

MEMORIAL MEETING AT THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF DR. GÁBOR TÖRÖK



A Memorial Meeting was held jointly on 18 December 2002 in Budapest by the Central Food Research Institute (KÉKI), the Complex Committee for Food Science (ÉKB) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Scientific Society for the Food Industry (MÉTE) on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of *Dr. Gábor Török*, one of the greatest personalities of Hungarian food research in the 20th century.

Gábor Török was born in Abrudbánya in 1902. He earned his „diploma chemical engineer grade” in 1926 at the Budapest Technical University. After his graduation, followed by a brief research period in his Alma Mater, the Technical University, he accepted a job of plant manager at the Mezőgazdasági és Kémiai Ipari Rt. (Agricultural and Chemical Industrial Estates Co.), where he accomplished many-sided technical modernisation, establishing new processing plants and developing technologies of new products. Ultimately, he rose to the position of manager of the Company in 1939. His work greatly contributed to the development of the Hungarian preservation industry and it was a pioneering and successful effort in the introduction of the production of quick frozen food in Hungary. From 1941, until the end of the 2nd World War, he was employed again at the Budapest Technical University. However, besides his university researches, he continued his industry-building activities. The first Hungarian food freezing plant was established under his direction in 1943 in Magyardiószeg. After the 2nd World War, Gábor Török had an important role in setting up again our preservation industry. Under his technical guidance a new processing plant has been established in Csepel, where a broad variety of quick frozen foods and meals started to be produced with the trade-mark „Mirelite”. In the same period, he fulfilled important diplomatic tasks also by serving as food industrial representative of the Hungarian governmental delegation during negotiations in the Soviet-Union. He had a significant role in the development of domestic preservation and meat processing into our large-scale industries. When time became right to establish organised food research

in 1949 Dr. Török was appointed Director of the Research Institute for Canning, Meat Processing and Refrigeration (KOHKI), Budapest. The sections of this Institute formed later individual branch-research establishments for the food industries, whereas the Central Food Research Institute was formed in 1959 to perform research activities relevant to the whole food industry or activities, which required long-term studies in developing brand new technologies. Gábor Török served as general director of this Central Institute until his untimely death in 1966. Besides this chief task, he acted also as the head of the Department of Chemistry of a new educational institution, the Higher Technical School for the Food Industry, Budapest, established in 1962. Dr. Török played a leading role in the associations for food professionals, as well. He was the Vice-President of the Scientific Association for the Agricultural Industries (MITE), then Honorary President of the Scientific Society for the Food Industry (MÉTE), successor of MITE. His new scientific results have been praiseworthy not only in the fields of refrigeration and freezing studies but also in the research areas of canning and dehydration technologies. He took also the role of initiator in the early Hungarian studies in the field of food preservation by ionising radiation. As an appreciation of his research achievements, and on the basis of his D.Sc. Thesis „The role of water in our foods” the highest scientific degree: „doctor of chemical sciences” was awarded to him in 1956. The highest governmental distinction: „Kossuth Award” was granted him in 1955. The research school established by Gábor Török is maintained to date by his former co-workers from whom at least a dozen became meanwhile heads of research establishments or university professors.

The Gábor Török Memorial Meeting was opened and chaired by *Diana Bánáti PhD*, the present General Director of KÉKI. The speakers dealt with specific elements of the astonishingly many-sided career and exemplary character of Gábor Török. Academician *János Holló*, Honorary Chairman of the Complex Committee for Food Science remembered the human values and engineering talents of Gábor Török. *Dr. György Beke*, Editor-in-Chief of the journal "Hűtőipar" (Refrigeration Industry) showed Gábor Török as the founder of the Hungarian frozen foods industry. Professor *Lajos Szalai*, a former close associate of Gábor Török, remembered him as a scientist and teacher. Professor *György Kárpáti* spoke about KOHKI-times under the directorship of Gábor Török, and his role in the development of canning and meat processing industries. Professor *Péter Biacs*, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development and President of MÉTE, appreciated the former role of Gábor Török in the leadership of the Scientific Society. Academician *József Farkas*, Chairman of ÉKB talked about the founding director of KÉKI and the results of the Institute during its Török-epoch, remembering with gratitude also on the leadership and support he received as young scientist from Gábor Török. After the memorial presentations several participants from the audience had spontaneous remarks on the colourful character and wise humour of Gábor Török. The Memorial Meeting was followed by laying wreaths on a memorial tablet and a friendly gathering in KÉKI.

J. FARKAS