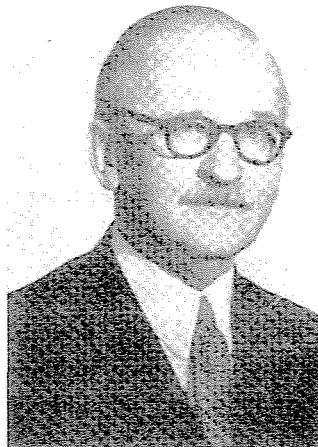


IN MEMORIAM
PROFESSOR LÁSZLÓ TELEGDY KOVÁTS
1902—1987



Only some days ago we had a live by discussion with him about the perspectives of food science and we prepared a seminar at the occasion of his 85-th birthday. Now, we must say a final good bye. Professor emeritus László Telegdy Kováts, D. Sc. Head of the Department, of Food Chemistry and Technology, former dean of the Faculty of Chemical Engineering, honorary president of the Hungarian Scientific Society for the Food Industry, teacher of many generations of chemical engineers, the big personality of the food science in Hungary, well known all over the world passed away May 11. 1987.

László Telegdy Kováts was born at Galgócz in 1902. After completing secondary school at Nyitra, he entered the Faculty of Chemical Engineering, Technical University of Budapest and graduated in 1925. He was appointed assistant at the Department of Agricultural Chemical Technology. There, at the side of the world-famous soil scientist Professor Elek 'Sigmund, he was engaged in soil and biological research. On this scientific field, still new at the time, he achieved his first successes: he revealed important ecological relationships between soil bacteria and protozoa. He took his doctor's degree for these scientific results. On January 1, 1927 he took up a post at the National Chemical Institute. In 1930 he received a state scholarship to England where he worked at the Agricultural Research Institute in Rothamsted. At that time he was mainly concerned with soil protozoological research under the guidance of J. E. Russel. Later he studied the application of mathematical statistics in up-to-date experimental work under Professor R. A. Fisher.

In 1935 László Telegdy Kováts's attention turned to his definitive field of action, namely to food chemistry and technology.

In 1942 he was appointed director of the Hungarian Sugar Industry Ltd. From 1948 on he was head of the Research Group at the Hungarian Sugar Industry Centre, and from 1949 head of section at the Ministry of Light Industry. In these positions he took active part in the post-war reconstruction and modernization of the sugar industry. He did not, however, lose contact with research and education in food chemistry. In 1946 he was appointed honorary lecturer at the University of Agricultural Sciences.

He was nominated head of the Department of Food Chemistry of the Technical University of Budapest on November 1, 1950 by the Hungarian Government. In 1952 he was Deputy Dean, in 1953—55 and in 1957 Dean of the Faculty of Chemical Engineering.

By László Telegdy Kováts's appointment new prospects opened up for both research and education at the Department of Food Chemistry. Under his guidance, teaching activity of the Department was substantially expanded, and parallelly the teaching staff was increased and the equipment was complemented and modernized. The curriculum of the subjects on food chemistry, food technology and food analysis was modernized both methodologically and in their matter. The results of this work were summarized in a two-volume text-book edited together with Professor János Holló (Food Industries, Vol. I—II.) which for a long time served as basic manual not only to students, but also to engineers and chemists working in food industry and research.

László Telegdy Kováts has always been deeply attached to teaching. He proudly claimed that all members of the younger chemical engineer generation in Hungarian food industry and research were his pupils.

Modern concepts as well as tradition characterize the objectives and directions of László Telegdy Kováts's scientific research. One of his leading ideas has been a clear definition of quality. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical demands, he defined quality as the property of agricultural and industrial food products of possessing full inherent value and satisfying consumer requirements. The pioneer activity of László Telegdy Kováts in the application of mathematical methods and in the objective evaluation of organoleptic test results is being continued at present by a large number of his pupils.

László Telegdy Kováts, together with his co-workers, achieved important results and contributed to a more detailed knowledge concerning the chemical composition of Hungarian cereals, vegetable oils, wines, mushrooms, molasses etc. His research connected with tocopherols, bioquinones and vitamin B₁₅ is of particular interest.

For almost 20 years, research has been continued at the Department under the guidance of Professor Telegdy Kováts aiming at the elucidation of

non-enzymatic browning in foods caused by heat treatment. Besides the Maillard reaction, he studied the thermal decomposition of carbohydrates, the mechanism of caramelization and the roasting processes of some food products.

The research work of Professor Telegdy Kováts on food packaging is of great theoretical and practical importance. Many ecological, food hygienic and industrial problems have been solved by his research in this field.

This list—though far from being complete—gives a clear idea on Professor Telegdy Kováts's manifold research activities. In acknowledgement of his scientific results, he was elected to functions in numerous Hungarian and international scientific societies and associations.

He was president of ISO TC/34 (Technical Commission for Food of the International Standard Organization), vice-president of GIANA (International Association of Food Analysts), section-president of ASIC (International Commission of Coffee Chemistry), member of the Executive Committee of ICC (International Association for Cereal Chemistry). He was awarded with the Gold Medal of the International Commission of Agricultural Industries for his scientific achievements.

Professor Telegdy Kováts's scientific, educational, social and political activities are highly estimated by the leading bodies of the Hungarian State. This appreciation is reflected in the numerous decorations and honours that were conferred on him in the course of his more than sixty-year career.

The wide circle of his co-workers, pupils and friends in Hungary and all over the world learned about the death of professor László Telegdy Kováts with deep sorrow and will always keep him in their memory.

Prof. Dr. Radomir Lásztity