

## THE BEGINNINGS OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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### ABSTRACT

The Center (Ustredna) for Vocational Counseling was founded in Prague in 1920. A year later, it joined the recently established Psychotechnological Institute, created in the framework of the Masaryk Academy of Work. In Bohemia, J.Lancova served as the general secretary of the Board [Odbor] for the establishment of vocational guidance services; additional outstanding contributors to the development of vocational guidance included A. Ivanov, O.Riha, C. Stejskal, F. Seracky, and J. Vána. In Moravia, V. Chmelar, associated with Brno's Masaryk University, did a great deal to facilitate the development of vocational counseling services in numerous localities. In Slovakia, the movement owed a great deal to J. Stavel, a Czech psychologist despatched to Bratislava by Prague's Psychotechnological Institute in the 1920s. In 1938, the leading role in the field of Slovak applied psychology was taken over by A. Jurovsky.

### RESUMEN

Se fundó en Praga un Centro de Orientación Vocacional allá por 1920. Un año más tarde, vino a unirse el recientemente establecido Instituto Psicotécnico, creado en el marco de la Masaryk Academy of Work. En Bohemia, J.Lancova formó parte como secretario general del Comité para

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el establecimiento de servicios de orientación vocacional; otros participantes destacados en el desarrollo de la orientación vocacional son A. Ivanov, O. Ríha, C. Stejskal, F. Seracky, y J. Vána. En Moravia, V. Chmelar, asociado en la Brno's Masaryk University, realizó una significativa contribución para facilitar el desarrollo de los servicios de orientación vocacional en numerosas localidades. En Slovakia, el movimiento acumuló una gran deuda con J. Stavel, un psicólogo checo que se desplazó a Bratislava desde el Instituto psicotécnico de Praga en la década de los años 20. En 1938, el papel fundamental en el campo de la psicología aplicada eslovaca lo interpretó A. Jurovsky.

It is a pleasure for us to be able to add the present account to an earlier report dealing with Czechoslovakia's early psychotechnology (Brozek & Hoskovec, 1986a). The context of that report was international, including Spain (pp. 42-43), with special reference to contacts with Spain's Cesar de Madariaga.

Historically, as an independent, democratic country Czechoslovakia was founded on 28 October 1918, not long after the end of World War 1. It contained four sectors of the former Austro-Hungarian empire. They were, from west to east: The Czech Lands, Bohemia and Moravia; Slovakia; and Subcarpathian Russia. In 1938 the border areas of Bohemia and Moravia, containing largely a German-speaking population, were annexed to the German Reich while, with German assistance, the western part of Slovakia became a separate state, the "Free Slovakia." Following the end of the First World War, Czechoslovakia was partially reconstituted: Subcarpathian Russia had been incorporated during the war into the Soviet Union. The Communist putsch of February 1948 brought the country as a whole into the Soviet orbit for 41 years.

Among our earlier papers bearing on the history of Czech applied psychology of the 1920s and the 1930s, one dealt with courses given at Charles University (Brozek & Hoskovec, 1986b). Here we shall focus on vocational guidance.

While the literature on the subject will not be neglected, this is primarily an archival study. The primary sources of information on which this paper is based are located in the Central Archive of the Czech Academy of Sciences, located in Prague I - Old Town, Karlova street 4. The materials bear the number XIII.16.1157. Additional information, based both on archival and published materials was provided by Malotinová (1993).

Among the earliest international materials we should note the article of G.H.Miles (1922), available in the form of a Czech translation (XIII, 9, MAP 1150). It notes that in the Psychotechnological institute a number of studies were carried out dealing with the job requirements in a variety of industries, including textiles. This was a topic of a paper by V. Forster (~1930).

J. Husakova's publication of 1920, entitled "Vocational choice," is among the first Czech works on the subject. It was written for a series "For the Child", edited by Petr Zenkl, a man who later became an outstanding mayor of Prague. The series served the needs of public education. The same author, whose married name became Lancova, wrote also a brochure on "Vocational Guidance Centers", published in 1922 by the Psychotechnological Institute.

The most significant Czech publication of the 1920s is a collection of articles on "The Correct Choice of Occupation" (Lancova, Riha, Stejskal, and Seracky, 1925). The volume is based on lectures presented at the first course designed for administrators and the testing personnel involved in vocational guidance.

The book consists of six parts. The first, written by J. Lancova, stresses the importance of personality and is focused on the occupations for girls. O. Riha writes on health and vocational choice. The third, extensive part written by C. Stejskal and F. Seracky deals with the assessment of mental abilities. More general but important are the chapters on the mission of vocational guidance centers considered, in separate chapters by C. Stejskal and J. Lancova, respectively.

There are three supplemental chapters, all three from the pen of J. Lancova. They deal with psychological classification of occupations; physical requirements and health hazards; and an alphabetical list of occupations and their mental and physical requirements. Lancova describes, in detail, the Prague unit, attached to the Psychotechnological institute and discusses the desirable characteristics of the personnel of the guidance centers, stressing five points: 1) A positive attitude to the work, 2) Appropriate personality, 3) Required abilities, 4) Adequate education and life experience, and 5) Technical training required for effective counseling.

Additional information is available in the writings of A. Dratva (1924) and F. Seracky (1928).

One of the authors of the present report (J.B.) served as psychologist in the Vocational Guidance Center, located in the district of Karlin, from the spring to the fall of 1937. He took over the responsibilities of Anna Smrzova, who was on a maternity leave. The center was administered externally by J. Vana, director of the psychological service of the Electricity

and Streetcar Enterprise of the city of Prague. Speaking of Vana, we can not fail to mention his 1933 volume on "Measuring intelligence."

It was in Vana's psychological laboratory that in 1936 Brozek was introduced to the use of statistical methods in applied psychology. He became familiar with the use of group tests in the Psychotechnological institute and with the apparatus testing in the Psychophysiological laboratory of the Military-technical institute of the Air Force. In the fall of 1937 Brozek accepted a position as industrial psychologist in the Bata Shoe Company in Zlin, Moravia.

### MORE ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN PRAGUE

At the very outset, as documented by the Archives (XIII.16, 1157, MAP, PU, 1920), the aim of the vocational guidance centers was defined as follows: "To counsel individuals as to which occupation or occupations would best fit their mental and physical capacities as well as their social and economic environment. Account should be taken of the present status of the different branches of the economy and its probable development in the visible future."

The constitution of the Board for the establishment of vocational guidance centers, approved on 13 June 1921, specifies the tasks of the Board as follows: 1) To develop and distribute the statutes and directives of the individual centers, to supply instructions, and support their activities; 2) To propagate the idea of vocational counseling; 3) To care for an appropriate training of the counselors; 4) To foster a meaningful cooperation with schools, other institutions, and physicians; 5) To provide to the centers relevant information about occupations; 6) To endeavor to coordinate the flow of applicants in accord with the state of the labor market; 7) To gather the experiences and data of the individual centers and to analyze them statistically; and 8) To assure financial means for carrying out their function.

On 24 June 1921 the scientific council of the Masaryk Academy of Labor approved the proposal that the Board join the Academy's Psychotechnological institute. It was argued that both organizations would benefit from such an arrangement: The Institute would provide the scientific backing for vocational counseling while the Board would supply topics and materials for research.

In the year 1921 the Board focused on the following occupational groups: 1) Applicants for apprenticeship in trades and crafts, in business, and agriculture; 2) Applicants for unskilled work; 3) Applicants for occupations requiring training at the highschool level; and 4) Applicants for occupations calling for higher education.

Counseling was to be provided both for individuals entering a given field as well for those wishing to change their occupation.

At the Board's session held on 16 September 1921 it was stressed that the scope of the testing should be broad and not be limited to requirements of a single, specific occupation.

The record of a joint meeting of the Institute and the Board, held on 27 January 1923 (MAP XIII.16) attests to the existence of two branches of the counseling center serving the city of Prague. They dealt, respectively, with students and with small-business applicants.

## BOHEMIA BEYOND PRAGUE

In time, vocational guidance centers were established in other cities of Bohemia, including Pardubice and Jihlava. On 19 February 1922 V. Krenek, professor of the Czech commercial school in Jihlava, contacted Prague, requesting help with the psychological testing program.

## MORAVIA

In the 1930s, V. Chmelar (1932, 1934, 1936), associated with Brno's Masaryk University and known as experimental psychologist for his studies of attention, contributed a great deal to the spread of vocational counseling throughout Moravia, while serving as external member of the Office for Assistance to Youth, located in Brno. He was also in charge of the supervisory vocational guidance center. At his initiative some 70 guidance centers were established in Moravia, thanks to recruitment of teachers as counselors. This was a unique and remarkable achievement.

## SLOVAKIA

At the meeting of the council of the Psychotechnological Institute in Prague, held on 5 December 1927 one of the topics that was discussed involved the establishment of a parallel institute in Bratislava. The council was requested (MAP, PU, XIII d, 1140) to recommend a psychologist who would serve as a leader of the Bratislava establishment.

The council chose Josef Stavel, an able member of the staff of the Prague Institute. He outlined the structure and the function of the new Bratislava organization, combining the function as well as the title of the Psychotechnological Institute and the Central service for vocational

counseling. He did so in two journal articles (Stavel, 1928a and 1928b) and, later, in the form of a small book (Stavel, 1932) in which he endeavors to inform a wider public about the goals and methods of applied psychology in general and the Bratislava institution in particular.

Stavel (1934) contributed also an extensive chapter on vocational counseling to the Czech Encyclopedia of Efficiency.

In his autobiographical notes, written in 1982-1983 and intended as introduction to the publication of his selected writings, Stavel noted that his two articles of 1928 appear to be the first materials on the subject published in Slovakia. The readers of Stavel's autobiography learn that the stimulus for introducing applied psychology in Slovakia came from the Slovak commercial and industrial chamber, in particular its president, senator K. Stodola, and from Slovak institutions for social welfare, education, small business and crafts.

Due to the separation of Slovakia from the Czech lands, in 1928 Stavel had to return to Prague and his function was taken over by A. Jurovsky, a Slovak applied psychologist. His life and work was described by V. Kovalikova and L. Kosc in the journal *Psychologia a patopsychologia dietata* (Psychology and pathopsychology of the child, 1985, pp. 567-569) and a bibliography of his early publications appeared in the same journal (1968, pp. 575-598).

#### PARTING PERSONAL WORD

J. Brozek, as a young applied psychologist, paid a rewarding professional visit to J. Stavel in Bratislava in the fall of 1937. Strangely enough, he participated in A. Jurovsky's funeral in Bratislava in 1985.

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