

PROFESSOR FERENC SZABADVÁRY



Ferenc Szabadváry was born in Kőszeg, a little town at the Austrian border, on September 1, 1923. His family owned a soap factory founded by his great-grandfather in 1837, which by the 1940s became a flourishing enterprise. The factory was nationalized in 1949, then, after 3 years it was shut off.

Ferenc Szabadváry, after taking his matriculation examinations in the Benedictine school in Kőszeg, continued his studies as a chemical engineering student at the Palatine Joseph Technical and Economics University, where he graduated in 1946. He started his career in the agonizing soap factory in Kőszeg. After it was shut, he was employed by Professor László Erdey at the Institute for General Chemistry of the Technical University as an assistant in 1949, where he worked for 41 years. He was appointed lecturer, senior lecturer, reader and became full Professor in 1972. During this time he received the Dr. techn. degree from the University, and the C.Sc. and D.Sc. degrees from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 1972 he was appointed Director of the Museum for Science and Technology founded then, so the real establishment was his task which could be performed till now only partly. From 1972 he held only a part time full professorship at the Technical University.

He started his research work under Professor Erdey in the field of the development of microanalytical techniques. Later his interest turned

towards the history of chemistry. He did pioneering work in the history of analytical chemistry which had not been dealt with before. His book 'History of Analytical Chemistry' was first published in Hungarian in 1960, then soon in English, in German, Russian and Japanese in the respective countries. The book appeared the other day as reprint in the series 'Classics of History and Philosophy of Sciences' in the USA, too. The book written by Ferenc Szabadváry and the late Zoltán Szőkefalvi Nagy on the 'History of Chemistry in Hungary' (1972) will be a valuable source in the future. The book is the first one written on the subject based on an important research. Szabadváry's book on the life of Lavoisier appeared in three languages, too.

Ferenc Szabadváry published over 300 papers partly on analytical chemistry, but for the most part on technical-historical subjects, of which about 150 appeared abroad. He lectured widely, from San Francisco to the West to Seoul to the East. He contributed to several encyclopaedias, e. g. he wrote several biographies for the Dictionary of Scientific Biographies edited in New York by the American Learned Societies. In 1970 he received the Dexter Award from the American Chemical Society, the only award in the field of the history of science as the first continental European. His activity in the field of the history of science was acknowledged by the Hungarian State by the Széchenyi Award in 1991. The International Academy of History of Science elected him a corresponding member in 1984. He is corresponding member of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Medizin, Naturwissenschaften und Technik (German Society for the History of Medicine, Natural Science and Technique). For 6 years he was first Chairman, later on honorary Chairman of the Working Party for the History of Chemistry of the Federation of European Chemical Societies, he is Chairman of the Hungarian National Committee of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Sciences (IUHPS), and member of the Committee of the International Association of Technical and Science Museums, chairman or member of several Hungarian scientific committees. For 20 years he was Editor-in-Chief of Periodica Polytechnica, the periodical of the Technical University, Budapest, which appeared in six series in foreign languages, and is Editor-in-Chief of Hungarian Review on the History of Techniques.