

Life jubilee of professor Dušan Janák

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doc. PhDr. Dušan JANÁK, Ph.D.

There are two types of significant scientific personages. The first ones mostly contribute to the development of their field in institutional terms: founding scientific journals, learned societies, research centres and faculty departments or organizing congresses and heading research teams. The others contribute to the development of science especially in terms of discourse: standing out among their colleagues by their prolific scientific work, by their works being considered as key to a scientific sub-field, by becoming founders of a certain scientific school, or by succeeding to produce long-quoted work.

Prof. PhDr. Dušan Janák, Ph.D., whose 70th birthday is commemorated by this article, may be ranked in both types. His greatest institutional success is the foundation and successful management of the Faculty of Public Policies of the Silesian University in Opava. Thanks to him, the faculty has established the course of study Central European Studies on Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral degrees and the *Central European Papers* journal was founded. As a lecturer, he has won the respect of many of his secondary school students and university students who were able to attend his lectures during his tenure which took place not only at the Silesian University in Opava, but also at universities in Poland and Slovakia. In terms of discourse, professor Janák may be characterized as a "hardened positivist". He is not attracted by conceptual systems, developmental theories and all-encompassing typologies, but by work with archival sources based on their precise analysis and typologies and theories of "middle range" based on their synthesis. His research has especially contributed to a more detailed understanding of the issues of political repression and the development of prison systems in Central Europe since 1945. On his own or together with his long-time friend and colleague, professor Mečislav Borák, he has created or co-created a body of scientific work no-one dealing with repression of Czechoslovak citizens in the 1940s can really omit.

The later historian and university professor began his educational path in a somewhat unconventional facility, the Mining Vocational School in Ostrava. As a certified hewer, he then completed his secondary education by a school-leaving exam at the Secondary School of Mining Industry. He spent his undergraduate years in Brno, starting his study of Czech language and history at the Philosophical Faculty of John Evangelist Purkyně University in 1968 and completing it in 1973. During his university years, he thus experienced the relaxed late 1960s with an interesting cohort of students and teachers who were not allowed to study or lecture during the 1950s and came to universities transiently in the second half of the 1960s, as well as the onset of the normalization regime.

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After his studies, he returned to his native Ostrava and worked as a secondary school teacher for several years. In late 1970s, he started working at the Museum of Revolutionary Struggle, the Ostravan branch of the Silesian Museum. This is where his professional career of an expert historian began, however, the key part of his historian work is tied with Opava. Since 1987, he joined his professional fate with the Czech Silesian metropole, becoming part of the Silesian Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. He also started shaping his scientific profile at this institution.

As witness of a number of turbulent events of Czech and Czechoslovak history of the 20th century, he focused his work precisely on the history of this era. He dedicated his first works to the local history of Silesia, paying gradual attention to the issue of political and economic history of the industrial area of eastern Silesia, however, he even did not avoid the very sensitive Cieszyn question, having re-visited it in his publications in later years as well. In his bibliography, we may encounter some rather general works, dedicated for example to the history of Orlová, or to the issues of heavy industry in the Ostrava region, but also specific case studies which include his descriptive study of the political orientation of the Cieszyn region citizens, or a study following the process of Czech-Polish border formation after 1948. In 2000, he also took part in the creation of a comprehensive two-volume synthesis of the history of Czech Silesia.

Already during his tenure at the Silesian Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, he also began to devote time to topics which may be considered as some of the most troublesome chapters in modern Czech and Czechoslovak history even after many decades have elapsed since. These include especially the issues of persecution of Czechoslovak citizens and of justice and prison systems in Czechoslovakia after 1945. His article dealing with the activities of retributive tribunals in Opava between the years 1945 and 1948 became one of the cornerstones for further explorations into the issue of retributive justice in the Opava region. From these issues, there was but a step towards research into prison systems and forced labour in Czechoslovakia after 1948. In cooperation with professor Mečislav Borák he went on to expand his subject of interest in later years to the pre-war persecution of Czechoslovak citizens in the Soviet Union as well. These research activities eventually culminated in 2014 into the publication of a monograph mapping the issue largely not reflected hitherto, namely the fate of Czechoslovaks who went to live in the Soviet Union as members of expellee associations in the 1920s and 1930s and who suffered persecutions in the 1930s. He also subsequently re-visited the issue of persecution in the Soviet regime several times.

As a native of the industrial agglomeration of Ostrava, he also gravitated in interest toward economic and social issues which he combined on the example of strikes and strike movement with the issues of persecution and forced labour. In recent years, he managed to blend the issue of the strike movement in Czechoslovakia after WW2 with the general history of the working class. A result of this interest will take the form of the forthcoming collective monograph, mapping the development of Czech industrial working class between 1945 and 1948.

In 2000, he defended his doctoral thesis at Palacký University in Olomouc, launching his further university career. An important turning point for him was the transition from Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences to the Silesian University in Opava in 2005. Here, he first worked as head of the Institute of Public Administration and Regional Policy at the Faculty

of Philosophy and Science. A turning point in his university track came in 2008 when he not only was awarded the degree of associate professor in the field of Czech and Czechoslovak history, but also in that same year, an institutional separation of some branches of study from the Faculty of Philosophy and Science also occurred and the Faculty of Public Policies was founded under professor Janák as its first dean. Under his leadership, the range of degree courses on offer broadened, the faculty was successfully stabilized in terms of staff, and as a culmination of his successful management of the Faculty of Public Policies, teaching was moved into newly renovated premises at Bezruč Square 14 in 2016. In 2016, Dušan Janák obtained full university professorship of history with focus on Czech and Czechoslovak history. His active scientific career by no means seems to be closing. After leaving the leading positions at the Faculty of Public Policy, the research publication activity of professor Janák has increased and the administration time at the Faculty was replaced by foreign lecture tours in Poland.

We hereby join all grateful students, colleagues and friends in congratulating professor Janák on his life jubilee and rather than satisfaction with his hitherto scientific track, we wish him a happy continuation and many happy returns.

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