FRITZ FEIGL (1891–)

Contributed by Ralph E. Oesper, University of Cincinnati

(For biographical sketch of Fritz Feigl, see page 538.)

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(*Frontispiece*)

ANALYTICAL chemistry is now making its principal advances along two lines: the application of organic reagents, and the development of technics requiring no more than minute quantities of the sample being studied. An acknowledged leader in both of these lines of progress is Fritz Feigl, whose name is familiar to all analysts interested in better and more rapid procedures.

He was born in Vienna on May 15, 1891, and studied chemistry there at the Technische Hochschule, a school famed for turning out competent analysts. During the great war he served as an infantry officer on the Russian front and was wounded. His first experiments on systematic qualitative analysis by spot tests were made during his hospitalization. After the war he returned to academic life, and was successively assistant, dozent, and professor (1936) at the University of Vienna, where he held the chair of analytical and inorganic chemistry.

Professor Feigl has made fundamental studies on the relation of definite groups in organic compounds to specific analytical reactions. He based his work particularly on the concepts of coördination chemistry. He can justly be regarded as the founder of the modern movement to utilize organic reagents in the solution of analytical problems, and he is greatly responsible for putting the search for such reagents on a truly scientific basis. These achievements were formally recognized by the Vienna Academy of Sciences by the award of a prize in 1927.

Dr. Feigl has put out about 200 papers on new reagents and improvement of known methods of detection. Since 1920 he has particularly cultivated the development of analysis by spot tests, a province of analytical chemistry that is almost entirely his own creation. His "Qualitative Analyse mit Hilfe von Tüpfelreaktionen," the standard work in this field, appeared in 1931; it passed rapidly through three editions and has been translated into Russian, French, and English. Here are given not only clear directions for making use of spot tests on inorganic and organic materials, but the theoretical section[1] lays down in considerable detail the lines that are likely to prove profitable in the search for new and additional specific tests and reagents. Spot test technic has led to important and entirely new advances in microchemistry, and its value has been acclaimed not only by chemists but also by their biochemical and medical colleagues. The Vienna Academy laureated this work with its first Pregl Prize for Microchemistry.

Dr. Feigl has won an international reputation; he is in great demand as a speaker on his specialty. Chemists from many countries came to his laboratory in Vienna to learn the methodology of spot tests. As one of the founders, and as secretary of the Austrian Microchemical Society, and as editor of various journals dealing with microchemistry, he did much to propagate microanalysis.

When Austria lost its independence in 1938, Dr. Feigl emigrated to Belgium and became director of the research laboratory of the Société Belge de Recherches et d'Etudes at Ghent. The Dutch concern Noury and van der Lande recently organized a laboratory for the study of fine reagents and spot tests, which was put under the charge of Professor Feigl. Following the recent invasion of the Low Countries, however, we understand that he was imprisoned for a period but has subsequently been released.

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[1] This has been issued in English translation (by R. E. Oesper) as a separate volume under the title, "Specific and special reactions for use in qualitative analysis (with special reference to spot test analysis)," Elsevier Publishing Company, (Distributed by Nordeman Publishing Co.), New York City, 1940, 192 pp.