

PROFESSOR JAROSLAV MACHÁČEK IS NINETY



This periodical published my first review of Jaroslav's life and times when he was sixty-five. Why do I refer to Jaroslav Macháček by his first name only? For one, we have been in the same boat since 1954, that is for sixty-five years. I am his senior by two years, and as regards academic career his junior by two years. When I joined the staff of the Department of English in Olomouc in 1954, he had already been assistant to Professor Poldauf for two years, who chose him as a promising graduate of English and Spanish. And for two, in the 1970s we shared the passage of the boat through stormy waters.

At first, Jaroslav's career was developing smoothly: 1953 PhDr., 1965 CSc., 1967 associate professor. He taught courses in Historical Grammar (published *An Outline of the Historical Development of English* in 1956), Morphology and Syntax. His first paper was published in *Linguistica Pragensia* in 1959 (on the copula in English), his habilitation thesis *Complementation of the English Verb by the Accusative with Infinitive and the Content Clause* was brought out in 1965 and later included in the bibliography in Randolph Quirk et al.'s *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985). Two more papers came out in *Linguistica Pragensia*, one in *Časopis pro moderní filologii* and *Brno Studies in English*, three in miscellany volumes *Anglica UP I* and *III*. In 1970 the publishing ban brought a stop to that.

Above, I hinted at some parallels between our lives. In 1970, both of us were put on the list of twelve Faculty members to be dismissed. The two of us were the only non-party people on it, the rest being Marxists who "had disappointed the working class" during the events of the Prague Spring. So both of us were removed from the "headquarters" of the Philosophical Faculty, me to a place three tram stops away, he to a place six stops away. The difference between the two stops was of critical importance, though. While I was prevented from lecturing I was allowed to teach in a less prestigious department the students of medicine, science, and education, and could work on textbooks, Jaroslav was struck by the "fist of the working class" harder: partly because he came from a worker's family himself (thus "betraying" his origin), and partly because he was already in the rank of associated professor, while I was not. After a temporary job in the Faculty reading room in 1972–74, for the next 15 years he made a living by operating the central heating system in the Children's Clinic. His only comfort in those days was that many physicians or even department heads came to him unofficially to ask for translations of their papers or for private lessons of English. In this way he could keep up his command of the language.

His post was filled by an Anglicist with a degree from Moscow University, mine by an Anglicist with Soviet citizenship. The staff of the English Department was headed for a few years by a man who chaired two more Departments, of Romance Philology and Germanic Philology — hard-line Communists were scarce in "western" departments.

The sins of fathers are visited upon their children, an old saying goes. In this case it applied to the victim's two eldest daughters, who could not study humanities at university level. Only the third one could graduate in translatology at Charles Univer-



sity, gained a diploma in Cornish Language, became an editor of a Prague publishing house and has translated ten novels by English female authors. One more parallel in the lives of the two Jaroslavs: in 2013 my class in American History and Civilization was attended by his granddaughter and my grandson.

The events of December 1989 proved that God's mills grind slowly. Next January, Jaroslav Macháček rejoined the English Department as its Head, was raised to the Professor's rank, and spent one semester at UCLA, Brown and Boston universities. Before 1970, his exposure to the English-speaking world was limited to a two-week-long Linguistics Seminar at the American Center in Salzburg (1968) and one year (1969/70) as instructor in Czech in the Department of Russian at the University of Sheffield. For the next twenty years, our generation of Anglicists was, so to speak, in the category of astronomers studying the Moon from a distance.

In 1990 he began teaching again courses in historical grammar, morphology and syntax, counselling graduate students, and sitting on PhD. examination committees. He served as Vice-Dean of the Philosophical Faculty (1990–92) and Vice-Rector for Foreign Relations (1992–97). As a member of the Presidium of the Council of Higher Education Institutions he attended several sessions, e.g. in Brussels. He was awarded the Gold Medal of Palacký University and in 1994 the Prize of the City of Olomouc. In 2003 he attended a conference of European rectors at Santiago de Compostela, in 2013 visited the University of Lancaster. He chaired the Department of English and American Studies until 2011. His courses were passed to his junior colleagues, many of them his former students. In 2015 he received the status of Professor Emeritus.

In the 2000s he participated in team work dealing with various problems, including innovation of the study of philology. In the 2010s he was a co-editor of *Ivan Poldauf: Sebrané spisy I-II* (Collected Papers). By the way, the appendix to Volume I (2016) contains a photograph of Professor Poldauf and the two of us on a bicycle trip.

Let me finish by saying a few words about the honoured person as a teacher. His perfect RP, his talent for a playful use of the language, and his quick wit were the credits which won both respect and admiration of his students. His own fondness of the students often took the form of an extra long examination: everything was discussed in detail until the examinee left the room a better linguist than when they entered it.

One more little detail: his memory is very good. Recently I asked him, what was the name of the mountain that we climbed outside Salzburg, 51 years ago? His answer was: "Schmittenhöhe, near Zell-am-See, 1,965 metres. And when we reached the top you said: 'What a beauty! I must wipe my glasses clean for this gorgeous view.'" Yes, it was a memorable climb, with us wearing sandals instead of mountain boots; it took us two days, including spending the night in a hayloft.

Mental agility and a good memory are a treasure. Let them never leave him.

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