

MEMORIAL OF FRANTIŠEK SLAVÍK

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Not long ago we congratulated Professor František Slavík on his eightieth birthday and wished him good health for the next decade, and now the time has come for us to part with him. He died on January 27, 1957.

František Slavík, son of the historian František Augustin Slavík, was born on July 18, 1876 in Kutná Hora, a mining town in Middle Bohemia.

In 1895 he entered the philosophical faculty of the Charles University in Prague, where he studied natural history, chemistry and physics. From the very beginning of his studies he was distinguished by wide knowledge in several disciplines of natural sciences—zoology, botany, geology, mineralogy, chemistry and others. He was therefore highly respected by many of his school-mates. His "exceptional polymathy" and true fellowship was remembered by one of his oldest contemporaries, Professor Josef Kratochvíl, on the occasion of Slavík's eightieth birthday, who said: "He was not jealous of successes made by others, but was pleased by them. We all in the small club circle felt it and it sank deeply in our memory."

At the Charles University he was taught mineralogy by the prominent crystallographer Karel Vrba and petrology by Jindřich Barvíř. He studied chemistry with Karel Preis and Bohumil Brauner.

Professor Vrba recognized very early Slavík's abilities and made him his assistant in the second year of his studies. In 1889 Slavík became doctor of philosophy on the basis of a dissertation which had a principally petrological character: "On ore-bearing pyroxenic and biotitic gneiss at Pohled near Světlá n.S. *Journal of the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences*, 1897, No. 34, Prague 1898.

In 1901–1902 he studied crystallography for one semester with Prof. P. Groth and petrology with Prof. E. Weinschenk in Munich. He remained Prof. Vrba's assistant up to 1903, when he was appointed as professor for grammar schools. He taught then in several classical and modern grammar schools of Prague. In 1905 he was admitted for a docent in mineralogy at the Charles University, where he was appointed in 1910 an assistant-professor and in 1916 professor in ordinary and director of the Mineralogical Institute of the Charles University. In the years 1907–1916 he worked simultaneously as a docent at the Technical High School of Prague. In 1937 he was elected rector of the Charles University in Prague.

The first forty years after he received the doctor's degree, Prof.



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Slavík devoted, practically undisturbed, to scientific work in a time of versatile international contacts, so necessary for the growth of a man of science. Slavík knew quite well several languages, especially English, French, German, Russian, Italian and Polish, which enabled him to take part actively at scientific conferences in various countries.

He was present at most international geological congresses of his time and at many other meetings of scientists abroad. With the exception of Albania and Portugal he probably knew all European countries. He had many friends all over the world and procured willingly for his collaborators and students comparative material from foreign countries.

Among his most distinguished students were Dr. Radim Nováček, docent in chemical mineralogy, known mainly for his studies on uranium minerals, and Dr. František Ulrich, professor of experimental mineralogy at the Charles University of Prague.

The Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939–1945 interrupted the successful development of Slavík's school and dealt a heavy blow to Czechoslovakian mineralogy. It was not only that the Czech universities were closed. Professor Slavík loved freedom in all his life, and so he partook actively in the national resistance, with his collaborators F. Ulrich and R. Nováček,

On February 4, 1943, he and his wife, the mineralogist Dr. Ludmila Slavíková, were arrested by the Gestapo. He went through the prison of Pankrác and the concentration camps of Terezín, Auschwitz and Buchenwald. His wife was tortured to death in Rajsko near Auschwitz on February 18, 1943. František Ulrich and Radim Nováček were arrested by the Gestapo too. Ulrich was wounded when resisting the arrest and died. Nováček perished in the prison of Pankrác. Slavík's Mineralogical Institute was moved, the laboratory installations demolished and an "Institut für Rassenlehre" established in its former rooms.

After the liberation of Czechoslovakia, when Professor Slavík returned in June 1945 to his institute, it was empty. It will never be forgotten, how Professor Slavík, 69 years of age and back from the concentration camps, carried piles of books day after day, and worked more assiduously than those who helped him. Unforgettable were his self-sacrificing efforts to restore what had been destroyed by the Nazis, to replace those who had been murdered, and to secure the renewal and further development of Czechoslovakian mineralogy.

After an interval of six years Prof. Slavík started with his lectures and, although put on the retired list in 1947, he actively continued in lecturing at the Charles University practically until his death.

His distinguished services were recognized by many honors at home and abroad.

He was an ordinary member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, of the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences and of many other scientific institutions in Czechoslovakia. In 1946 the Charles University of Prague conferred on him an honorary degree in natural sciences.

Abroad he was elected a corresponding member of the Mineralogical Society of America, an honorary member of the Mineralogical Society in London, the Geological Society of Great Britain, Société française de Minéralogie et de Cristallographie, the All-Union Mineralogical Society of the USSR, Société géologique de Belgique, and a member of the Rumanian Academy of Sciences.

From 1920 up till his death he abstracted regularly the Czechoslovak scientific papers for the *Mineralogical Abstracts* as a co-worker of Dr. L. J. Spencer.

Czechoslovakian mineralogy has lost in Professor Slavík its most

distinguished member. He was respected not only for his scientific activity, but also for his unusual modesty and kindness. He was always prepared to comply with the wishes of anyone who came with good will. He always spared time even for beginning students and private collectors of minerals. He used to give unselfishly all publications, which he had received during his long and rich interchange with foreign countries, to the library of the Mineralogical Institute. Thanks to him the library of separata of the Mineralogical Institute of the Charles University no doubt is one of the largest in Central Europe.

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