



History of the Institute of Psychology at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University

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Important Events in the History of the Institute of Psychology

- **since 1919** – Psychology taught at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University
- **3rd November 1926** – requisition for the foundation of the Institute of Psychology at the Faculty of Arts was filed
- **1926** – Institute of Psychology established by Professor Mihajlo Rostohar; the institute was equipped to international standards of the period
- **3rd May 1927** – Articles of the Institute of Psychology were accredited by the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment

“The aim of the Institute of Psychology is partly to educate our members in autonomous scientific research in Psychology using experimental empirical methods, partly to prepare students of the Faculty of Arts for teaching at secondary schools.”

(Excerpt from the Articles of the Institute of Psychology dated May 3rd 1927)

Pictures 1 and 2: Contemporary photographs of research work in the Psychological Laboratory



- **9th June 1928** – Institute of Psychology visited by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first President of Czechoslovakia, who personally knew Mihajlo Rostohar
- **interwar period** – foundation of the “Brno psychological school” (see the following text)
- **1939–1945** – Czech universities were closed by Nazi occupiers; many psychologists were persecuted (e.g. Robert Konečný was imprisoned, Mihajlo Rostohar escaped in autumn 1942 to avoid arrest by the Gestapo and then participated in partisan resistance in his native Yugoslavia)
- **after 1945** – restitution of the Institute of Psychology proceeded quickly
- **after 1948** – psychology as a science declined with formation of the Communist regime, teaching of psychology was reformed to conform with Soviet textbooks, psychology was replaced by study of higher nervous activity (based on the doctrine of I. P. Pavlov) and was officially classified as a pedagogy; people were excluded for political and religious reasons
- **after 1956** – the time of ideological liberalization raised psychology as an autonomous science and coincided with the rebirth of Soviet psychology
- **after 1968** – Marxist psychology was accepted as the only “right” psychology
- **1970** – Robert Konečný was forced to resign the management of the Department of Psychology (for changes in the name of the Institute of Psychology see the following text) for the name, members of the department elected to office Josef Švancara, who was replaced by Jiří Sedlák after a few months at the Communist Party establishment’s bidding
- Communist ideologues laid the foundations of authoritative and totalitarian thinking, some psychologists were imprisoned or persecuted and investigated by the state police for political reasons
- **after the revolution in 1989** – liberalization, arrival of foreign information and influence
- **25th September 1996** – *Personality in Order and Disorder Functioning Dimensions* – conference held on the occasion of the 90th unachieved birthday of Professor Robert Konečný (held by the Institute of Psychology of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University and by the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic)
- **23rd October 1998** – symposium *Mihajlo Rostohar (1878-1966) in the Tradition of Holistic and Experimental Psychology* (held by the Institute of Psychology of the Masaryk University’s Faculty of Arts in cooperation with the Rectorate of Masaryk University and with the Czech-Moravian Psychological Society)
- **9th November 2006** – symposium on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Institute of Psychology

Brno Psychological School

The Brno Psychological School founded by Mihajlo Rostohar had its unifying base in the holistic conception of psychic phenomena, in the research of the development of psychological processes (especially perception) and in experimental approach and emphasis on the understanding of man as a subject (see the Rostohar’s monograph *Psychology as a Science about the Subjective Reality*, 1950; *Psychologie jako věda o subjektivní skutečnosti*). Supporters of this school were members of the Institute of Psychology (Vilém Chmelař, Ferdinand Kratina, Robert Konečný, Ludmila Kolářiková, Emil Pejhovský), who published their works in the first Czech psychological journal called *Psychology – Journal of Theoretical and Practical Psychology* (*Psychologie - časopis pro teoretickou a užitou psychologii*), published in Brno between 1935-1950. A wider group of researchers included Josef Burjanek, Karel Černocký, Ludvík Kempný, pedagogues Jan Uher, Jan Vaněk, Václav Komárek and others. The reputation of Rostohar’s Psychological Laboratory also grew thanks to the legendary macaque Pepa, with whom Rostohar practised various experiments. Today the main research instruments of the era are on display on the premises of the Institute of Psychology.

Status and Name of the Institute of Psychology throughout its History

The names and status of the Institute of Psychology changed together with the political situation in Czechoslovakia. Its original name was reinstated in 1991.

- 1926 - 1950: The Institute of Psychology
- 1950 - 1953: The Institute of Psychology (as a part of The History of Philosophy Department)
- 1953 - 1963: Department of Psychology and Pedagogy
- 1963 - 1974: Department of Psychology
- 1974 - 1975: Workplace of Psychology
- 1975 - 1990: Department of Psychology
- 1990 - 1991: Department of Psychological Disciplines
- 1991 - present: The Institute of Psychology

Department Heads since 1926 till Present

- **1926 - 1948** (except for wartime): prof. **Mihajlo Rostohar**
- **1948 - 1963**: prof. PhDr. **Vilém Chmelař**, DrSc.
- **1964**: PhDr. **František Janda** (army psychologist)
- **1965 - 1968**: doc. PhDr. **Jaroslav Šabata** (politologist)
- **1968 - 1970** prof. PhDr. **Robert Konečný**
- **1970**: doc. PhDr. **Josef Švancara**, CSc.
- **1970 - 1974**: doc. PhDr. **Jiří Sedlák**, DrSc.
- **1974 - 1975**: doc. PhDr. **František Mainuš**, CSc. (historian)
- **1975 - 1989**: prof. PhDr. **Jozef Kuric**, DrSc.
- **1990 - 1998**: prof. PhDr. **Vladimír Smékal**, CSc.
- **1998 - present**: prof. PhDr. **Mojmír Svoboda**, CSc.

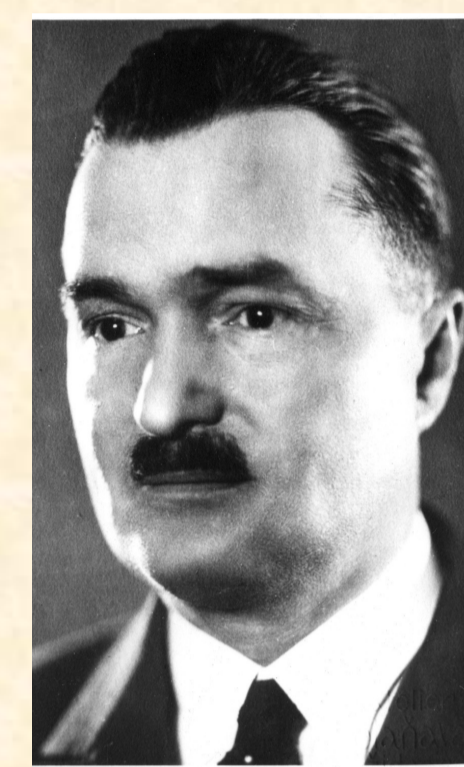
Mihajlo Rostohar (30th July 1878 - 5th August 1966)



The first Czech experimental psychologist was born in Slovenia. In the years 1911–1912 he developed his private laboratory of experimental psychology in Professor Mareš’ Department of Physiology at the Charles’ University Faculty of Medicine in Prague. In 1924 Rostohar moved the laboratory to Brno. Since 1923 he worked at the Faculty of Arts in Brno as an Associate Professor, from 1924 as a Professor of Systematic Philosophy and in 1931 he became the first Professor of Psychology at the Masaryk University’s Faculty of Arts, where in 1926 he established the Institute of Psychology thanks to the support of the Rector, E. Babák. With the exception of wartime, he worked there until 1948. Between 1934 and 1935 he was the dean of the Faculty of Arts. After becoming Professor Emeritus he continued working at the Faculty for another two years as well as executing the function of the Rector of a newly established College of Social Studies in Brno. In 1935 he founded the journal *Psychology*, which he edited (except for wartime) until 1949. Rostohar participated in activities of the Association for the Research of the Child and became its president in 1926. In years 1950–65 he set up the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. He worked there as a Professor (1950–1958) and edited basic texts of the main psychological disciplines in Slovene. In 1958 he was honoured by the Decoration of Merit (First Grade).

Publications: *Papers about Developmental Psychology I* (1928), *Psychological Grounds of the Early Reading with the Practical Instructions for Reading* (1934), *Psychology as a Science about the Subjective Reality* (1950)

Ferdinand Kratina (1885-1944)



He studied German, French, Philosophy and Psychology and graduated from Charles’ University in Prague. He then worked as a teacher at secondary school. His cooperation with Masaryk University’s Faculty of Arts began with his dissertation named *The Problem of Subconscious Spirituality in Contemporary Psychology* (*Problém o podvědomí duševna v soudobé psychologii*) in 1926. After that he worked with the local Institute of Psychology. His educational stay in Leipzig in 1930-1931 was very thought-provoking for him. Since his habilitation in psychology in 1933 he lectured in the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University as an associate professor and taught at the College of Pedagogical Studies and at the Academy of Pedagogy. He published in many professional journals and was a member of the editorial board of the journal *Psychology*. He was the main representative of the Czech gestalt psy-

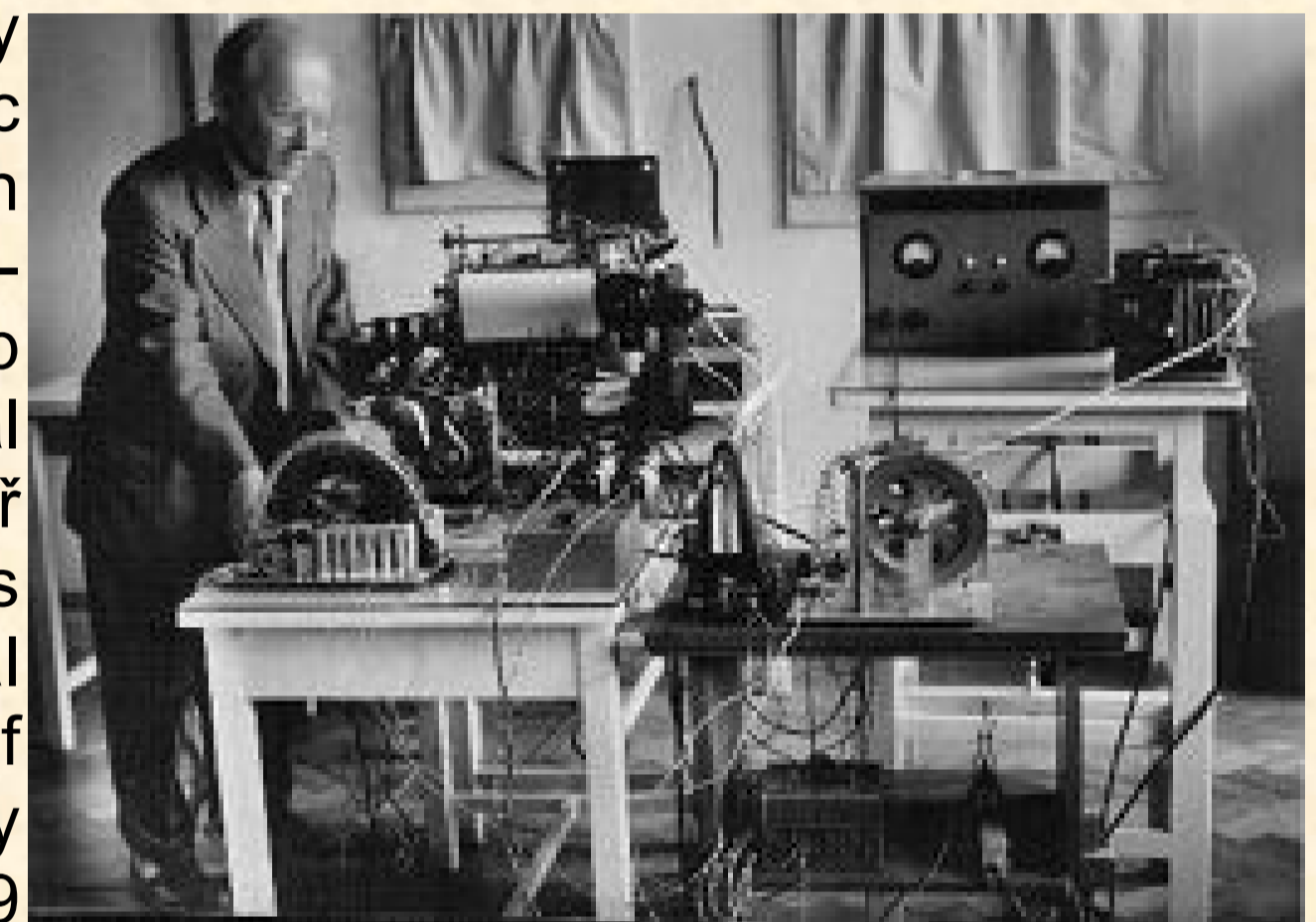
chology and supported the syntactical trend. His great interest in psychology of personality extended the coverage of Brno’s school.

Publications: *Eidetic Gift in Youth* (1930), *Studies in Gestalt Psychology* (1932), *Introduction to Gestalt Psychology* (1935), *Personality* (1941), *Type and Typology* (1942)

Vilém Chmelař (1892-1988)

He was a director of the Psychological Laboratory at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic since 1970. He performed empirical research on continuous active and auditory attention development and attention course duration. Following up this research, Pavel Osecký derived mathematical models of attention course processes. Chmelař also explored the formation of drawing movements in early childhood. He established a psychological counselling centre in Brno. He was the director of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy (1948 - 1963) and dean of the Faculty of Arts (1949 -1950 and 1952 -1954).

Publications: *Active Optic Attention in 6-11 year old Children: the Development of its Duration* (1936)



Robert Konečný (1906-1981)



Robert Konečný was one of the most important personalities in the post-war period and one of the founders of psychology in Czechoslovakia. He graduated in Philosophy, Czech and German. He worked as a teacher at secondary school. He was an essayist (*A Living words; Živá slova*), literary reviewer (*Sheets, Listy; Moravian Writers Association, Sdružení moravských spisovatelů*), prosaist (*Daisies; Chudobky*) and poet (*Sleeper under Flame; Spáč pod plamenem*). He wrote other rhymes when he was in prison for his resistance activity. After World War Two he edited his garner *Song from the Cell (Písně z cely)* and *My Country (Má vlast)* reflecting on the period of Nazi occupation. He was the director of the Department of Psychology and founded the “school” of clinical psychology. He inspired many young psychologists by his art of psychotherapy, ethical approach and organisational effort. After February 1948 he was compelled to leave the Faculty and public life for political causes. After that he only worked on his psychological research. The Institute of Psychology organised a conference for his unachieved 90th birthday anniversary. The garner named *Sleeper under Flame. Poems, reviews, confessions* representing his creative profile was published in his honour. He would have celebrated his 100th birthday last year.

Psychological publications: *Psychology in Medicine* (1970), *Philosophical Propedeutic* (1946), *Difficulties in Adolescence* (1966)

Ludmila Kolářiková (1909-1968)

She studied Latin, Greek and Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts in Brno and worked as Rostohar’s assistant. He inspired her with psychology and she concentrated on this discipline. She focused on pre-school children and research of time, space and causal relation judgements and the development of visual imagination. She also worked on Aristotelian psychology. She taught at a gymnasium and worked as a psychologist in a counselling centre for students. After World War Two she became a lecturer and later Associate Professor at the Faculty of Arts in Brno. She also lectured in psychology at the new College of Social Studies in Brno. She became director of the Institute of Psychology in Olomouc in 1946. Her social status declined after 1948. Her character did not permit her to acclimatise to the political situation in the 1950s. She left Olomouc in 1952 and lectured in Brno. She was brought low when required to produce a new habilitation. Her habilitation was not accepted and she had to leave the Faculty in 1960. She coped with it very badly, both psychologically and physically.

Publications: *Psychology of Child* (1942)



Emil Pejhovský (1909-2003)

His research focused on the psychological structure of interest and on habitual repugnance against work. He was director of the Institute of Psychology in Olomouc in 1970 -1978.

Conclusion

The Institute of Psychology at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University in Brno celebrated last year 80th anniversary. Research, pedagogical activities and psychological applications have had a long tradition since the establishment of the Brno Psychological School. Its members recruited from the most important specialists in psychology at that time. The present Institute of Psychology continues in the tradition and holds on the professional training of the students as well as research activities in this beautiful “science about the subjective reality”.