

PRESENT STATE OF CZECH STUDIES IN FRANCE

French culture has long been known and appreciated in Prague. Its prestige was further enhanced in the first half of this century by the contribution made to the historiography of the Bohemian lands by a few distinguished scholars – Lous Léger, Ernest Denis, and Victor-Lucien Tapié. Denis' former home, which now houses the Institut national d'études slaves in Paris, was presented by the first Czechoslovak Republic as a gift to Paris University. Unfortunately, the efforts of these eminent philologists and historians were not followed by coherent attempts at introducing the study of the Czech and Slovak languages and literatures into university curricula. Accordingly, handbooks and translations in French are scarce or obsolete, and basic materials for use by students often have to be compiled from scratch. Czech literature in particular suffers such conditions. – This contrasts unfavourably with conditions in most Western countries, where Czech is taught at all levels in several universities. Until recently, specific teaching of Czech language and civilisation was restricted to the Institut des Langues et Civilisations orientales in Paris, and to a few hours' unstructions by *lecteurs* at half a dozen provincial universities and at Paris IV (Paris-Sorbonne). Little opportunity was provided for the study of literature.

As a first attempt to improve this situation, an informal Research Group was set up in 1976 by Hana Jechova, then teaching Comparative Literature at Paris III. (Sorbonne nouvelle.) A few years later, in 1982, Dr. Jechova was appointed to the newly created Czech professorship in the Slavic Department at Paris-Sorbonne, first as associate-professor, then (1986) as full Professor. She is assisted by a *lectrice* appointed by the Czechoslovak authorities.

This, although a major improvement, is only a first step; until the activities of this small section are extended beyond the first and second years, and a degree program is established, Czech studies will only constitute an optional *minor* for students taking degrees in other languages, mainly Slavic (besides Russian, Polish and Serbo-Croat are taught at Paris-Sorbonne). Facilities are, however, available in the form of scholarships for students wishing to attend language courses or to research for a master's or doctor's degree (in Comparative Literature for instance) at Prague, Brno or Bratislava. And there are hopes for a full-fledged Czech curriculum to be established by stages at Paris-Sorbonne.

Parallel to these developments, the Research Group for Czech and Slovak Studies, now twelve years old, has attained official status within the Centre de recherches sur les langues et cultures slaves of Paris-Sorbonne. It has contacts and exchanges with specialists abroad, particularly in Britain and Germany. It has held symposia attended by speakers from Belgium, Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, occasionally Canada and the United States, and of course from France. The proceedings some of these symposia have been published in French, either in the form of books, or in the Research Group's periodical, *Etudes tchèques et slovaques*, six issues of which have appeared to date. The *Revue des Etudes slaves* also published in recent years a number of articles or reviews interesting Czech culture.

The following can be obtained by contacting Prof. Dr. Hana Jechova, Université

de Paris-Sorbonne, U.E.R. de Slavistique, Centre universitaire du Grand Palais, Cours la Reine, 75008 Paris:

- *Les Avant-gardes tchèques et slovaques dans le context international* (Publications de l'Université Paris III, 1982);
- "Jaroslav Hašek" (special issue of *Revue des Etudes slaves*, 1985, n° 4);
- "Jan Neruda" (special issue of *Etudes tchèques et slovaques* n° 5, 1985);
- *Les effets de l'émigration et de l'exil dans les littératures tchèque et polonaise* (Presses universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 1987).

A symposium will be held by the Group in December 1989, on the theme "Mémoire et tradition dans la prose contemporaine. Les lettres tchèques dans le contexte international". Information can be obtained from the above address.

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