

**WORDS OF WELCOME ADDRESSED TO THE NEW DOCTOR VADIM
IVANOVICH UTKIN**

Dear Dr. Utkin, President of the Board of Trustees, General Secretary of the URV, Dr. Luis Martínez Salamero, ladies and gentlemen of the senate,

Distinguished authorities, ladies and gentlemen,

This formal ceremony in which Dr. Vadim Ivanovich Utkin has been awarded an honorary degree by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili is a source of great satisfaction to our university community.

The ceremony in which an honorary degree is awarded is an occasion of the greatest solemnity for the university community. As a result of the ceremony, those people who have distinguished themselves for their activity in benefit of the arts, culture, sciences or, quite simply, humanity become part of our Senate, and for this ceremony we reserve the ritual that evokes the leading role that universities have played for centuries in the development and advancement of knowledge.

Such selective and judicious recognition also defines the University. The people who have become part of the URV by means of such formal ceremonies as today's show the world what academic, artistic, cultural or social accomplishments we value. And, in turn, by becoming a member of our Senate they bring us both honour and recognition.

It is my honour and privilege to welcome Dr. Utkin to our Senate. For me personally and for all the members of the University—and in particular the Department of Electronic, Electric and Automatic Engineering whose initiative it was to confer on him

the highest distinction that a University can give—it is a pleasure to have him among us.

In his *laudatio*, the sponsor Dr. Luis Martínez Salamero has highlighted all the academic and scientific merits that make him deserving of such a distinction and which we have witnessed in Dr. Utkin's *magistralis lectio*.

For the URV it is a privilege to have as a member of our Senate one of the leading world experts in automatic control. He helped lay the foundations of variable structure systems and sliding mode control, which have been used to automate processes such as electric motors and robotic manipulators. The results of his research, as Dr. Martínez Salamero has pointed out, have led to innovations in such diverse fields as metallurgy, the petrochemical industry, the fishing industry and many more.

As I have mentioned, the award of an honorary degree always highlights some of the values that our University defends. And the fact that we have chosen to award a degree to Dr. Utkin shows the importance of two features that university research tries to promote.

In the first place, Dr. Utkin's research is clearly interdisciplinary, which is probably one of the reasons why the results of his work are so applicable. Interdisciplinarity—that is to say, working in the interstitial spaces between scientific disciplines on the basis of a deep knowledge of one's own—is the source of the most effective progress and a speedier transformation of new knowledge into benefits for society.

In the second place, and linked to what I have just said, I should also point out that Dr. Utkin has combined scientific research of the highest quality with knowledge transfer by directly collaborating with leading industrial companies. And as well as applying his

research to the improvement of many industrial technologies he is also committed to transmitting knowledge through education. In this regard, he has been personally involved in setting up a research school in the field of variable structure system control and, over the years, as has been pointed out by his sponsor, his results and his pupils have spread all over the world. At the Rovira i Virgili we were able to enjoy his teaching when he came here as a visiting lecturer and some of the current researchers have been trained by him.

Finally, I must mention that Dr. Utkin and his research have had an impact worldwide. The awards that Dr. Martínez Salamero has described—the Lenin Prize, the most prestigious prize in the former Soviet Union; prizes awarded by societies of mechanical engineers and electric and electronic engineers from the United States; or the Humboldt Prize awarded by the German government—are the highest recognition of scientific excellence and proof of the worldwide relevance of his work.

Dr. Vadim Ivanovich Utkin, thank you for accepting this award. More than an honour for you, it is an honour for us. Your membership of the University Senate confers prestige on our University and encourages us to work even harder to be worthy of the privilege of our association with you.

Today, with the greatest recognition of your merits, you are acquiring a commitment to represent the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, which I am sure you will undertake with distinction. Please accept my warmest congratulations and those of the university community, which from today on will also be your own.

Thank you very much.