

## ALEXANDER KOSSIAKOFF: AN APPRECIATION

After almost four decades of experience, the existence of the Applied Physics Laboratory within The Johns Hopkins University is generally well established and understood. That calm fact, however, is very much more remarkable than that occasional questions about the relationship are still raised, and no doubt will continue to crop up. As experience elsewhere has indicated, the successful and enduring operation within a university of a large and distinguished laboratory with APL's special mission is an extraordinary feat all by itself. For this achievement a select few deserve singular credit. One of them is Dr. Alexander Kossiakoff.

Deservedly recognized for his outstanding achievements in science and his splendid leadership performance, Kossy also merits an accolade for a less heralded role: he is truly a university man. That statement encompasses far more than his staunch and unquestioned loyalty and devotion to his University. It refers above all to his profound and affectionate understanding of the University's purposes and inner workings — an understanding regrettably more rare by far than is commonly assumed — and to his superb, unflinching sensitivity to the best interests of the University in every nuance.

A unique personal chemistry must function in an effective relationship between the laboratory director and the university president. Both are apt to be strong persons, accustomed to the need for swift decisions on grave matters. Professionally they will differ vastly in experience and mission. For each of them the relationship with the other is a minimal yet also crucial part of his role. There is the omnipresent danger that they may encroach on each other's prerogatives — more likely by inadvertence rather than design. They are bound to try to trust each other — to achieve that mutual faith that is at once the most rewarding and the most delicately difficult of human relationships. It helps if they like each other, but it does not follow that affection always goes hand in hand with trust; and it is trust that matters. For the laboratory director, the basis of trust can only be the president's supportive understanding of the laboratory's mission and function. For the president, trust

must rest on the director's capacity to lead a complex enterprise, both on its own terms and yet somehow also in tune with the rest of the university.

There is a poem by Stephen Spender — rather a rueful poem — that begins, "What I expected was/Thunder, fighting," and then later proceeds, "What I had not foreseen/Was the gradual day." Well, in the partnership between Kossy as Director of APL and myself, there was — happily — no thunder or fighting. Instead, what I cherished so much was his genius during the gradual day, every day, in particular respect to his role as a university man. The unqualified, undramatic, miraculous — and to me priceless — tribute I can pay him is that in all those years I do not ever recall having heard from Kossy when it was not necessary nor — far more important — not hearing from him at once when it was.

What was so marvelous was the knowledge that, atop all the other vital concerns, Kossy considered all matters affecting APL within the context of the whole University, foreseeing implications, anticipating difficulties, making his own preliminary judgments as though we had already had an exhaustive discussion. Words cannot capture the full flavor of a relationship any more than they can portray a taste or smell. Seen from the University as a whole, Kossy's directorship of APL is much more than what the record shows as having happened. It is marked also by some things that were not done at all, and more frequently by events fashioned one way when in less sensitive and careful hands they might have been shaped otherwise and less desirably. Throughout, the prevailing sense was the Laboratory's integral role within the University, exquisitely perceived and pursued. In the most splendidly unremarkable way, Kossy gave a most remarkable demonstration of being a University man. A towering success as Director, he is also distinguished brilliantly as a great citizen of The Johns Hopkins University.

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