

THE STORY OF THE PSYCHIATRIC DEPARTMENT IN PRAGUE



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PREFACE

Places where history happened are not always marked in travel guides. There are definitely more visitors coming to Prague Castle than those who visit the Psychiatric Clinic in Ke Karlovu street nr. 11 in Prague. Not only the visiting guests, but especially medical students will feel some indefinite respect in the old buildings at Karlov. This place impresses them with its look and tradition and unconsciously it influences their thinking. It is sometimes called genius loci, although this expression is not really accurate. Genius loci indicates –at least this is what the dictionary says– atmosphere of a place. But it is volatile and inconsistent, it changes with the seasons, with lighting, decoration and colours of the corridors, it is even influenced by people who are just passing by at the time. Apart from elusive sensations there are some constants in the walls of old buildings that do not change with decorators coming and going or minor renovation works. The most important part is its history. “The new building”, the seat of today’s department of Psychiatry of the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University became old a long time ago. It has been used for treating patients since 1844 and clinical psychiatry lessons have taken place in it since 1886. During those years whole generations of medical students and esteemed professors have walked its corridors. Outside its walls thrones collapsed and new states were formed, The Austrian-Hungarian monarchy fell apart, then after the Czechoslovak republic there was the Munich betrayal and occupation, democracy and totality exchanged places. The echoes of the outside events weighed heavily, because not even the hospital works in a vacuum. Inside the massive walls, almost untouched by age, its own development was going on. A genius loci is created by the hope and searching, personal ambition and selfless service to people, suffering and the attempt to lessen it, the work of doctors, nurses and also cleaning ladies (without whom the institute would not function). All of this is interwoven in the walls that surprisingly do not look old. The visitors who come here to be treated feel this and so do the guests. They also contribute to creating the reputation of the institute, they are also part of the relay passed from one generation to the next. And it is their names written in the Guestbook that became the

: standard of significance the institute has had since 19th century in
 : scientific and also political world. The signatures have become a racy
 : testimony about the institute, its aspirations and its spirit. Together,
 : they belong to its history with all the names of excellent physicians
 : or famous patients (Raboch et al. 2007). The Guestbook founded
 : by Josef Riedel opens with the date of September 5, 1834 (Riedel et
 : al 1834).

The most important and famous signature is to be found as first in the Guestbook, dated 27. October, 1866. It is the only one on a blank page, probably written on a blank piece of paper and providently kept for such an occasion. The signature is big and tidy, written by a hand that was used to writing tens of documents daily.

An Emperor deserves the cover page in the Guestbook. His marks in history are the most significant from all the famous men that have visited the Prague Institute – although it was not in a way he might have wished.

The times of his Prague visit were insecure. Austria had just lost the war with Prussia and the most important battles took place in Northern and Eastern Bohemia. The Austrian army suffered a defeating loss near Hradec Králové. Austria had to vacate the premises in Germany and watch winning Prussia getting a significant influence. The lost war also caused problems within the Hapsburg monarchy, and Vienna was soon going to try to lessen it by moving part of its power to Budapest. Unified Austria changes within the Austrian-Hungarian balance into two states connected by the figure of the Monarch. But Bohemia is urgently vocaling. So the Emperor's visit to Prague is of no coincidence and has a clearly political flavour.

Why did the young Emperor head just for the Institute for the insane in Prague? Neither here it is hard to find the answer. The institute belonged to the top of Prague medical care and treated its subordinates regardless of nationality. The Emperor who sat on the throne for an incredibly 68 years considered decency very important. He would get up at 5 every day and start work in his office. When he was older he would even get up at four. And by the way this is why it is common for Czech factories to start work

at six. When the Emperor worked the court could not sleep, high officers requested the co-operation of the low officers and nobody wanted to look like a lazy body lying in bed while His Majesty was attending to documents.

Franz Joseph I, in spite of all his diligence, personal modesty and good will remains a very average monarch. His upbringing made him believe in the superiority of a monarch who is chosen by God. Now he is supposed to face challenges that exceed his possibilities. In the times, where new ideas and concepts are required, he stays a conscientious clerk with no imagination, who responsibly attends to all documents and files, is a cold ward of traditions, a man who already in his young age was very conservative and whose thinking gets with age more and more rigid.

He does not give much space to his son, the crown prince Rudolph, who commits suicide at chateau Mayerlink. The Emperor's brother Maxmilian prefers to throw over to the succession and instead of waiting for the throne in Vienna he accepts the imperial crown in Mexico. The effort to stall monarchy on the premises of the New World is not successful and the deposed monarch ends up at the execution squat. Alone at Konopiště, the next successor of the throne Franz Ferdinand d'Este for whole decades frets about plans of reforms. Eventually, he becomes the victim of assassination in Sarajevo in 1914 – while the old Emperor keeps reigning in Vienna. The assassination of the successor of the throne becomes the impulse for World War I, which changes the map of the whole world and finally ends the reign of Hapsburgs for ever in central Europe. Austria-Hungary, one of the main European great powers, falls apart into a number of states. One of them is Czechoslovakia.

In his own way and indirectly, the Emperor Franz Joseph has written his name not only into the history of Europe but also the history of psychiatry (Raboch et al 2007).

JAN EVANGELISTA PURKYNĚ

Jan Evangelista Purkyně could not be missing in the Guestbook. In the nineteenth century, there was no other Czech scientist who would receive greater fame in the world. The weariless experimenter and great physiologist known all over Europe was offered membership by all important Czech scientific and cultural societies. He belonged to the Society of the Museum of Patriots, Royal Educational Company and Matices Ceska. Every organization, significant in the national life, attempted to be privileged to call him its member. In physiology, to the founders of which he belonged, his name has been renowned till today.

His journey to science was not easy at all. He was born in December 1787 at Libochovice chateau, where his father was working with the Ditrichsteins as a scribe and benefice. The breadwinner died, though, when the son was six. The Ditrichsteins helped the widow to send her little boy to study with the piarists in Mikulov. He wants to become a teacher and in 1807–1809 studies philosophy in Prague. He teaches for three years in the family of baron Hildprandt in south Bohemia, in Blatná. In the age when others finish their studies he studies in the years 1812–1818 medical faculty in Prague. He graduates aged 31.

But his troubles did not end. He can not find a job, and in spite of his study results he gets rejected by universities in Prague, Budapest and even Graz. He is not aware that he is suspicious of being a member of a secret society of illuminators, which in times of Metternich absolutism was enough reason to be put on the black list. But bad luck encourages his persistence. Finally, he gets at least the post of the dissector in Prague anatomic institute. He converts the drawback into an advantage. He learns to dissect and watch every detail carefully.

His starry years start in 1822, when he becomes professor of physiology and pathology at the Prussian university in Vratislav. But it was no bed of roses there either. He had been a passionate experiment-

er since young age, which differs him markedly from his peers. Practical experiments were not common in natural science then, and physiology was more or less a speculative field. Even educated colleagues consider animal testing evil and profane. Moreover, they consider the new professor not very sociable and rather strange at his lectures. But he knows exactly what he wants to achieve. He has no time for chatting. First he is interested in sight: where do the blurs come from when looking at the clear sky? What happens in the eye when it is pressed with fingers? He is also interested in vertigo. First he does not even have a microscope and only uses magnifying glasses, his flat serves as a lab.

He experiments with himself and also describes effects of various medicaments and drugs, among others ether, grain alcohol, camphor, belladonna, turpentine, or opium, so popular in those days. He enters a new, undiscovered and dangerous field of experimental pharmacology: when testing camphor he falls into a long unconsciousness. We have to bear in our mind that in his days physiology was a discipline in a much broader sense – overlapping to biology, embryology and histology.

Purkyně visits the Prague institute for the insane already in 1835. His curious spirit is interested in the whole field of natural science – including medicine. He still writes his name down into the Guestbook in German: Joh. Purkinje, Dr. und Prof. Medizin in Breslau. But his biggest success is still waiting for him.

Only in 1839 –after fifteen years of effort– he builds his dream research institute which becomes the first physiological institute in the world.

The width of his interests and research is amazing, and he keeps consistent systematic way of work. He becomes a pioneer in team work, he delegates topics of research to his colleagues – students and makes sure they are elaborated. With his students, he was engaged in studying the human skin, parts and functions of the heart, microscopic bones structure, joints and teeth. He is interested in muscles, fibers of the cerebrospinal system, structure of the stomach mucous membrane and glands, sight physiology, colour blindness, speech physiology, phonetics but also the structure of an animal egg, move-

ments in the inseminated egg... It is not possible to name all. Purkyně not only forms the fundamentals of modern physiology, but also histology, logopedy and stomatology.

The greatest Czech scientist of the nineteenth century elaborates microscopic technology and methodology in a new way – he was the first to view findings of the newly discovered Daguerreotype and became the pioneer in using photography in microscopy. Purkyně studied streaks and pictures on the skin of fingers and palms, which had first been overlooked. He set nine classes of footprints and they indirectly influenced the origin of dactyloscopy. In Purkyně's "grain theory" the grain, meaning the cell, is the foundation stone of ever life matter. This is considered to be the first attempt to formulate cell theory. He is the author of the word "protoplasm", describing the life matter of the cell. Soon after his discoveries, protoplasm started to be considered the basic material of all alive beings, the substance of life itself.

In 1850 he comes back from Wroclaw to Prague for good. Instead of pure science, he is engaged into organizational and social activities, but his energy does not fade. He remains Professor at the physiology stool in Prague until his death, builds his own Prague physiological institute (open in 1851). He dies in 1869 (Hora-Hořejšv 1998).

JEAN MARTIN CHARCOT

The French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot became famous thanks to his own research and also thanks to organizing health care for nervous and mentally ill patients. The more his Prague colleagues were pleased that he highly appreciated also their results. He had a major impact on Professor Josef Thomayer. From Charcot's students, the founder of psychoanalyses Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet reached the greatest fame. It was Janet who continued in Charcot's research of the hypnosis. In his "psychological analysis" he came to similar conclusions as Freud, who was criticized for his psychoanalytical pansexualism (Junas 1977).

He visited Prague's psychiatric department as young physician on 13.05.1854 and signed the list of the Guest book below signature of another famous figure of history of our discipline Daniel Tuke

from York. On 16.10.1853 Tuke wrote: "Visited the Asylum with much pleasure and admired the great cleanliness and good order of the institution. Every facility was afforded me by the excellent directors" (Raboch et al 2007).

JULIUS WAGNER VON JAUREGG

The famous Austrian psychiatrist Julius Wagner von Jauregg [accompanied by Otto Potzl, head of the German Psychiatric Department (Hlaváčková 2006) and his successor in Vienna] visited the clinic at Karlov from a collegial interest on 27.4.1925 - the co-operation of Viennese psychiatrists with their Prague colleagues had not been interrupted by the fall of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and the formation of two independent states. The head of the Czech clinic at Karlov František Köstl had already before mentioned the possibility of treating some mental illnesses with inducing fever and he had also found out, that some psychosis had got better after variola vaccination.

In his psychiatric practice, Wagner von Jauregg orients first of all to treatment of mental illness with pyrotherapy. Already in 1887 he started to put his mind into research of influence of fever disease on psychoses and later started to use tuberculin discovered in 1890 by Robert Koch. Because the methods were not successful, he moved his attention to treatment via artificial vaccination of plasmodia with inducing malaria fever. This method brought success in curing progressive paralysis which in those days tormented one fourth of the patients of the psychiatric clinic. Discovering malarotherapy caused first mass dismissal of patients from psychiatric clinic. For this discovery from 1917–1918 and its use in therapy, Julius Wagner von Jauregg was in 1927 awarded Nobel Prize for medicine (Junas 1977).

Professor Vladimír Vondráček, famous head of the Prague department (1957–1970), describes in his memoirs his impression from meeting the Austrian psychiatrist in 1925, when Wagner von Jauregg was head of the Psychiatric clinic in Lazarettgasse 14 in Vienna as follows: "Wagner von Jauregg was of rather medium height" Sitzriese, which means a person who sitting down looks like a giant, he had a big head and dark grey hair. Our conversation

was short, so I could not study his looks much, although in those days I had already been enchanted for four years by the teachings of Ernst Kretschmer and in my free time I liked reading anthropology textbooks.” (Vondráček 1973).

Julius Wagner von Jauregg died in 1940. It is beyond dispute that he deserved the Nobel Prize, as with his discovery of treating progressive paralyses a new era in psychiatry was started. Professor Vondráček says to this: “...from a therapeutically helpless field a field with beautiful treatment results has become, from human life perspective slowly, and from earth history perspective very quickly, it is definitely a field therapeutically active...” (Vondráček 1973).

OTHER VISITORS

There were many other well-known visitors, who signed the Book in the past, like Carl Franz Crede, Heinrich August Damerow, Wilhelm Griesinger, Jacques-Joseph Moreau, Karl Rokitansky. However in recent years, especially after the “Velvet Revolution” in 1989 became Prague and its Psychiatric Department again a popular facility where many outstanding colleagues used to come (Raboch 2000). There were meetings of APA, RCP, UEMS, AEP, WFSP as well as WPA and we can find signatures of Larry Hartman, Siegfried Kasper, Norman Sartorius, Fiona Caldecott, Juan Mezzich, another Nobel Prize winner Marshal Nierenberg and his wife Myrna Weismann, Hans Jörgen Moeller to name some of them (Riedel et al 1834).

George Christodoulou visited Prague many times on various occasions, as an officer of UEMS, WPA, WFMH, visiting his son, Nikos Christodoulou who, at that time was studying medicine at Charles University, or simply as a friend of ours. As far as I know he signed the Book twice.

On 7.6.2004 as a member of the executive committee of WPA he wrote: “It is a great pleasure and honor to be in the Department of Psychiatry of the University in Prague, a city of great history and contribution to psychiatry. I wish you to organize a magnificent Congress”. And after the very successful XIV World Congress of Psychiatry in Prague (Raboch et Libiger 2008) on 25.9.2008 “Warm wishes to

all of you. With best regards, George Christodoulou, Athens, Greece”.

In this way, Professor Christodoulou will stay with us in Prague forever.

CONCLUSION

In the Guestbook of the former Prague institute for the insane, bound in black, decorated with winegrapes on the sides and a golden vine, the day of the first entry is written clearly: September 5, 1834. After the page of honor dedicated to the Monarch himself, a hundreds of esteemed names follow, from all parts of the world. Over a hundred and sixty years of human effort, some two centimeters of pages in height and then sheets still untouched still waiting for their entry. Sometimes, it is possible to capture things on an incredibly small area (Raboch et al 2007).

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