On the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday Baron Charles Gustavus Mannerheim, Marshal of Finnland, received a telegram of congratulation from the Regent of Hungary. This heroic son of the magnificent Finnish people, who was congratulated personally by the Führer of the German Empire, will without doubt be proud also of having been admitted by the Nicholas Horthy University of Sciences of Szeged to the degree of doctor honoris causa. This distinction was meant as a compliment, not only to Marshal Mannerheim, who has in any case won a name for himself as a student of geography, ethnography and archaeology, but also to the Finns, a people closely related to the Magyars. The Magyars have every reason to be proud of their European racial kin, the Finns, who have vindicated their independence in a series of bloody struggles lasting for centuries, showing a love of liberty and a determination to be masters of their own fate practically without a parallel in the history of the world. This small people has not only won a supremacy quite out of proportion to its numerical strength in science, the arts, literature and sport, but has also set an example to practically the whole world by its social organization and its institutions for the protection of the people and of the family. International statistics have proved that, until attacked by Russia, after a political independence covering a period of barely two decades, this people succeeded in establishing conditions enabling the country to boast of having a smaller proportion of illiterates and unemployed and more favourable hygienic and criminal statistics than any other country in the world.
The history of Marshal Mannerheim's family concides with the legendary history of Finland. The founder of the family, Carl Erik Mannerheim, was the first leader in the struggle for independence against the Swedes. In order to be able to secure his country's independence of Sweden, he concluded an agreement with Czar Alexander I. The Czar then guaranteed that Finland should be a free and independent State, only stipulating that it should establish a personal union with Russia. The Russians would however respect the ancient Finnish laws, as well as the privileges and the religion of the Finnish people. This first Mannerheim took the lion's share in the work of organizing the Finnish State. Naturally he could not know that the Czars would repudiate the agreement and inhumanly oppress the Finnish people. Marshal Mannerheim studied in a Russian military academy; and he fought valiantly in the Russo-Japanese War because he hoped that Russia would reward the loyalty of the Finnish people by restoring the independence of the Finnish people. The Marshal later on led a geographical, archaeological and ethnographical expedition; and for the scientific results achieved by him was awarded distinctions by the academies of several countries — among others also by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In the first Great War too the object he had in mind was to embrace the historical moment, when it came, to start the movement organized to secure the restoration of Finnish independence. And, when the Russian revolution broke out, he organized the Finnish army, driving out the Russians with the host of peasants hastily organized into the first Finnish national army. On April 29th, 1918, the last remnants of the Russian bolshevik army too surrendered; and on May 16th, Mannerheim marched into Helsinki, amid the enthusiastic acclamations of the inhabitants, as Liberator of his Country. It was due to his efforts as the leader of the Lapp movement
that order was restored in a Finland threatened by revolutionary upheavals. Little Finland got on its feet again with extraordinary rapidity and its national unity began a process of cultural, social and economic development almost without a parallel in history. In 1939 the whole world watched with admiration the heroism with which the model army organized by Mannerheim won victory after victory against vastly superior odds and noted the strategic genius with which Mannerheim organized his army, built the Mannerheim-Line and led his troops. Although Finland was crushed for the moment by superior odds, today that same legendary army, with its marshal of exceptional ability at its head, is once more engaged in liberating this fine, gifted and highly moral people from Russian oppression.

On June 8th the diploma of doctor honoris causa of the Faculty of Arts, Linguistics and History, was handed over, amid formalities of the most cordial character, to the Minister for Finland, who represented Marshal Mannerheim at the ceremony. Among the distinguished persons who thronged the Senate House of the University were Dr. Julius Glattfelder, Bishop of Csanád, M. Alexander Tukats, High Sheriff of the County, and all the leading personalities of the church and civic life of Szeged headed by the Mayor, M. Joseph Polgár. A number of military delegations were seated on the left side of the hall. Ministers Joseph Varga and Valentine Hóman and Secretary-of-State Kálmán Szily were also present. Herr Erich Kampf, German Consul in Szeged, attended the ceremony on behalf of the German and D. Egregorio Ottona, honorary consul, on behalf of the Italian Minister to Hungary. At eleven o'clock sharp Marshal Mannerheim’s representative, M. Aarne Wuorimaa, Finnish Minister in Budapest, arrived. He was received with military honours. Accompanied by Colonel Walter, Finnish Military Attaché, and by Lieutenant-General Feketehalmy-Czeydner,
commander of the Szeged army corps, the Finnish Minister inspected the guard of honour while the Finnish and Hungarian national anthems were being played; he was then received in the gateway of the Senate House by Dr. Charles Kogutovitz, Rector of the University, and the Members of the Senate.

Dr. Joseph Halasi-Nagy, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, gave an account of the events which had preceded the admission of Marshal Mannerheim to the degree of doctor honoris causa. He pointed out that Marshal Mannerheim was a distinguished statesman, a heroic soldier, a scientific explorer of Central Asia who might figure with distinction among the greatest sons of any nation. The Szeged University, which had started on its way under the supreme patronage of the leader of the Hungarian renaissance, was doing itself an honour in admitting as first doctor honoris causa the greatest Finnish statesman and savant.

After describing the events which had led up to the ceremony now in progress, Dean Joseph Halasi-Nagy by request of the Rector admitted Marshal Mannerheim and inaugurated him as honorary doctor of philosophy, endowing him with all the rights and privileges due under the law to all honorary doctors.

Then the Rector, Dr. Charles Kogutovitz, amid the enthusiastic acclamations of the public, handed to Marshal Mannerheim's representative, Minister Wuorimaa, the diploma of doctor honoris causa, and in a congratulatory address emphasised that the University offered the degree of honorary doctor primarily in recognition of services to science and that Marshal Mannerheim was in every respect fully qualified to receive the distinction.

The Rector finally begged the Finnish Minister to convey to the Marshal the expression of the profoundest respect of the Senate and professors of the University and of the
students, together with a request to the effect that the honorary doctor of Szeged University should after the victorious conclusion of the war fulfil his promise to visit Hungary and should also visit the University of Szeged.

After the formal ceremony M. Aarne Wuorimaa, Minister for Finland, in a short speech in Finnish, thanked the University on behalf of Marshal Mannerheim for the distinction conferred on him and delivered the message sent by the Marshal: —

"This distinction, the appreciation of the university circles of Hungary for my work as explorer, I regard as a most exceptional honour. I nevertheless feel that this honour is not accorded solely and exclusively to my person, but to the armies fighting under my leadership and to that nation of which I am a son. Scientific researches have proved that the two peoples one of which is living on the Hungarian plains and the other in the snow-bound North are connected by ties of blood. History has proved" — said Marshal Mannerheim — "that these two peoples separated from one another by so great a distance are united by an identity of destiny and of the historical missions imposed upon them".