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ALBERT SZENT-GYÖRGYI
IN SZEGED
(Permanent exhibition)

Arranged by:

DR. TIBOR SZABÓ
research fellow

and

DR. ANDOR ZALLÁR
Head of the Central Library of
Szeged University of Medical Sciences

Designed by:

JÁNOS SINKÓ
artist and lecturer at the
Teachers' Training College in Szeged

“... With deep and silent emotion I receive this document by which the affection and generosity of the city have elevated me to the highest position a city can ever elevate one of its citizens. The title of Honorary Freeman is but a superficial sign of my having attained the highest honour a man can attain: the affection of my fellow-citizens. I have always believed that the most one can attain is a grave-plot. But fortune has given me much more than that: I am enthroned in the heart of my fellow-citizens just as I long ago too this city to my bosom...”

(Excerpt from his speech delivered at the City ceremony when he became Honorary Freeman of Szeged, 1st December, 1937)

“... Now I have no house by the bank of Tisza. My house stands by another stretch of water, today I work in another country. My endeavours are for the whole mankind but I take this opportunity to declare that I am Hungarian and I am attached to this fatherland. ... I wish to fortify the ties which bind me to Hungary and the University of Szeged. I see that in this little country the respect and affection for science is so great, the appreciation of general human values is so high that, for this reason, I can rightly expect Hungarian science to grow enormous...”

(From his speech delivered when the degree of Honorary Doctor of the Szeged University of Medical Sciences was conferred on him in Szeged)

“What brightened this ceremony was not its glamour and splendour but warm affection, the greatest of human values. The conferring of the degree of Honorary Doctor is one of the most remarkable events in my adventurous life because I have never before enjoyed so much affection, respect and fervour.”

(His note in the album of the University)

A SZEGEDI TUDÓS

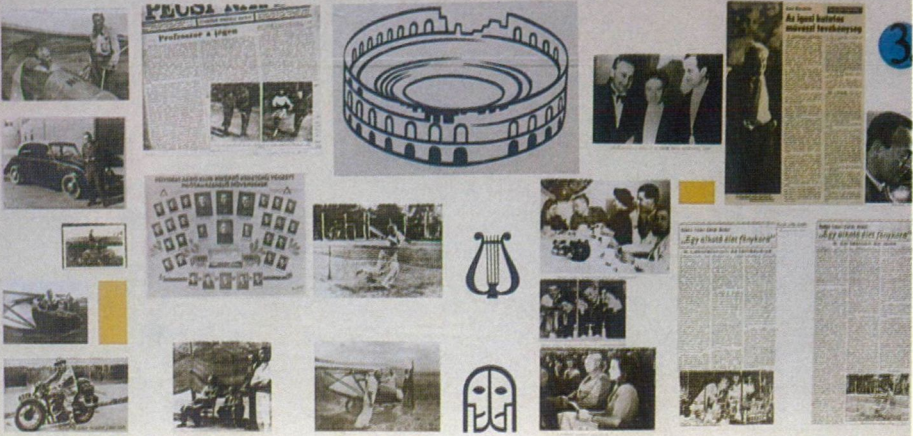
THE FAMOUS SCIENTIST OF SZEGED



He takes up his university post on 26th September 1930 and with his family (his mother, wife, and daughter Nelly) he moves to Szeged. Until 1935 his institute and home are in the building of the former metallurgy school that had been handed over to the university. From 1935 to 1940: He resides at Rudolph Square, then in a villa in New Szeged at 20 Bethlen Street. In 1931 he discovers vitamin C, and in 1934, together with István Rusznyák and others, vitamin P. In the school year 1934/35 he is Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, then later Deputy Dean. His research is supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. For his scientific achievements he receives many acknowledgements at home and abroad, reads a number of lectures abroad. He is one of the founders and the secretary of the Hungarian Society of Physiology.

SPORTOLÓ ÉS MŰVÉSZETBARÁT

SPORTSMAN AND FRIEND OF ARTS



His personality differs from the customary image of a scientist in many respects. His inclination towards the fine arts had already developed in his childhood, he was instructed in piano-playing, and his brother became a violinist. When the time of five o'clock tea parties at his institute arrived they also discussed questions of arts and literature. We also find him among the spectators at the ceremony celebrating the reconstruction of the National Theatre. In his opinion science is also an art. He went in for different sports. He became junior champion in speed skating, his best loved sports were tennis and volley-ball, on his motorbike he made a trip around Europe. The citizens of Szeged scarcely ever saw him without his little Buick. He could not only ride a horse but he became a licensed glider and aeroplane pilot.

A NOBEL-DÍJ THE NOBEL PRIZE



He won the Nobel Prize on 28th October 1937 as the first and only scientist in the country to win the highest scientific distinction for his activity in his fatherland. The attention of the world turned to Szeged and its University, greeting letters and telegrams poured in, reporters bombarded the world-famous scientist. The university had a commemorative plaquette made. The prize-giving ceremony took place on 10th December in Stockholm where his wife and daughter were also present. Former pupils of the grammar school in Lónyay Street celebrated their school-fellow and class-mate's success.

NOBEL-DÍJ, DÍSZPOLGÁR, DÍSZDOKTOR NOBEL PRIZE, HONORARY FREEMAN OF SZEGED



The Nobel Prize acquired glory for Szeged and its university. On 1st December 1937 Albert Szent-Györgyi was elected Honorary Freeman of the city of Szeged; on 7th April he became Honorary Doctor of the University of Szeged. The brightness of the ceremony merged with a feeling of unity between the city and the university. In addition to the honorary title the city decided to erect a statue of him and to change the name of Rudolph Square to Albert Szent-Györgyi Square (he lived there at the time of winning the Nobel Prize) and to build a “Szent-Györgyi” villa in New Szeged.

A RECTOR MAGNIFICUS

RECTOR MAGNIFICUS



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In 1940 Albert Szent-Györgyi became Rector of the newly-founded University of Szeged. He was not just an administrative leader of the university but he also strived towards a new, democratic university in a country shadowed by approaching fascism. He brought into existence a progressive youth organization named the University Youth of Szeged. He wanted his students to feel at home at the university, he set up a students' club in consideration of their demand for entertainment, he also organized a theatre company that performed Hamlet. On his fiftieth birthday he received a cordial commemoration from his students. He married for the second time on 18th October 1941. His bride was Márta Borbíró.



In 1939 he turned to the field of the biochemistry of muscle movements. After 1945 he carried on this research in Budapest, and then, until 1964, in his research institute in Woods Hole near Boston. The most outstanding results had already been born in Szeged but the war isolated the country from the scientific world abroad, so the true importance of his research could be recognised only in the seventies. He declared the first results of his research on muscle tissue in Szeged to be the greatest experience in his life.

SZEGED UTÁN, ÜZENET A TÁVOLBÓL

AFTER SZEGED, MESSAGE FROM ABROAD



The professor who took an active part in the antifascist movement was put under police supervision; later he had to hide from harassment by the Gestapo in Subotica and in Budapest. He was set free by the Soviet troops on 10th January 1945. Already as professor of the university in Budapest he displayed remarkable political and scientific-political activity as, e.g. honorary president of the Hungarian-Soviet Cultural Society; his photo can be found on the front page of the journal of the society. After emigrating to America he did not show up for a long time; from the sixties he published more and more papers, and radio programmes and reports began to appear about his life and work.

ÚJRA ITTHON AT HOME AGAIN



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In his letters he expresses more and more often that he wants to visit his fatherland. His wish came true on 7th October 1973. He arrived home after 26 years of absence. His colleagues and pupils awaited and greeted him at the airport. He read a lecture at the Loránd Eötvös University, radio and television broadcasts commemorated his activity in Szeged and in America.

ÚJRA ITTHON AT HOME AGAIN



He arrived home on 11th October 1973 and participated at the inauguration of the Biological Research Centre of the Academy of Sciences in Szeged. He felt at home on the following day as well, when, on 12th October, he became Honorary Doctor of the Szeged University of Medical Sciences. More intimate than the enthusiastic welcome by university students and professors were the celebration proceedings when the 80-year-old scientist heartily thanked the city and the university for their warm reception.

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ÚJRA ITTHON AT HOME AGAIN



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The ceremonious occasion was followed by friendly meetings. In the photos reminiscences of the past are called to mind by his former colleagues.

(Five years later, on 7th January 1978, he visited Hungary again, but only for two days as a member of the delegation returning King Stephen's crown and the coronation regalia to Hungary. He met some of his friends and reporters but the following day he flew back to the United States.)

