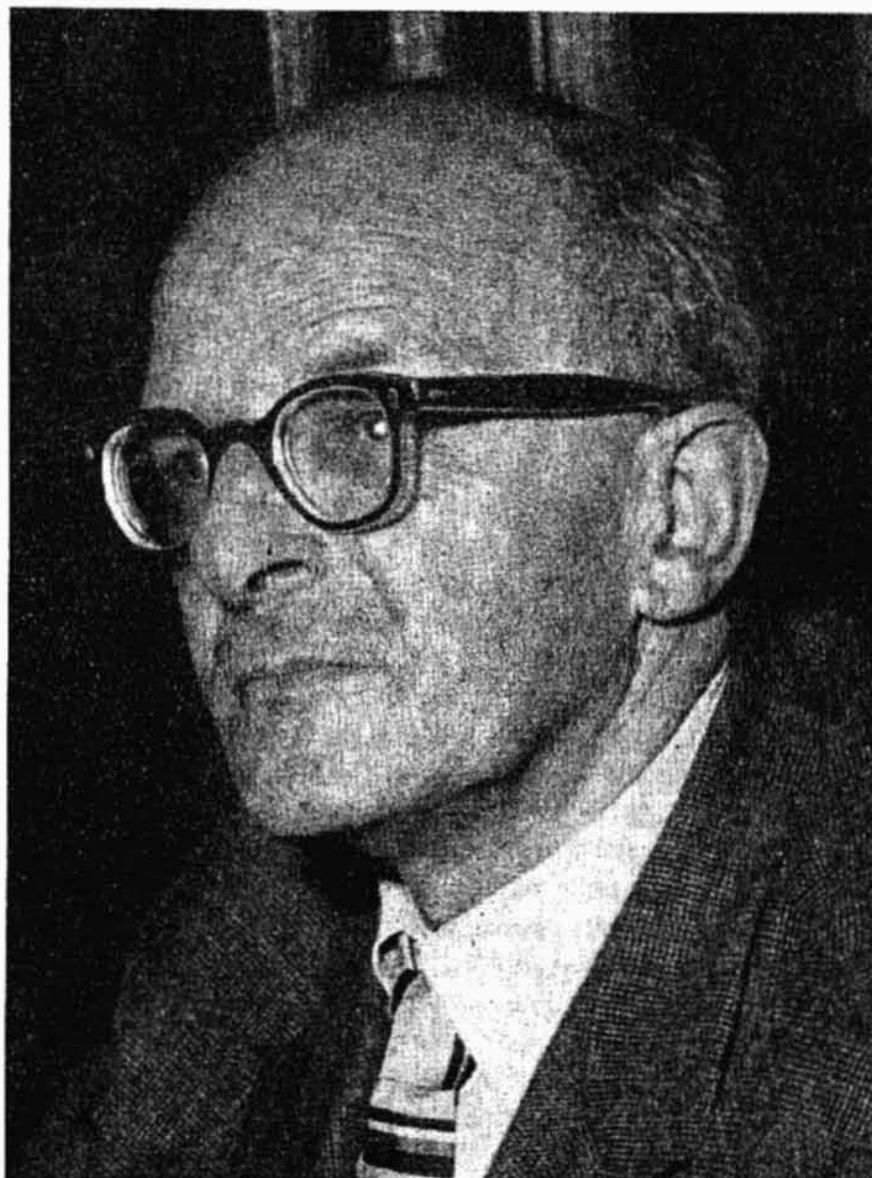


OBITUARY

PROF. DR. OTTO JÍROVEC, D.SC.

31. 1. 1907 — 7. 3. 1972



Academician Otto Jírovec, Doctor of biological sciences, Professor of the Charles University in Prague and Director of the Zoological Institute, Natural Sciences Faculty of the Charles University, died after a long and serious illness on March 7, 1972, at the age of 65.

He was a prominent biologist, especially in the field of protozoology and parasitology, whose death is a heavy loss to Czechoslovak science, as well as public health service, because due to him parasitological diagnostics was introduced into our medical practice.

During his pedagogical activities at the Charles University he trained hundreds of students, pointed out the importance of parasitology in tropical medicine to thousands of our physicians and wrote excellent text-books which enabled Czechoslovak parasitology to draw upon its own sources. He demonstrated the importance of clinical parasitology to medicine. He was a man who had devoted his entire life to the science of animal parasites and its application in practice.

A native from Prague, he began his studies at the Natural Sciences Faculty of the Charles University in 1925. In 1929 he received his doctor of natural sciences degree, based on his thesis "A study on trypanosomes without blepharoplast", which he accomplished under the guidance of Prof. Dr. V. Breindl and Docent Dr. J. Hahn. In 1933 he took the post of assistant at the Zoological Institute of the Natural Sciences Faculty, Charles University, Prague. On the basis of his extensive study on microsporidia he qualified to become university lecturer in parasitology at the same faculty in 1938.

During the pre-war years his activities were mainly focused on hydrobiological problems and on certain subjects concerning Sporozoa, Infusoria, Spirochaeta, as well as on studies concerning silver fibrilles in Protozoa and cytological studies. He worked on the effect of radiation upon Protozoa, on the fauna of the digestive tract of the termite *Calotermes lucifugus*, on parasitic Protozoa (mainly Microsporidia) etc. His papers dealing with general and special protozoology contributed to the development of protozoology as a science. He was also engaged in solving some important problems in insect pathology.

Since the very beginning of his scientific career Otto Jírovec showed a special interest in parasitology. At that time parasitology in Czechoslovakia belonged to the neglected scientific fields. Despite the fact that some outstanding scientists such as Lambl, Drbohlav, Mrázek and Janků worked in this field, Czechoslovak parasitology had neither tradition nor development as a science until then.

Not until the thirties Jírovec began to occupy himself systematically with parasitology, especially protozoology, following in the footsteps of other professors at the Zoological Institute of the Natural Sciences Faculty, Charles University. He was the first in this country to demonstrate the importance of parasitology and he developed the parasitological protozoology to a scope never achieved before. He gained valuable experience by visiting, in 1931, Institut für Schiffs- und Tropenhygiene in Hamburg and Institut Pasteur, Paris. His papers dating from this period were important for the knowledge of endoparasites of man and of some free-living animals in Czechoslovakia. He published a number of articles elucidating parasitological problems, specially the harmful effects of parasites on man and domestic animals.

After the second world war O. Jírovec resumed his work at the Zoological Institute of the Natural Sciences Faculty, Charles University, where he established a parasitological department. His scientific enthusiasm attracted the interest of young naturalists in parasitology and won them over for this field of study. In subsequent years this parasitological department educated a score of parasitologists and largely participated in postgradual education of biologists and physicians in clinical parasitology. After 1945 the basic conditions for the development of parasitology in Czechoslovakia were most favourable, because in all socialist countries parasitology has been regarded as a science which is helping the public health service to carry out measures for the protection of the population from communicable diseases, as well as for the environmental sanitation and which is indispensable to agriculture as a basis for the increase of animal production.

The period after 1945 marks the extensive and basic research conducted by Jírovec mainly on human parasitology. He and his co-workers were engaged in the study of trichomoniasis and vaginal fluors. He provided a background for the new classification of vaginal fluors and for the introduction of effective treatment.

In 1947 Jírovec was appointed professor in parasitology at the Charles University in Prague. In this period he studied, besides the problems of *Trichomonas vaginalis*, the distribution and biology of leptospires and the distribution and chemotherapy of oxyuriasis in Bohemia and Moravia, the treatment of taeniasis with atabrin, etc.

In 1953 O. Jírovec and J. Vaněk were awarded a State prize for the discovery of the causative agent of the so-called interstitial plasmocellular pneumonia in infants and for the proposed effective treatment of this disease. The discovery attracted the appropriate attention of parasitologists and physicians both in Czechoslovakia and abroad and the discovered pathogen — *Pneumocystis carinii* — has become the object of further profound research. Jírovec's studies have become a basis for the research of pneumocystosis as a new nosological unit among important parasitoses of man living in the temperate zone. His contributions to the improvement of diagnostic methods, epidemiology and pathogenesis of toxoplasmosis, the problems of standardization methods used in human clinical parasitology, etc. have been generally recognized.

O. Jírovec is the author or co-author of more than 220 scientific papers and of nearly the same number of popular scientific and professional articles*). He wrote the first Czechoslovak textbooks on parasitology: Parasitology for Physicians, Parasitology for Veterinarians, and Protozoology (in Czech). His textbook in German language "Parasitologie für Ärzte" (Fischer-Verlag Jena) and the publication by Engelbrecht, Jírovec, Nemeséri and Rosický "Parasitologische Arbeitsmethoden" (Akademie-Verlag, Berlin) have received considerable attention in parasitological circles. His book "Zoological Technique" (in Czech and Slovak) has reached several editions. He edited a number of parasitological and zoological publications and was chief editor of the journal Věstník Čs. spol. zoologické, member of the editorial boards of Folia parasitologica, Journal of Protozoology, Acta protozoologica and other scientific periodicals. One of the latest publications of O. Jírovec is the book "Tropical Medicine", which he wrote together with V. Šerý, D. Zoulek, J. Mirovský and other co-authors.

When the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences was founded in 1952, O. Jírovec was elected Corresponding Member and in 1955 Academician. He held a number of important posts at the Academy: he was scientific secretary of the biological section, head of the biological-medical section and member of the presidium, member of the scientific board for special biology. It was on his initiative that as early as 1950 a parasitological department was established at the then Central Biological Institute and a protozoological laboratory was affiliated to the Czechoslovak Academy from 1954 until 1961. He was director of the Zoological Institute of the Charles University in Prague, president of the Czechoslovak Parasitological Society and vice-president of the World Federation of Parasitologists.

His scientific activities have been widely recognized in the world: he has been awarded honorary doctorates of the Medical Faculty of the Humboldt University in Berlin and of the Natural Sciences Faculty in Clermont-Ferrand; he was Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences, honorary member of the Polish Parasitological Society and of the Parasitological Society in the German Democratic Republic.

We pay tribute to the efforts of O. Jírovec in the development of human and clinical parasitology of the temperate zone. He was one of the parasitologists who proved the expedience and economic importance of parasitological studies relating to public health and to veterinary problems as existing in non-tropical regions.

*) A bibliography of his papers is given in detail in: Fendrych M., Bibliography of Czechoslovak parasitological literature until the end of 1961. Publ. House Czech. Acad. Sci. Praha 1966, and in: Bibliography of Czechoslovak parasitological literature between 1962 and 1966. Publ. of Czechoslovak Parasitol. Society and Institute of Parasitology, Czech. Acad. Sci., Praha 1969.

Friends and associates in science will mourn the early death of O. Jírovec who had been working on his new "Parasitology for Physicians" until the very last days of his life. They will long remember his work, his excursions into the depths of microcosm which brought forth his sense for discipline and for the beauty of nature. They will always remember his modesty and industry, his enthusiastic endeavours to serve the health of people.

Academician O. Jírovec has left our ranks and the vacancy after him is a sorrowful reminder of the great loss we have suffered. We shall keep his scientific heritage and his great personality in our minds and hearts.

Academician Bohumír Rosický