

## **SMETS, Georges**

Born: Leuven, 1915

Died: Leuven, 1991

Georges Smets studies pharmacy at the Katholieke Universiteit of Leuven but switches to chemistry and graduates in 1940 with a doctoral thesis on the geometric stereoisomerism of  $\alpha$ -ethylene alcohols. In the course of a supplementary year of study in Paris his interest in the chemistry of polymers and dye-stuffs grows. On his return he joins the concern Gevaert (Mortsel, Antwerp) and subsequently is appointed professor of the newly established chair of macromolecular chemistry in 1948. After the scission of the university he remains professor at both universities, the Katholieke Universiteit van Leuven (KUL) and the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL).

He is highly qualified in the chemistry of macromolecules and polymers and one of the first researchers to point out the polymerisation by free radicals between an existing polymer and a growing chain. He also draws attention to the influence of the intramolecular structure and stereospecificity of the polymers during a reaction and applies his findings to create new polymers. Smets is well-known for his study of photochrome polymers and copolymers and their related chemical reactions. He entertains a solid friendship with the Belgian industry and the specialists of polymer chemistry, among them the Nobel Prize winners Hermann Staudinger (1881-1965, who coined the term “macromolecule”) and Giulio Natta (1903-1979), with whom he develops a new polymer.

Professor Smets has written a large number of articles, has universally been praised for his work which was governed by his conviction of the value of research and teaching. The “Smets Chair” is created in 1984. He was president of the IUPAC. His main interests were specialist literature and walking.