

ARTICLES

A Historian of Czech-Polish Relations Zdeněk Hájek (1894–1958)

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The historian Zdeněk Hájek was interested, first and foremost, in the Polish revolutionary movement of the nineteenth century. Hájek published a number of studies relating to the period following the November Revolution of 1830 and later studied the response to the Polish January Uprising of 1863 in the Czech Lands. Hájek's studies introduced remarkable material and interesting information to the history of the National Revival in the Czech Lands and Moravia and the history of Czech-Polish relations.

Key words: *Czech Historian; Zdeněk Hájek; Czech-Polish Relations*

He was born on March 13, 1894, in Suchdol near Kutná Hora. After graduating from grammar school in Čáslav (1913) he began studying History and Geography at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague. His studies were, however, interrupted by the First World War and he had to enlist as a sergeant in the 21st Infantry Regiment of the Austro-Hungarian Army. He was captured by the Russian Army in Sieniawa, Poland on May 27, 1915, and was sent to a prison camp in Charkiv. After the fall of the Tsarist regime, he joined the Czechoslovak Legion on August 24, 1917, and was assigned to the 8th Rifle Regiment as a private. He served in the Legion until October 28, 1921, reaching the rank of lieutenant.

He was only able to continue his university studies, which he completed in May 1923, after demobilisation. After enrolment, he worked under Jaroslav Bidlo at the Institute for Slavic History, and in December 1924 defended his doctorate and was awarded the title Doctor of Philosophy (PhDr.).

He decided not to continue his promising university career, but went into secondary teaching on September 1, 1925, joining the Josef Kudela

State Grammar School in Brno, where he worked until 1941 when he was pensioned off prematurely for political reasons as a former legionnaire. In order to support his family (his wife Marie, daughter Milena and son Zdeněk), he accepted a position in 1943 as archiver and librarian at the newspaper *Lidové noviny*, where he was allowed to publish small articles.

He returned to the State Grammar School following liberation in 1945, and also taught at the State Music and Drama Conservatoire in Brno. He switched to the newly established Faculty of Education at Masaryk University on November 1, 1946. He took his higher doctorate in Polish history at the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University on October 24, 1947, and was appointed Associate Professor in Slavic History at the Faculty of Education on July 29, 1948.

He had to devote much of his time to organisational work, in addition to teaching. He was administrative director of the Institute of History at the Faculty of Education in the years 1946–1950 and held the post of Vice-dean for Science in the years 1952–1955. After the transformation of the faculty into the University of Education in 1953, he worked as Head of the Department of History and Civics in the years 1954–1958. He also lectured at the Faculty of Social Studies at the University of Political and Social Studies after the war.

An assistantship with Jaroslav Bidlo gave Zdeněk Hájek a more profound interest in Slavic and, in particular, Polish history. A thorough knowledge of Slavic languages enabled him to achieve remarkable results in his chosen research work. He published a number of specialist works in book form and in the form of journal papers on the basis of his study of sources in the Moravian Archive in Brno and the State Archive in Lemberg. He also performed academic work as a secondary school professor in the years 1925–1941 without requesting holidays or any reduction to his workload. He undertook four trips to Lvov in the school holidays in the years 1928–1931. His thorough knowledge of sources and literature on the Polish revolutionary movement made him a recognised authority on this issue.

His first large study came out in 1930 in *Pekařův sborník* under the title *Špilberk in the Memoirs of Polish Prisoners*.¹ The author compared the memoirs of Poles imprisoned at Špilberk Castle with Moravian sources to demonstrate their veracity. Hájek wrote about the way in which the Moravian population behaved towards the Poles on their way to prison

¹ Hájek, Z. (1930). *Špilberk v memoárech polských vězňů. Pekařův sborník II*. Praha, Historický klub, pp. 332–371.

and after their release in his forty-page study *The Moravians and the Polish Prisoners at Špilberk in 1932*.² The author demonstrated that the Moravians sympathised strongly with the Polish prisoners as they themselves also longed for liberation from the shackles of Metternich's absolutism. His description of the liberation of Polish prisoners in March 1848 was also a valuable contribution to the history of the City of Brno.

Zdeněk Hájek found the large handwritten work *Pamiętnik Henryka Bogdańskiego* (*The Diary of Henryk Bogdański*), which described both the revolutionary situation in Galicia in 1830–1841 and the imprisonment of this revolutionary at Špilberk Castle, in the Ossolineum in Lemberg. Hájek translated parts of these memoirs relating to Bogdański's time at Špilberk Castle into Czech and published them in book form under the title *A Polish Revolutionary at Špilberk* (Brno, 1932).³

In 1935, Hájek published his study *Špilberk's Prisoner Jindřich Hubicki, His Imprisonment and Death at Špilberk*. In addition to these specialist studies, he also wrote a series of popular articles in the newspapers *Moravské noviny*, *Lidové noviny* and *Lidová Obroda*. He published the study *Polish Prisoners at Špilberk Castle* in the journal *Wiedza i Życie* (*Knowledge and Life*) in Poland in 1930⁴ and an overview of research into prisoners of Polish nationality at Špilberk in the journal *Trybuna Dolnosląska* (*The Lower Silesian Tribune*) in 1948.

He published a series of articles on the life of František Cyril Kampelík in *Zemědělské listy* (*Agricultural News*) in 1936 based on an investigation protocol of 1840 found in Lemberg. He also published the study *The Revolutionary Movement in Galicia* in the anthology *Jdeme Dál*.

His academic work was able to develop fully following his arrival at the Faculty of Education at Masaryk University. He continued, first and foremost, with his Polonistic studies. He examined the Polish January Uprising of 1863 and wrote a number of detailed studies about it which had a fundamental innovative importance for Czech and Polish historiography. The most important of these studies were about the time spent by the Uprising's Dictator Marian Langiewicz and his adjutant Henryka Pustowojtowna in the Czech Lands. His works *The Internment of Marian Langiewicz in Tišnov* (1952)⁵ and *The Internment of Marian Langiewicz in Josefov* (1955)⁶ are based on materials from Czech and

² Ibidem, (1932). *Moravané a polští vězni na Špilberku*. *Časopis Matice moravské*.

³ Ibidem, (1932). *Polský revolucionář na Špilberku*. Brno: Matice moravská.

⁴ Ibidem, (1930). *Polscy więźniowie w Szpilbergu*. *Wiedza i życie*.

⁵ Ibidem, (1952). *Internace Mariana Langiewicze v Tišnově*. *Časopis Matice moravské*.

⁶ Ibidem, (1955). *Internace Mariana Langiewicze v Josefově*. *Česko-polský sborník*.

Austrian archives. In these works, the author gave a vivid account of both the fate of the interned dictator and the diplomatic background to his internment, and these studies are a valuable contribution to the history of the European diplomacy of the times.

The author's studies on the time spent by Henryka Pustowojtowna in the Czech Lands are innovative in that they are based on original archive material. The given works are *The Double Stay of Henryka Pustowojtowna in Prague* (1953),⁷ *The Journey of the Prague Falcon to Karlštejn in 1863 and Henryka Pustowojtowna* (1952)⁸ and *The Escape of Henryka Pustowojtowna from Prague in 1863* (1953).⁹ The results of this research were summarised in popular form in the journal *New Poland* (1953).¹⁰

Alongside these studies, the essay *Josef Menšík – Colleague of the Polish Revolutionary Party* (1955)¹¹ also threw light on the attitude of the Czech nation to the Polish uprising. In this essay, the author explained the work of the previously unknown Czech Polonophile who helped Polish fugitives and emissaries escape to Dresden. This was followed by Hájek's extensive work *The Trial of Engineer Jan Gerink and His Partners and Silesian Assistance to the Polish January Uprising* (1956).¹² He described secret supplies of weapons and gunpowder made with the help of Czech railway workers. He described the investigation of Dr. Otto, a young Czech lawyer in Vienna, on the basis of investigation protocols found in Lemberg (1948). In the years 1954–1955, he described the reasons for the imprisonment of Poles at Špilberk Castle.

Illness in the second half of the 1950s prevented Professor Hájek from continuing his systematic academic work. This distinguished academic from Brno died in January 1958 at the age of sixty-four. A commemorative plaque to this legionnaire and historian was unveiled in December 2013 at the house in Minská Street where he spent forty years of his productive life. He considered his academic work, to which he devoted all of his time, to be his mission in life.

⁷ Ibidem, (1953). Dwókratny pobyt Henryky Pustowojtówny w Pradze. *Sobótka*.

⁸ Ibidem, (1952). Výlet pražského Sokola na Karlštejn roku 1863 a Henryka Pustowojtówna. *Časopis Společnosti starožitností českých*.

⁹ Ibidem, (1953). K útěku Henryky Pustowojtowové z Prahy v roce 1863. *Slezský sborník*.

¹⁰ Ibidem, (1953). Henryka Pustowojtówna. *Nové Polsko*.

¹¹ Ibidem, (1955). Josef Menšík – spolupracovník polské revoluční strany. *Sborník slovan-ských studií*.

¹² Ibidem, (1956). Proces ing. Jana Gerinka. *Slezský sborník*.