

György Inzelt

## Laudation on the occasion of the 70th birthday of György Horányi

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It is one of the greatest honours of a scientist when the fellow researchers decide to celebrate his achievements by a special journal issue. It is—first of all—a recognition of his outstanding contribution to the development of the science, but at the same time a personal gratitude from his colleagues, and former students who were enriched by working or just speaking with him.

The occasion is usually an anniversary that generally coincides with retirement, or better to say the age limit of it. Luckily, official retirement does not mean the end of activity in most cases. It is also hard to believe that Professor György Horányi turned 70 this year. His scientific activity and zeal are unchanged; he has been publishing papers and monographs, and has many plans for the future. However, the fact is he was born in 1934, and he is one of the leading electrochemists who have significantly contributed to the development of this field in the last five decades.

His career started in 1958 when he graduated from chemistry at the Eötvös Loránd University, in Budapest. The choice of electrochemistry as a profession was understandable, since this discipline had a long tradition at the Chemistry Department. There used to work among others I. Bugarszky (the discoverer of endotherm cells, 1868–1941), L. Szebellédy (who developed the coulometric titration, 1901–1944), and T. Erdey-Grúz (one of the founding fathers of electrode kinetics, 1902–1976) was still active that time. Another heritage of this school was the radiotracer technique developed by G. Hevesy (1885–1966, Nobel Prize 1943) who was professor of this department and already applied radiolabelling to study electrochemical phenomena before leaving Hungary in 1919. Professor Horányi continued on this way. He developed an in situ radiotracer method

that proved to be a very powerful tool for the investigation of electrosorption and electrocatalytic phenomena at solid electrodes, ionic exchange processes in polymer modified electrodes and electrochemical oscillations. Although he remained in close contact with the university as a titular professor, in 1961 he joined the Central Research Institute for Chemistry of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Here, beside the application of radiotracer labeling he has studied many systems with traditional and other combined electrochemical techniques. Some of his results are considered to be fundamental ones, e.g., the application of nickel oxide electrodes for the oxidation of organic species, open-circuit electrochemical oscillations proving that the periodic changes are in connection with the nature of the electrochemical reactions and not with the electrical circuit, reduction of perchlorate and nitrate ions, reductive splitting of C–OH and C–Cl bonds, the application of tungsten carbide as a hydrogenation catalyst, the clarification of the properties of platinized platinum electrodes. Recently, he extended the application of radiotracer technique to the investigation of powdered oxide surfaces. These studies contributed to the better understanding of the overall adsorption phenomena in the course of corrosion and constitute a link between electrochemistry and colloid chemistry.

He was the Hungarian National Secretary of ISE for two terms, served in the IUPAC Commission on Electrochemistry and as the chairman of the Committee of Electrochemistry of Hungarian Academy of Sciences for several years. He has been an invited speaker in many international conferences, and visiting professor in Japan, Finland and the USA. He has published 15 monographs and more than 400 research papers that have found more than 3,000 independent citations. He has always been ready to help and to advise electrochemists in Hungary and abroad. Practically all the present professors in electrochemistry in Hungary were either his pupils or co-workers.

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Last but not least, some words about his personality. Although he is very stern in scientific and moral matters, he is the most benevolent and supporting person. If I think of Professor Horányi, a saying of Juvenalis comes to my mind: “Vitam impendere vero”, which can be translated as, “To dedicate one’s life to truth”.

In the last 50 years, he has been fighting for improvement and justice, especially in the scientific life. The prevailing potentates never and nowhere liked it. His rightful struggle for the renewal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences led to the disappointing result that he has not become a member. History teaches us that the struggle of brave men is not in vain, and serves as an example for the next generations, which should eventually lead to a better world.

The present collection of papers is a testimony of appreciation from his friends, colleagues, and students from all over the world.

Many happy returns of the day!

