University, Budapest) Budapest, BME Technical University, Library edition, Műszaki Tudomány-történeti kiadványok No. 25. (1977) 243 pp.

The Department of General and Analytical Chemistry is the first chemical department at the Technical University, Budapest, and the third oldest one in Hungary. For the 125th anniversary of its establishment, an exceptional work has been published, namely the scientific bibliography of the past 125 years. Since its establishment, this department has always been one of the centres of chemical research in Hungary and in this century, especially in the last decades, several internationally acknowledged results have been produced here, first of all in the field of analytical chemistry. It is this department that the first ion-selective organic specific reagent, the Griess-Ilosvay reagent (1888) had been elaborated used all over the world for the detection of nitrite. The department has great merits in the examination of minerals and thermal waters in Hungary, as well as in the scientific investigation of the water of the Lake Balaton. In the fifties of this century, significant results have been achieved in the field of volumetric analysis (ascorbic acid standard solution, new redox- and luminescent indicators and methods). Much efforts were made for determining trace elements applying a wide range of analytical chemical methods. In the last decades, entirely new methods and instruments have also been developed here, for instance, in the field of thermal analysis (derivatograph), electroanalysis (oscillometry, ion-selective electrodes), analytical application of isotopes (radiometric acid-base titration). It is worth mentioning that the first monography in the world on the history of analytical chemistry was written also here.

During the 125 years activity of the department, numerous papers dealing with inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, physical chemistry, agricultural chemistry and with chemical technology have been published, in addition to those on analytical chemistry. As a matter of fact, the titles of publications reflect indeed the history of chemistry or better, that of analytical chemistry. Every Head of the department had been elected member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. It is interesting that during 125 years the department had been headed only by 6 professors. The first Head was a physician Károly Nendtvich who headed for 36 years until 1882, he was followed by a pharmacist, Lajos Ilosvay having held the leadership of the department for as long as 52 years. This seems to be a world record in the department leadership. Between 1934 and 1936 the department was headed by Gyula Gróh, from 1936 to 1949 by Jenő Plank, between 1949 and 1970 by László Erdey and from 1970 by Ernő Pungor. Since its establishment the department had five different seats in Budapest, its present accommodation dates from 1904.

The activity of professors prior to their appointment is also included in the bibliography. The first entry the doctoral theses by Károly Nendtvich had been written in Latin, entitled: „Dissertatio inaug. historico-naturalis exhibens enumerationem plantarum in territorio Quinque Ecclesiensi sponte crescentium praemisso tractatu generali de natura geognostica montium, deque situ, climate et vegetatione eiusdem regionis”.

73 books, not counting the new editions, are enumerated in the bibliography, the first originates from 1854. 50 of these books have been written in Hungarian, the remaining 23 in foreign languages (German, English, Russian, Slovakian and Roumanian). A book by Nendtvich entitled „A vegytan elemei” (Fundamentals of chemistry) had four editions between 1854 and 1870, while a text-book by László Erdey: „Bevezetés a kémiai analízisbe” (Introduction to chemical analysis) had ten editions in the time period of 1945—1970.

During these 125 years, 110 patents have been granted most of them also abroad. Of the total of 1310 publications, the first paper was published in 1847. Authors of these papers were 84 scientific workers of the department and several publications have been co-authored by foreign and home researchers of other institutions but working for a time at this department.

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