

## A Special Anniversary



This is a remarkable jubilee not so much for the impressive age of eighty years but for the special and undoubtedly exceptional personality of the jubilarian *Professor Ing. Elemír Kossaczký, PhD.*

Many of his former students, as well as both his former and contemporary colleagues, some of them already silver-haired or pensioners, remember him simply as “Rexo” who with a hardly noticeable natural scepticism analyzed the opinions heard from around about common affairs of human beings or scientific matters and when they sounded false, he turned in an instant into erupting volcano always ready to vigorously defend exactness and accuracy, in science as in life. In this respect he has maintained an absolutely uncompromising attitude. It was his inherent feature from the very beginnings of conscious perception of the world. Born in Ľubietová on 13 June 1924, he has grown

from a universally gifted child through an excellent student – at an exam in physics Professor *Dionýz Ilkovič* expressed his admiration in the words “... do come whenever you like to talk physics...” – into a true generally acknowledged founder of Chemical Engineering as a separate scientific branch in Slovakia.

Back in the thirtieth and fortieth of the last century the Slovak higher education of chemistry did not know Chemical Engineering as an independent subject. In those times the majority of the teaching staff at the Slovak Technical University were in fact secondary-school teachers without adequate academic background. Professor Ilkovič represented an exception among the others. The introduction of this subject into syllabi after the Second World War was, to a great extent, a result of Kossaczký’s activities. One of the most important steps was the publication of *Chemical Engineering I* and *II* written in the coauthorship with *Július Surový*, the textbooks frequently used by students up-to-now. The secret of the pedagogical mastery of Professor Kossaczký is based on two quite simple pillars plastered with strict consistency and logical thinking, namely on a proper estimate of the audience’s horizon and a perfect understanding of the problems.

Professor Kossaczký consistently implanted in his students’ minds the idea of the importance of seemingly minor and often neglected details, such as the unit of the quantity or dimensional homogeneity as a basic and necessary condition of the correctness of any relationship. Nowadays many experts remember those moments with gratitude. Similarly, the excellent defence of Kossaczký’s thesis devoted to the dimensional analysis remains an unforgettable experience for everybody present at the event.

Looking back at the Kossaczký’s eighty years, the feeling is absolutely unambiguous – it was not a common way of life of a common man. It was not a bed of roses, not because of the often exhausting work, which in fact he liked and generously dosed it to himself, but mainly due to a lack of understanding and perhaps envy of the direct powerful authorities or insensible political actions in the former regime. As an open-minded and sincere man he did not keep his mouth shut but spoke his mind. Such attitude could not remain unpunished in those times – he had to leave the academic ground. Thanks to favourable circumstances it was not forever, he came back. However, he was appointed professor when he was almost sixty years old. Further postponing of this act would have been socially unacceptable even in those times when the power “elite” had managed to share out all the thinkable and unthinkable academic titles. Seemingly, Kossaczký was able to observe these anomalies from a bird’s-eye view. On the other hand, he was mobilized to an active protest by any hidden or open attack on chemical engineering. In those moments he was finding in himself an inexhaustible strength, he threw himself into sharp discussions and continued until he prevailed. Many times it took not days or months but years.

Professor Kossaczký did not stop his prolific work after retiring. One of his latest contributions written before a rapid deterioration of his sight, devoted to material and energy balances, really deserves an admiration. It is easy to recognize the typical Kossaczký’s style: crystal-clear lucidity, perfect logical structure and continuity of individual parts as well as brilliant practical illustration of the subject.

On the occasion of this jubilee the whole Slovak chemical engineering community, along with the Czech one, wishes Professor Ing. Elemír Kossaczký, PhD. many content years to come in the circle of his family and amid his former students, now colleagues, with whom he spends time drinking coffee every day to his own pleasure and to the pleasure of the others enjoying his still refreshing company.

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