

WELCOME ADDRESS

by

BERTIL ARONSSON (*)

Mr. President of the Accademia Nazionale delle Scienze detta dei XL, Professor Gian Tommaso Scarascia Mugnozza, Dr. Claudio Battistoni, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Director of P.F. "Materiali Speciali", Professor Claudio Furlani from Accademia Nazionale delle Scienze, detta dei XL, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind words of welcome and the interest you have taken in developing the contacts between our two countries and our two academies. As you mentioned these contacts have a very long tradition and most of the time it has been much more important for us than for you. Not only was Italy the central part of the Roman Empire, without which we would probably not have a western civilisation. But it was also here that its renaissance and revitalisation took place some 500 years ago.

We were reminded of that when we entered this building and were met by the statue of Galileo Galilei, who has had greater importance than anyone else for the foundation of modern natural sciences that started in the 16th century. Perhaps it is particularly appropriate in these days (361 or 192 years since the termination of the process against Galileo) to remember his invaluable contribution in defending the independence of science and scientists against political or ecclesiastical authorities.

Although the legend that our great king, Gustaf II Adolf, ever listened to Galileo during his early journey to Italy, is most certainly not true, he was strongly influenced by Italian culture (as was even more his daughter Queen Kristina). This may have had a strong influence on his decision to give our only university at this time, the University of Uppsala, the financial means to achieve European standards. From this base, Swedish science developed quickly and with the foundation of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1739, the exchange with Italy and other European countries could take place on more equal terms. Many Italian scientists were elected foreign members of our Academy (in this century several Nobel prize winners) and many Swedes to the Ita-

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lian academies. From early contacts we may mention the visit by Anders Celcius (member of the Swedish academy 1739-1744) in Bologna in 1734, which he has described in the most enthusiastic terms.

It is our wish that the many scientific contacts we have to-day will further develop — not least in the context of European collaboration — and in this process our academies certainly have an important role to play.

Materials science is one of the most dynamic scientific fields at present and we are very pleased that the Italian-Swedish symposium arranged at Piteå in 1992, can be followed by the one you have now arranged at Ischia.

On behalf of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and all Swedish participants I wish to thank you, Mr. President, Dr. Battistoni, Professor Furlani and all his coworkers as well as Dr. Sergio Dellonte, the Scientific Counsellor of the Italian Embassy in Stockholm, for preparing the symposium that will take place the next few days.