

Inauguration Address

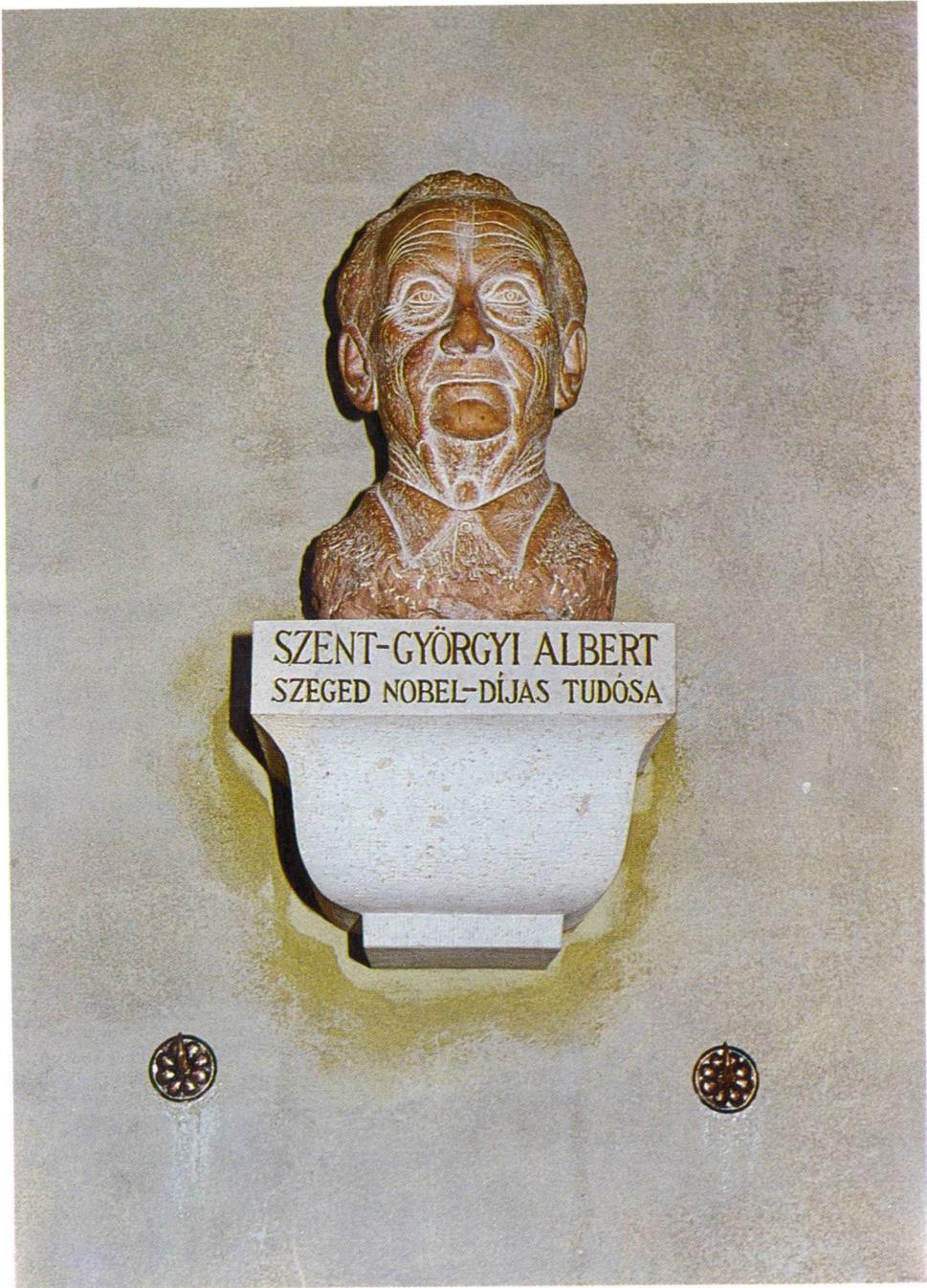
Honoured Guests!

It is 50 years now that on 1st December, 1937, the Nobel Prize winning scientist, Albert Szent-Györgyi, became a freeman of the city upon the decision of a special assembly of the Szeged City Council. And now, by inaugurating his bust here on the wall of the national pantheon in Szeged, among the great figures of Hungarian history, science and culture, we wish to manifest our respect and gratitude towards this outstanding and fine man. Szeged is the only town in our country privileged to have a Nobel prize winning citizen: a scientist, who achieved the results of the research for which he was decorated here in this town using in his work a special product of this region, the green pepper. Szeged certainly has much to be thankful for to Albert Szent-Györgyi. The town became known throughout the world overnight, and also the fact that this important scientific work was being conducted here in Szeged to the benefit and in the interest of mankind, as is still the case. I suppose it is justified that we Szeged citizens — knowing that we can thank the genius of this scientist for these outstanding research results — are especially proud of Albert Szent-Györgyi and we regard his activities in our town as an important landmark in the history of science and education.

“I went to work in Szeged” he wrote once “The conditions were provided: co-workers, laboratories. All I needed was peace and quiet, and I got it”. When in October 1973 he returned, unfortunately for the last time, and his former university conferred the degree of doctor “Honoris causa” on him, he expressed his attachment to Szeged — his home town for 15 years — in the following words: “I was happy to come home again, to see the places where I used to live and work. I wanted to meet old colleagues and also to see what has become of my former students. My homecoming had, however, another aim, namely to recharge the “batteries” of my emotions. I wish to strengthen the links attaching me to Hungary and Szeged University.” This feeling was mutual. The question may arise in us: What is it that maintains this sincere interest? It is surely not mere local-patriotism or pride, that this great figure of universal science was connected with our town. It is much more, I think: the personal magnetism of an extremely colourful, renaissance-type personality and a spirit with universal thoughts and problems. His extraordinary popularity can be attributed to his humanistic attitude, and the purity and wisdom of his spirit. He declared that science should serve man and mankind. We all know that he was led by this principle throughout his long and rich life. This is an attitude which can be called humanistic but it can be also regarded as a policy. When in 1937 he was on his way to Sweden to receive the Nobel prize he said in an interview to Népszava (Voice of the People): “Men of science are most worried

about peace throughout the world. All our efforts will be in vain if our discoveries are being used as tools of destruction, and fruit of our peaceful work will be diminished by a world war. The political tension nowadays is frightening, though there would be enough bread and space for everyone, if we could properly accept each other.”

I think that we who pay homage to him in front of his bust know that Albert Szent-Györgyi not only talked about his principles but was ready to act for his country and people if needed. Therefore, we know we have an example to follow. I hope this bust will make all of us remember it. When we pass it in our everyday life, we should remember that we are indebted to him, to this country and to mankind. And we should also keep in mind that our University bears his name from now on.



Bust of Albert Szent-Györgyi carved by György Kalmár sculptor