



*Theodore von Karman, Professor of Aeronautics, Emeritus*

## A SALUTE TO TODOR

by E. E. SECHLER

*Professor of Aeronautics*

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY of the birth of one of the most distinguished of the world's scientists and engineers, Dr. Theodore von Karman, occurs on May 20, 1956. Many words will be written and volumes will be published concerning his contributions to science and engineering, particularly in the field of aeronautics, and to repeat these praises here would be redundant. Suffice it to say that his leadership in this field is outstanding and has been recognized by honors and medals granted him by most of the important countries of the world.

To those who have been so fortunate as to be closely associated with this great scientist, there are other facets to his personality which, if that is possible, overshadow his scientific ability. These include his friendship, his essential humanness, his tolerance, and his kindly helpfulness to his students and co-workers, all of which combine to make him the "Todor" whom we all love and respect.

Since I was one of those lucky first students of Caltech's Guggenheim Aeronautics Laboratory when

Karman became its director in 1930 it has been my privilege to have known him for the past quarter of a century. As a young student in awe of the great von Karman (an awe which has never left to this day) I can well remember his patience with my ignorance and his sincere efforts to instill in myself, and others of that small first class, a sense of the important things to be found in science and engineering if one only knew how to look and then looked hard enough for them. This interest in his students was also held by his brilliant and devoted family consisting of his sister, Josephine de Karman and his mother—the latter always being afraid that her Todor was being too harsh on his students.

The warm and friendly home of the von Karmans, which was open day and night to their friends and co-workers, was a living proof that an eminent scientist and engineer need not be narrow minded nor a recluse. There one would meet artists, musicians, writers, and philosophers, as well as scientists, all making their contributions to conversations which were not only cosmopolitan but some-

times became cosmic in their scope.

These meetings were held in rooms filled with fascinating objects received by the von Karmans as gifts from their many friends throughout the world, each of which told a story of someone else who treasured his association with the von Karmans. And, as a final touch there always were available plates of delicacies which seemed to appear continuously from a kitchen inhabited by a Hungarian cook who was a scientist in her own field.

Many are the anecdotes that are passed around between those who have known this great man. Since most of them are connected in some way with the lives of the story tellers they would lose their flavor if committed to print; however, the fact that so many do exist, and that they can be heard in nearly every part of the world, attests to the warm hearted, human respect in which he is held by his friends and colleagues. As a scientist, a world leader in engineering and, moreover as a sincere friend, we would all like to salute you, Todor, on your birthday and to wish you well.