

# žurnál

Magazine of Palacký University Olomouc, 2023/2

portrait

## Irena Smolová: Making decisions at the right time



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Genius loci...



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cover – Irena Smolová, UP Academic Senate Chair | photo: Jakub Čermák

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Dear Students, Colleagues,  
and Friends of UP,

*The new academic year has barely begun, and the new calendar year is now upon us, marking the end of the year in which we held celebrations commemorating 450 years since the founding of the university in Olomouc. I hope that some of you were able to find your way to at least a few of the many events which we celebrated in the jubilee year. We celebrated at the Palacký University Ball, at the Majáles May Student Celebrations, on František Palacký's birthday, and at alumni events – as well as other traditional occasions and events particular to this year's jubilee. We welcomed a number of distinguished guests to Olomouc, including the rectors and leading representatives of Czech universities to celebrate the start of the academic year, and also presidents of foreign universities who came to the Aurora Olomouc Biannual international meeting. We organised a special exhibition on the history of the university in Olomouc at the Olomouc Regional Museum, published several interesting books and other publications on the occasion of the jubilee, a musical suite was composed for our alma mater, and a massive mural was also created. We were profiled nationwide on both Czech Television and Czech Radio, and we celebrated in the USA at the Czech Center in New York and the National Czech and Slovak Museum in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.*

*I could go on and on, but even so, the list of events where we presented the university and celebrated its jubilee would be far from complete. I would like to thank all those who took an active part in the celebrations – they did a tremendous job, for which we received admiration and appreciation from all sides. And I'm personally grateful I could take part myself. The good fortune that I could be the head of the university during such a jubilee is a huge honour for me. Long live Palacký University Olomouc, and long may it thrive!*

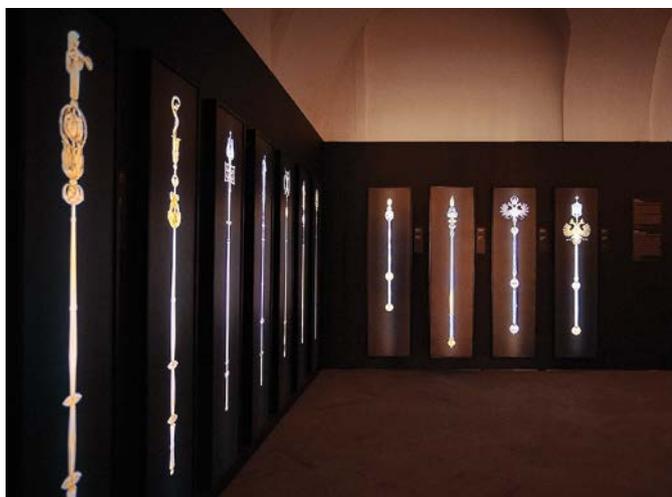
Martin Procházka, UP Rector

theme



# The university as a temple of wisdom

text: Ivana Pustějovská  
photos: Vojtěch Duda



A fascinating history, An inspiring university. These could be the subtitles of two exhibitions which were held this year at the Olomouc Regional Museum to mark the university's jubilee. They take visitors back in time, to the beginning, when the entity which today proudly carries the title "university" came into existence in the town, 450 years ago.

The exhibition "The Temple of Wisdom – The Jesuit University in Olomouc, 1573–1773", reawakens for visitors the long-forgotten course of a dialogue between science and religion. It portrays Olomouc higher education in the first two centuries of its existence, when the teaching, administration, and management of the university were fully in the hands of the Jesuits, a dynamic and progressive religious order. Curators Zdeněk Orlita and Filip Hradil transformed the Wenceslas III Hall of the museum in an original way, to capture the spirit of the university. "We decided to create a space reflecting the shape of the no longer existing Baroque university ceremonial hall, in which pictures of the benefactors of higher education in Olomouc were hung," explained Orlita. Another part of the exhibition is the "Illuminarium" in its central section, a round structure onto which the names of the rectors of the Jesuit university are projected with the dates of their terms in office. The exhibition offers visitors several dozen diverse exhibits connected with the history of higher education. Among the most valuable are the globes which used to be part of the Jesuit academy library, now belonging to the Olomouc Regional Museum collection. Must-see items in the exhibition include the large graphic sheets called "university theses", printed on the occasion of final exams, and the three ancient Olomouc university maces.

The maces are the centrepieces of the second exhibition, "Symbols of Wisdom". Against dark, backlit panels, the rector's and deans' maces – the newly documented historical ones now in the possession of the University of Innsbruck, as well as those currently used which were created in the modern era of Palacký University – are presented in an intimate interior. For this unique exhibition, Palacký University Press prepared a catalogue with photographs of the thirteen maces and sets of rector's and deans' ceremonial chains.

Both exhibitions are being held from 18 October 2023 to 11 February 2024. There is also a rich programme of events accompanying both exhibitions.

EXHIBITIONS



photos: Jakub Čermák



# Good Morning: Live broadcast from the university

All year long we have commemorated 450 years of higher education in Olomouc. And Czech Television could not pass up such an opportunity. For two days, the Ostrava studio of Czech TV2 moved to the UP Arts Centre, to introduce our university to viewers of their Good Morning show. For two and half hours of live broadcasting, we spoke not only about our impressive history but also about our living university today. Students as well as teachers got to take the microphone. The live broadcast featured Rector Martin Procházka, historian Tomáš Parma from the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, psychologist Martin Dolejš from the Faculty of Arts, teacher trainer Petra Šobánová from the Faculty of Education, alumnus and musician Jiří Pavlica, and more. Viewers learned about our University of the Third Age, about interesting research going on at UP, the activities of the UP Volunteering Centre, and the project Expedition Without Barriers, which is organised for people with physical challenges by students at the Faculty of Physical Culture. TV cameras also peered into labs, Fort Science, and art studios. (ipu, vim)



photo: Jakub Čermák

event

# Opening of the academic year

Palacký University Olomouc hosted the opening ceremony for Czech universities' 2023/2024 academic year. Two hundred guests from both the country and abroad, including forty rectors of domestic universities, the Czech Minister of Education, and other important figures, gathered at the Archbishop's Palace. The opening was part of the Czech Rectors' Conference, which was held over two days in Olomouc. (ipu)



## The Asian hornet appears in the country, as predicted by experts from the Faculty of Science

The invasion of the dangerous Asian hornet, which has now invaded the Czech Republic and was caught and identified for the first time in the vicinity of Pilsen, threatens especially the western part of the country due to favourable living conditions. Experts and beekeepers should be alert, especially in the vicinity of České Budějovice, Pilsen, and the foothills of the Ore Mountains. These findings come from a unique computer model of the spread of this predator destroying bee colonies, which was completed this year by experts from the UP Faculty of Science.

“The presence of the Asian hornet in the Pilsen region confirms the accuracy of our prediction, which points to an increased risk in the western parts of the country, especially around urban areas,” said Jan Brus from the Department of Geoinformatics.

The Asian hornet is an invasive species of hymenopterous insect native to South-east Asia, and is about 10 to 20 percent

smaller than the European hornet common in the Czech Republic. “However, it is a very aggressive predator that specialises in hunting bees and other pollinating insects,” noted Jiří Daníhlik from the Department of Biochemistry.

Bees account for up to 70 per cent of its diet, which is why the Asian hornet is decimating bee colonies and causing legitimate concern, not only for European beekeepers. In the European Union, it is considered a high-risk insect species that threatens native biodiversity.

Due to the growing risk of the Asian hornet invading the country, experts from UP FS decided to create a model that, based on data on the occurrence of this predator in Western Europe, could identify the locations in the Czech Republic with the most favourable conditions for its spread. From databases mapping the confirmed occurrence of the Asian hornet in Europe, the scientists select-

ed over 2000 observations. Based on the average values of available climate data from 1991–2020, they used nine variables with the greatest statistical influence on the distribution of the Asian hornet. The computer model subsequently showed that favourable conditions for this insect are mainly found in the western part of the country.

For the subsequent period until 2050, the prediction obtained by the model is similar, but the suitability of individual sites that already have favourable conditions increases significantly. “We can thus prevent the spread of this invasive species, especially with regard to beekeeping,” added Brus.

According to experts, data on the spread of the Asian hornet in Europe so far show that the climatic conditions in the Czech Republic do not yet suit the species very well. In particular, cold winters could be fatal for the Asian hornet. (cho)

## The Bánov treasure reveals surprising findings to archaeologists

Experts from the UP Faculty of Arts participated in the research of objects that were found in the vicinity of the village of Bánov.



They came up with a surprising finding: the Bánov treasure is a set of objects buried together during the Iron Age, within a certain ritual.

“In addition to an iron axe and a ceramic vessel in which some of the objects were placed, the deposit consists of parts of a rich female costume in the form of bronze jewellery and two iron belt rings. The costume probably belonged to a high-ranking person, a noblewoman,” said the head of the authors’ team, Martin Golec from the UP Department of History.

Among the jewellery found are two thousand amber beads. This makes the

deposit the largest collection of prehistoric amber in the country. Thanks to analyses carried out by Lukáš Kučera from the UP Faculty of Science, scientists now know that the amber comes from the Baltic region. And since some of the bronze jewellery did not originate in Moravia, experts assume that the Bánov treasure is linked to the Amber Road, which connected the Baltic coast with the Mediterranean in the early Iron Age. The Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Brno and Charles University in Prague also cooperated in the research. (map)

## Faculty of Law: Top experts discussed the use of armed force in international law

Seventy experts in international law from four continents, including leading world experts, were attracted to Olomouc by the conference “International Law and the Regulation of Resort to Force: Exhaustion, Destruction, Rebirth?”. The Centre for International Humanitarian and Operational Law (CIHOL) at the UP Faculty of Law organised the symposium. The unifying theme of the two-day meeting was the prohibition of the use of armed force in international law, its current status, and prospects for further development.



The organisers divided the conference into 15 thematic panels, in which nearly fifty speakers from more than thirty institutions actively participated. “Most of the panels were held concurrently, so the participants could partially tailor the program to their professional interests,” explained Marko Svicevic from the Department of International and European Law (UP FL) and a member of CIHOL. Attendees represented prestigious and established international institutions, such as the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, the American Red Cross, the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the British Institute of International and Comparative Law.

Among the most followed speakers and prominent participants were Dire Tladi and Pavel Šturma, former Chairs of the UN International Law Commission; Niels Blokker from Leiden University; Douglas Wilson, Director General of the UK Attorney General’s Office; Nicholas Tsagourias from the University of Sheffield; and Tom Ruys from Ghent University.

According to the organisers, the conference fulfilled expectations. “We managed to connect a young generation of scholars with world-class experts from different parts of the world and to comprehensively discuss with them an issue that is not only a pillar of the international law system, but is receiving even more attention in the light of current events. The participants appreciated the timing of the symposium and its high professional, social, and organisational standards,” said Martin Faix, Head of CIHOL and UP FL Vice-Dean for International Affairs. According to him, the conference allowed the quality of Central European academics to be demonstrated, brought prestige to the faculty, and expanded the network of contacts with influential international institutions.

The symposium was organised by CIHOL in cooperation with the University of Graz and with the support of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, the European Society of International Law, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Czech Republic. (eha)

## Alumni Days at the Faculty of Education

The UP Faculty of Education prepared a rich two-day programme full of information, inspiration, and informal meetings for its alumni and supporters. They met during tours of departments and institutes, at interesting workshops, an exhibition by senior students, and a concert by graduates and students.

“Alumni Days have a long tradition in our school. It’s a small festival of departmental events. Our graduates are interested in specific educational events such as workshops, so we included several of them this year. Our alumni are interested in sharing various practical tips and in projects whose results they can use professionally in their teaching. Naturally, they are keen on meeting their classmates and teachers directly at their workplaces, where we have been cultivating our bonds for a long time,” said the Vice-Dean of the faculty, Petra Šobáňová.

Interested students could tour the building on Žižkovo Square. The UP Arts Centre also offered a tour of its studios, attended by alumni like Hana Čermáková. “I love

it here. When I started my studies, our department was still in the premises of today’s Archdiocesan Museum, but here in the Convictorium, there is a special atmosphere that constantly attracts me. I am so

happy to be able to meet my classmates and teachers again and that I could share and consult what I do with them,” she said. The Alumni Days at UP FE are attended by hundreds of former students every year. (map)



8 faculties  
1 university



## Construction of a new building for future healthcare professionals

The construction of a new building for the education of UP Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry and Faculty of Health Sciences students was inaugurated with a symbolic tap on its heart-shaped cornerstone. The modern building will have a lecture hall for 400 people, facilities for practical training of future doctors and healthcare professionals on state-of-the-art simulators, and a canteen that can serve 2000 diners daily. Construction work is expected to be completed in early 2026.

“I am very happy that this plan has been realised and I believe that after the construction of the new building, the space requirements of our faculty will be secured for the next 20–30 years. The large lecture

hall will be used primarily for the study programme General Medicine, where the number of students in the first year currently exceeds 270, but also for other study programmes and joint events. The simulation floor, in turn, will enable the expansion of practical teaching on the most modern simulators in order for students to acquire necessary competences and satisfy current requirements for a medical faculty graduate,” said UP FMD Dean Milan Kolář.

The Faculty of Health Sciences will also use the new premises to concentrate all simulation technology in one place. “I believe that thanks to the construction of the new building and in cooperation with UP FHS and University Hospital Olomouc, we

are going to build a centre of medical education, science, and healthcare that will stand out – not only in the Olomouc Region, but in the entire Czech Republic,” added Kolář.

The modern four-storey building is designed by Brno-based Atelier Velehradský. The new building on Hněvotínská Street will attract attention by its unusual shape and cladding of triangular glass and red metal panels. The cost of the construction, including all infrastructure, interior fittings, and landscaping of the surrounding area, will exceed €26 million, with approximately two-thirds covered by a state budget subsidy. The remaining third will be paid by UP from its own resources. (vim)

## Faculty of Theology project dedicated to the presentation of sacral monuments

A new project of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology supported by the Czech Ministry of Culture deals with the possibilities of presenting sacral buildings – not only in cultural and educational events. The five-year applied research combining academia, historic preservation, and religious institutions will result in expert methodologies as well as specialised maps and exhibitions for the public.



The main objective is to create two comprehensive methodologies for the appropriate presentation of sacral monuments. The first will focus on the accessibility of religious buildings during cultural and educational events, especially during the Night of Churches; the project team aims to present in more detail this increasingly popular event with an ecumenical dimension. The second methodology will offer a more general view of the forms and possibilities of presenting sacred monuments as an important part of living culture and national cultural heritage.

“I believe that we will be able to develop the methodologies in such a way that they will be clear and interesting for experts and the wider public alike. The key factor in the presentations is the idea of a church without barriers, as barriers may be due to a misunderstanding of the content of the church, its functions, iconography, and so forth,” said

Jitka Jonová from the Department of Religious History, Patrology and Christian Art at UP CMFT, head of the research team.

Other results of the project will be interactive specialised maps focusing on churches and other sacral monuments along important pilgrimage routes in the Olomouc Archdiocese. A monograph dedicated to the pilgrimage site of Calvary in Jaroměřice u Jevíčka should become a model for similar publications on other sites. Last but not least, two exhibitions will be held in the crypt of the Olomouc Cathedral of St Wenceslas, accompanied by a critical catalogue. One will present an important Olomouc patron, canon Jiří Jindřich of Mayerswald; the other will display the St Wenceslas Treasury.

The project Sacred Objects: Presentation, Care and Appreciation is supported by the Czech Ministry of Culture under the NAKI III programme. (vim)

## Faculty of Physical Culture organised a meeting of experts in movement analysis

After six years, the conference Movement Analysis in the Czech Republic and Slovakia returned to Olomouc, bringing together some three dozen biomechanists, bioengineers, physiotherapists, and other experts in the field of human movement analysis, with the aim to promote mutual cooperation. During the two-day programme, twenty papers from various areas of basic and applied research were presented, with topics such as the influence of wearing protective equipment on the postural stability of members of the integrated rescue system and the biomechanical parameters of walking in barefoot shoes.

“One of the two principal speakers was Roman Farana from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ostrava, who has long been trying to analyse the execution of movement in gymnastics and apply the findings in sports training. The second was our own Prof Miroslav Janura, who spoke about the history of kinematic movement analysis in the Czech Republic. His lecture was not only professionally interesting but also funny, as usual,” said Zdeněk Svoboda, head of the organisers, UP Department of Natural Sciences in Kinanthropology.

He also highlighted two contributions by members of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Diana Bzdúšková presented a study in which she investigated the effect of fear of heights on balance in virtual reality environments, while Jana Kimijanová focused on the issue of postural adjustment when starting to walk in relation to the risk of falling. In addition to the lectures, the participants had the opportunity to learn about modern technologies that can be used in

the study of movement, such as camera systems and virtual reality applications. There was also a poster session, which was unexpectedly popular. “We got very positive feedback from the participants. They appreciated how well the event was organised and several of them have expressed interest in doing an internship in the faculty laboratories,” added Svoboda. The conference was held for the fifth time; UP has already hosted it once – in 2017. (vim)



## Faculty of Health Sciences hosted foreign obstetricians and physiotherapists and celebrated a grant

Two successful international conferences and one important triumph marked the UP Faculty of Health Sciences' opening of the academic year. The fourth year of the Olomouc School in Midwifery offered a busy programme. Resuscitation of the newborn, water birth, suturing the perineum, postpartum haemorrhage – these were just a few programme entries of the event attended by

guests from Slovakia, Belgium, Estonia, and for the first time also from Norway. “The thirty participants of this year's school enjoyed many new insights and ideas. The Belgian lecturers led an interesting workshop on the increasingly popular water birth, including a practical demonstration. The lecturers from Estonia spoke about bleeding after childbirth, and the seminar of the guests from Norway was focused on community care,” said Kateřina Janoušková, deputy head of the UP FHS Department of Midwifery. In the rich programme, there was also an intersection with the autumn Czech School of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, taking place for the very first time, also at the faculty on the same date, and which was attended by guests from Slovakia, Belgium, and Finland.

Another reason for joy was the first ever grant from the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic awarded to the Faculty of Health Sciences, for the project Applica-

tion of Optimised Well-being Strategies for Healthcare Professionals. Healthcare professionals played an important role during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their help in fighting the virus took its toll in the form of increased stress and symptoms of burnout syndrome. The UP FHS therefore decided to create a web and mobile application to prevent and reduce stress and reduce the incidence of burnout. The project leader is Simona Dobešová Cakirpaloglu, deputy head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at UP FHS. “The main objective of the project is to prevent and identify psychosocial risks in healthcare workers with the ultimate goal of promoting their well-being,” said Dobešová Cakirpaloglu. The app, whose development will be finished by June 2026, will offer self-diagnosis of stress levels and of the degree of burnout syndrome, with the possibility of creating a personalised daily plan according to which the user will practice techniques to reduce stress. (dkr)



# Olomouc scientist develops a new method of peptide stapling and labelling

A new method called peptide stapling, which offers further possibilities of their use in the field of targeted drugs or in biology, was developed by Soňa Krajčovičová, a PhD graduate at the Department of Organic Chemistry, UP Faculty of Science, currently working at the University of Cambridge. The results of her research into peptide stapling and labelling have been published in the renowned journal *Angewandte Chemie*.

Peptides are important organic compounds made up of amino acids. In living organisms, they regulate biochemical processes in cells, tissues, and organs; also, proteins are formed from them. In their natural form, however, they are generally not stable enough and are easily subject to undesirable enzymatic degradation. Scientists have therefore developed peptide stapling, which allows the peptide struc-

ture to be “locked” into a more stable spatial conformation, significantly increasing its stability.

“I have now discovered a new synthetic method how to use the amino acid tryptophan in stapling and functional modification of peptides,” said Krajčovičová. By means of tryptophan stapling, which stabilises the spatial interconnection of amino acids, useful substances can be incorporated into peptides. These could be pharmaceuticals, such as doxorubicin, or fluorescent dyes, further expanding the possible of utilisation of this method.

With this new approach, scientists can also modify peptides functionally in various ways in the late stage of their synthesis. “This allows us to quickly and efficiently develop many bioconjugates with various biological and medical applications from one common intermediate. For instance,

we can add fluorescent tags to help us track the movement of peptides in the cells, or we can synthesise peptides to specifically target the cancer cells. Our method saves money and especially time,” said Krajčovičová.

Soňa Krajčovičová was granted an internship at the University of Cambridge thanks to a scholarship from the Experientia Foundation and the Czech Science Foundation. The young scientist has been studying peptides for quite some time. “The idea to use the amino acid tryptophan in stapling peptides and their functional modification was purely mine. During the whole time I worked on this part of the research independently in Cambridge within the group of Prof David Spring, who gave me a free hand in everything, but in the end offered me very valuable advice in finalising the publication,” added Krajčovičová.

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**Peptides are important organic compounds made up of amino acids. In living organisms, they regulate biochemical processes in cells, tissues, and organs; also, proteins are formed from them. In their natural form, however, they are generally not stable enough and are easily subject to undesirable enzymatic degradation.**



text: Martina Šaradínová  
photo: Viktor Čap

science

# Elite project pushes the boundaries of nanotechnology in energy and medicine

Fundamental discoveries that will push the boundaries of current nanotechnologies and find a wide range of applications in practice are expected by scientists involved in the Technology Beyond the Nanoscale (TECHSCALE) project led by the Czech Advanced Technologies and Research Institute (CATRIN) at Palacký University Olomouc. The five-year project succeeded in the Jan Amos Komenský Operational Programme in the “Top Research” call with the second highest score and received a grant of €19.5 mil.

“I consider it a great success that our project was approved from this prestigious and demanding call, for which we have been preparing for about a year. I am convinced that we succeeded not only thanks to a very topical and well targeted topic, but also thanks to the experience of our researchers and the interdisciplinary focus of our research, which is one of the key missions of CATRIN. In the project, we will connect with colleagues from five faculties of Palacký University as well as with scientists from Charles University and the Central European Institute of Technology (CEITEC). This will allow us to strengthen our research efforts, achieve even more significant results, and make a significant contribution to the development of science and technology in our society,” said CATRIN

Director Pavel Banáš. Scientists from the UP Faculty of Arts, UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Health Sciences, and Faculty of Theology are also participating in the project.

Researchers will be developing new nanomaterials and technologies that will contribute to solving two current global challenges: the generation and storage of renewable energy and the development of new materials to improve the quality of life. The project will also include an assessment of the societal impact and public acceptance of new technologies.

“The main focus of the project is the design, preparation, and use of a new class of materials that we will prepare using a breakthrough single-atom engineering method. We expect to make fundamental discoveries that will push the boundaries of current nanotechnology and find applications in, for example, energy storage, chemical catalysis in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, and diagnosis of certain diseases and their treatment. The project will also include the development of new materials for antimicrobial therapy and for combating bacterial resistance to antibiotics,” said the project’s principal investigator, Michal Otyepka from CATRIN, a four-time recipient of prestigious European Research Council grants.

For example, colleagues from Charles University in Prague will focus on the targeted synthesis of new types of zeolites and other porous materials. “Our task is to develop new highly active and selective catalysts based on precisely defined monatomic active centres on suitable supports for the preparation of specialty chemicals and to use them, for example, in cascade reactions or in the preparation of chiral molecules important for the pharmaceutical industry,” explained Jiří Čejka from the Faculty of Science, Charles University.

“I believe that by engaging a wide range of scientists from the natural sciences to the social sciences and legal studies, we will succeed in changing the paradigm for the development of new materials and technologies that are designed from the outset to be safe and responsible,” Otyepka added.

The total funding for the call was €324 mil; out of the 15 successful projects, eight were awarded to institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Other supported applicants include, in addition to UP, Brno University of Technology, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, VSB – Technical University Ostrava, Charles University, Masaryk University, and the Masaryk Institute of Oncology. Scientific teams from UP will participate in five of these projects.

# How is China perceived by its neighbours?

## Research brings crucial data for European policymakers

An international team led by Palacký University Olomouc has completed research on the global impact of China from the perspectives of the cultures of Taiwan, Russia, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Kazakh-



stan, Kyrgyzstan, and others. Their findings are of great significance for European policymakers.

Issues such as political events, Chinese civic society, Chinese artistic production, and the influence of Chinese culture and politics abroad were addressed by the international research team in the five-year project *Sinophone Borderlands – Interaction at the Edges*. In order to support the research on these topics, a specialised laboratory was established at UP for researchers to investigate both the language and material culture, as well as, via computer analysis, to study minority languages and how Chinese has influenced them. The international team, which included scholars from the UP Faculty of Arts, also analysed the tensions between the processes of economic competition and cooperation, and the migration trends between China and the outside world.

“Our research centre employs scientists and academics from all over the world. As direct research on China is becoming increasingly difficult, we are investigating China from the outside. Thus, we focus on the interactions in the borderlands of the Sinophone world which provide a unique and at the same time novel perspective on China and its cultural, political, and socio-economic system,” said Jiří Luňáček, project manager from the Department of Asian Studies at the UP Faculty of Arts, on behalf of the research team. According to him, their findings point out how the People’s Republic of China is expanding its influence through international institutions, development projects, and investments, and how its cultural, political, and economic influence is perceived and accepted.

According to the researchers, global opinion polls have shown that China’s popularity mostly lags behind the United States

and other Western countries. “It cannot be said that China has the world on its side, but at the same time it is not true that China is perceived significantly negatively. Negative perceptions of China are almost exclusively characteristic of Western countries and their allies, such as South Korea and Japan. The European Union countries, including the Czech Republic, do not have a clearly defined long-term strategy in their relationships with China, oscillating between unbridled optimism and scepticism. Whereas, in the global context, their public opinion is very negative towards China,” said Richard Turcsányi, a key researcher in the project.

Although China itself is closed to many forms of research, a careful examination of its surroundings shows that its authoritarian regime combined with capitalism is an effective force transforming its neighbouring environment economically and socially. “It is being done through major investments in Central Asia and infrastructure construction in Southeast and South Asia, or disputes over the South China Sea, a key trade route on which the economies of China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and other countries depend. China is becoming an increasingly assertive global player, working with Russia to reshape the international order,” added Turcsányi.

Experts from the UP Faculty of Arts established research cooperation with leading world institutions specialising in research on China and its surroundings. The data that emerged from the impressive five-year research were presented to the representatives of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as reported in the European Parliament and the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, which operates under the auspices of the EU and NATO.

text: Šárka Chovancová  
photos: Jakub Čermák

portrait

A portrait of Irena Smolová, a woman with short, wavy white hair, wearing a black blazer over a black top and a black skirt with a white polka-dot pattern. She is standing outdoors in a park-like setting with green and yellow foliage in the background. She is leaning her right hand on a wooden slatted bench. Her glasses are perched on her head.

**Irena Smolová**  
Geographer, UP Academic  
Senate Chair



**Irena Smolová (b. 1970)**

Hails from Nové Město nad Metují. She studied geography at the Masaryk University Brno Faculty of Science, where she completed her Master's and doctoral studies. She has been working at the UP Faculty of Science Department of Geography since 1995. In her scientific research and publications, she focuses on geomorphology, especially anthropogenic influences of reliefs, regional geography, and regional development. During her career, she has supervised more than 50 Bachelor's and over 70 Master's theses. She is the guarantor of studies in teaching geography. She is the author of several university textbooks. She was Vice-Dean for Studies, Teaching, and Social Affairs, Vice-Chair of the UP FS Academic Senate, UP AS, and Vice-Chair of the UP AS Economic Commission. In September 2023 she was chosen UP AS Chair.

She has never visited Antarctica, even though that region of perpetual ice and cold had a significant influence on her future profession. Irena Smolová is from the picturesque town of Nové Město nad Metují, where she met Josef Sekyra, who had set foot on the South Pole. His travel experiences influenced the young student in her choice of study. She enrolled in the Masaryk University Brno Faculty of Science.

Another fateful encounter took place when she wrote her Master's thesis. "When mapping the Broumovsko Protected Landscape Area, which had just been designated, I worked with Prof Jaromír Demek of UP. I loved research in the field and 'running' about the 'rock town' formations so much that when that well-known geographer retired and offered me work at their Department of Geography, I accepted. In my professional life, I've had the opportunity to meet so many other inspiring people. I'd like to name at least one of them, geographer Václav Toušek, who was my teacher in Brno and now is my dear colleague in the department."

Her transition was not so easy. "Because I come from the foothills of the Orlický Mts,

I had to gradually get used to Olomouc and the plains of Haná. And the mentality of the people here is different. But I connected my life with Olomouc, such a lovely historic town, and do not regret a thing."

Irena Smolová has worked at the Faculty of Science since 1995. In her scientific work, she focuses on geomorphology, especially anthropogenic influences of reliefs, regional geography, and regional development. She is the author of several university textbooks, scientific monographs, and chapters in science books published here and abroad.

"The greatest transformation in geography since my studies has been in geographic information systems. Geography graduates now have a complex view of the territory and know how to use state-of-the-art methods. A significant advance is their access to massive amounts of data which used to be very hard to obtain. Unlike other countries, the majority of geodata is usually available free to public administration and education."

The scientist and teacher enjoys meeting with students and fulfilling her role as guarantor of studies in teaching geography. "I still really like working with students. I'm happy that we have such mo-

tivated and capable students, although they can surprise me. For example, even though they have the opportunity to travel, which my generation did not, they do not see it as an advantage. Of course, there are others who do travel and take advantage of their possibilities. Students from all over the Czech Republic and Slovakia apply to our programme in teaching geography.”

Travelling – though now rather for fun – is one of Irena Smolová’s hobbies. “I enjoy being in the mountains and exploring new places. Recently, for exam-

ple, I went on a weekend where we gathered medicinal herbs, and learned how to use them.” In addition to travelling, she likes reading, architecture, and family gatherings. “Family gatherings are very important to me. We hold them regularly. Recently, I also decided I need at least one day of R&R a week for myself, to see the bigger picture.”

Irena Smolová has held several important positions at Palacký University, including the role of Chair of the Faculty of Science Academic Senate and Vice-Dean for Studies, Teaching, and Social Affairs.

She was also Vice-Chair of the UP Academic Senate (UP AS), and Chair of the UP AS Economic Commission. In September 2023 she was chosen UP AS Chair.

“It took me a long time to decide whether I would run. I hadn’t thought of it, but since we discuss the university’s problems among my friends, I realised due to my age and experience, this is the right time,” said the geographer. “My goal is mutual communication, so that we can work together on the issues which are crucial for the university. It is a great honour and challenge for me.”

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**“I still really enjoy working with students, it’s rewarding. I’m happy that we have such motivated and capable students, although they can surprise me. For example, even though they have the opportunity to travel, which my generation did not, they do not see it as an advantage.”**



**Veronika Machovská**

Director of the Šternberk District Local Action Group

I’ve known Irena for nearly a decade. We met during our cooperation at the Šternberk District Local Action Group, where she worked then and still does as the guarantor for the local action plan regarding education development in the Šternberk and Olomouc districts. We are both familiar with academia, which means we share experience, an interest in education, and the desire to help improve the quality of education in kindergartens and primary schools. During our years working together, our cooperation has developed into a profound friendship. I admire Irena’s ability to analyse and effectively process so many sources and documents. She has a gift for easing difficult and tense situations, conducting negotiations calmly. I enjoy discussing issues in contemporary education and education in general with her. She is a great female role model to me.



**Michal Botur**

UP FS Department of Algebra and Geometry

I was aware of Irena when I first started at the university, when she was Vice-Dean for Student Affairs. But it wasn’t until the last five years, when I engaged in university politics, that I got to know her better. Her diligent and hard-working approach to the enormous amount of material and information at AS fascinated me from the start. I soon realised that she puts passion into everything she does. After several years of working with her, what I appreciate most is her sensitivity and optimism. In emotionally fraught situations, she’s the one who encouraged us and gave us strength. When she’s around, it’s as if conflicts do not exist, like they avoid her. What is more, Irena is a good listener, and not someone in love with the sound of their own voice. I’m really glad that I’ve gotten to know Irena – both as a colleague, and as a person.

success

## Prof Jan Peřina receives František Palacký Prize



Palacký University Olomouc has awarded the prestigious František Palacký Prize to Prof Jan Peřina for his long-term scientific work in quantum, statistical, and nonlinear optics. “I appreciate this award very much, more than any other award I have ever received. František Palacký has been a huge historical figure for me, ever since I was young. I’ve read his five-volume *History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia* several times. It is a gripping and enlightening read. I’m always sad that it ends in 1526,” said Peřina.

Prof Jan Peřina gained international fame for his scientific achievements in quantum, statistical, and non-linear optics and in the theory of the coherence of

light. He has also made a significant contribution to the discovery of the properties of non-classical light. For his scientific work and merits for the establishment of the internationally recognised optics centre in Olomouc, Jan Peřina has been awarded, among others, the I.I. Rabi Award at Columbia University NY, the Czech presidential Medal for Merit (First Grade), and the Neuron Prize for contribution to world science in physics. From 1990 to the present, he has been Professor of Optics at the UP Department of Optics as well as at the Joint Laboratory of Optics at the UP Faculty of Science and the Institute of Physics of the Czech Academy of Sciences. (cho)

## Two prestigious awards for the Faculty of Education

The E-Safety project by the UP Faculty of Education dominated two prestigious competitions this year. It won the first year of the national 2023 CYBER Award in the CYBER Project of the Year category, and it also won first place in the Best Crime Prevention Project at the Local Level contest.

“We are delighted with both awards, and I have humble words of thanks on behalf of the whole team. It’s also a kind of signal that our work has meaning and impact. We’d like to thank our faculty for the necessary facilities and service it provides

us with,” said Kamil Kopecký, head of the E-Safety project at the Faculty of Education. He noted that the award is, above all, a commitment to maintain the quality and scope of the services provided.

The success of the Faculty of Education’s E-Safety project was also commented on by Minister of the Interior Vít Rakušan, who said that cyberbullying, risky online dating, and online addictions are issues that must be addressed. “That is why I also appreciate the E-Safety project, not only for the topics it tackles, but also for the human approach it chooses,” he said. (map)



## Ivo Jirásek awarded for his contribution to the philosophy of sport



Ivo Jirásek from the UP Faculty of Physical Culture has been awarded the Warren Fraleigh Distinguished Scholar Award by the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport. He received the award at the organisation’s 50th anniversary conference in Croatia, where he was also the keynote speaker for a lecture on hierophany and transcendence in sport, which will be published in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* in March 2024.

He learned in advance last year that he would receive the award for extraordinary contribution to the philosophy of sport

as the first ever laureate from Central and Eastern Europe. “I was quite surprised indeed, because I’ve more or less retreated from philosophy of sport; it used to be my main area of expertise, but my current publishing activities involve rather recreation and outdoor education. Moreover, I don’t think that I’ve made such an impact in this field. However, this prize is a motivating factor, and I’m not going to shut the door to the philosophy of sport, because it’s an interesting field, one worth pursuing,” says the professor from the Department of Recreation Studies and Leisure Studies. (vim)

## Anna Petráčková from the Faculty of Medicine wins the Werner von Siemens Award

The 2022 Werner von Siemens Award in the category Best Dissertation was awarded to Anna Petráčková from the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry (UP FMD) Department of Immunology for her work on research into new biomarkers and refinement of the analysis of existing ones, using new molecular techniques in haemato-oncological and autoimmune diseases. Research into biomarkers allows tailor-made treatment for patients. Petráčková's supervisor, Assoc Prof Eva Kriegová, was also awarded.

In her doctoral thesis, the young scientist summarised the results of nine orig-

inal papers based on the collaboration of Olomouc experts from the UP FMD and University Hospital Olomouc and bioinformaticians from the VSB – Technical University of Ostrava, who have discovered a number of biomarker candidates for these diseases that can improve patient care and adapt treatment procedures to the requirements of precision medicine.

“The award is a further motivation for me and an acknowledgement that the research I am involved in is of high quality and should be continued. I very much hope that this award will help me pursue my further goals,” said Petráčková. (vim)



## Czech Academic Games dominated by Palacký University

The twenty-first annual Czech Academic Games, the largest domestic university sporting event, was owned by Palacký University. Not only did UP take over the organisation of the games for the fourth time, but thanks to the performance of its contestants, it took first place overall.

Olomouc students won a total of 80 medals, 27 of them gold. More than half of them were won in swimming and fin swim-

ming, 11 medals were won by athletes, others were won in judo and archery. In team sports, men's football players took gold medals, while women's volleyball, floorball, and handball teams won silver medals. The most successful UP athlete was swimmer Barbora Janíčková, who won seven individual races and three more as a member of relays.

“The games went very well, thanks to the perfect organisation of all events and

favourable weather. We were able to see outstanding sporting performances of students who are involved in their sports at the top or competitive level, as well as those of hobby athletes, but who often contributed to the success of their teams. Thank you all for your participation,” said Vítězslav Prukner from the Faculty of Physical Culture, on behalf of the organisers. (vim)



success



## New professors at Palacký University

Among the ninety new professors who received their appointment decrees from Czech President Petr Pavel during the June ceremony in the Carolinum in Prague, there were five experts working at Palacký University.

Three of the newly appointed professors are employed at the UP Faculty of Science. Petr Barták, an analytical chemist, is engaged in research and development of in-

novative methods for qualitative and quantitative analysis of organic substances. Pavel Pospíšil has been appointed professor in Biophysics, focusing on free oxygen radicals formed in plant and animal cells. Vladimír Remes has long been engaged in the ecology, ethology, and evolutionary biology of birds, especially songbirds.

Kamil Kopecký from the UP Faculty of Education was also appointed profes-

sor, as an acclaimed expert in information and communication technologies in education, online safety, and media education. The last of the five new professors is Radek Vodička from the Department of Medical Genetics at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and University Hospital Olomouc, whose research in applied molecular genetics focuses on the human genome. (vim)

## CATRIN scientists help protect Europe from potato contagion



Protecting European potato production from certain diseases, in particular the insect-transferred disease “zebra chip”, which has already been devastating crops, especially in South America, is the main objective of the European project PATAFEST under the Horizon Europe RIA programme. Since June 2023, 18 partners from academia and commerce have been working together. The only domestic representative in the consortium is UP CATRIN.

“The aim of the project is to prepare Europe for the possible emergence of a quar-

antine disease called ‘zebra chip’, which, particularly in the Americas, significantly reduces potato production, negatively affects the visual quality of the tubers, and prevents their sale. Our joint task is to develop a strategy to monitor the occurrence and symptoms of this disease, as well as of other known post-harvest diseases in Europe, and to develop technologies that can protect potatoes from these,” said Nuria De Diego, head of the Olomouc research team. The European Union will support the four-year research with roughly €10 million. (srd)

## Palacký University hosted Aurora, the European university alliance

For the first time ever, rectors and other representatives of all the Aurora partner universities met in Olomouc. During the three-day Aurora Olomouc Biannual 2023 meeting, the representatives focused mainly on their common direction in the future. “Thanks to successful completion of the pilot phase, the alliance has been evaluated positively by

the European Commission and has secured funding for the next four years. Our common goal in the period ahead is to further deepen university collaboration and bring new opportunities to our students and staff at a time when education in Europe is rapidly changing,” said Michal Malacka, UP Vice-Rector for Strategy and Regional Af-

fairs. The meeting also addressed key issues such as sustainability, which was discussed in a separate panel, and inclusivity in higher education. During the meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to facilitate the sharing of infrastructure and resources, and also a Multilateral Aurora Mobility Agreement. (mz)

## Virtual reality can aid burn treatment

Patients with burn trauma could better manage the pain and anxiety of dressing changes with a non-pharmacological approach: virtual reality. This has been confirmed by the results of a European study, in which psychologists from the UP Faculty of Arts participated.

3D glasses for use with a specially developed application called Cold River were tested on a group of selected patients with burn trauma to make them focus on something other than pain during dressing. The sixty selected patients who underwent the study subjectively experienced significantly less pain and anxiety, in some cases by as much as forty percent. “Although we had in-

dications that it is possible to influence pain and anxiety using virtual reality, until now we lacked adequate data from burn trauma patients in the Czech environment to make such a claim. No one before us had paid attention to the effect of what we call presence, immersion, and interactivity,” said Jan Šmahaj from the Department of Psychology at the UP Faculty of Arts. Discussions about its further use have been opened. The research was done in collaboration with experts from the Second Faculty of Medicine at Charles University in Prague, doctors and medical staff from University Hospital Královské Vinohrady, and experts from the SPACE company. (map)



## Faculty of Law accredited to award the degree of Associate Professor in EU Law

Great news for the UP Faculty of Law came from the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education. The faculty has received accreditation for the habilitation procedure in European Union Law. Until now, it could only award the title of Associate Professor in Civil Law.

The Board of the National Accreditation Bureau granted the faculty accreditation for the habilitation procedure

in European Union Law for a period of five years, the second field in which the faculty has received such authorisation. “European Union Law has always been a strong field at our faculty; it has sufficient staff resources to grant the title, which should further contribute to the improvement of education and research in European Union Law at UP,” said Michael Kohajda, Vice-Dean for Doctoral

Studies, Qualification Proceedings, and Finance, adding that the faculty’s management plans to apply for the same status in other fields, too.

The restored Olomouc Faculty of Law received its first accreditation for habilitation in 2014 in Civil Law. In 2019, it was granted this accreditation again, for ten years, along with accreditation to appoint professors in the same field. (eha)

## Lukáš Novák of the Faculty of Theology receives the Derrida Prize

Lukáš Novák, a student of the doctoral programme Social and Spiritual Determinants of Health at the Sts Cyril and Methodius

Faculty of Theology, received the Jacques Derrida Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities. It is one of the honours that the

Embassy of France in the Czech Republic awards to support the best young scientists from Czech universities and research institutions.

Novák’s work “Social Emotions and Social Cognition: Brain and Behavioural Correlates” was evaluated as the third best. “I entered the contest with a project aiming to identify brain regions related to the experience of compassion. More specifically, my colleagues and I were interested in what happens in people’s brains when they feel compassion towards another person. We were also interested in the effect of injury to certain parts of the brain on the experience of this emotion, which motivates us to sacrifice time, effort, and sometimes even vast amounts of resources to help someone in trouble,” said the doctoral student, who feels encouraged by the award to continue his research activities. (per)



# UP opened unique space: Envelopa Hub

Closer cooperation between institutions and firms, faster implementation of research results into practice, and a place for new projects – Envelopa Hub, opened by UP in Olomouc, offers all of these. A modern building with an atypical “green” façade has risen up in proximity to the UP Faculties of Law and Science and the dormitories. It serves as the UP Centre for Innovation and Transfer Technologies, offering at the same time facilities for firms aimed at optics, healthcare, new materials, and information technology, among others. The public will also be able to use the space for co-working.

“Olomouc has lacked something like this... until now. It is good that it is our university which has built a space for realising innovative ideas from which our entire society may benefit,” said UP Rector Martin Procházka at the opening ceremony.

The new building substantially expands the facilities of the UP Science and Tech-

nology Park (UP STP). The Centre for Innovation and Transfer Technology should become a place where academia meets practice. “It’s great that we’ve been able to create a modern space connecting the university, region, city, state administration, and the business sector,” said Petr Kubečka, UP STP Director. He added that the university wants to facilitate the transfer of its experts’ research results into practice, i.e. cooperation with institutions and firms located in the new premises.

The modern five-storey building makes an immediate impression with its vertical garden façade, consisting of nearly 18,000 plants. It offers 35 offices and labs, 2 outdoor atriums, 2 electric vehicle charging stations, and 50 parking spaces. At the heart of the new facility is Element, a modern co-working space for sharing experience, expertise, and innovative ideas. It can be used by students, entrepreneurs, and

companies. Twenty-eight 24-hour-access work spaces are available for lease, and regular events will be open to the public, such as talks and workshops.

The building is also the headquarters of the Digi2Health Digital Innovation Hub, which connects UP, University Hospital Olomouc, and the Innovation Centre of the Olomouc Region. Its purpose is to open new possibilities for small and medium-sized companies to use digital tools and innovations, and by doing so, strengthen their competitiveness and contribute to the development of the healthcare sector.

Envelopa Hub also serves for popularising science. UP’s Fort Science has expanded its activities there by opening the new UP\_LAB. Visitors can acquaint themselves with modern educational technologies such as 3D printers, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, robots, and programming modules.





## photo reportage

photos: Jakub Čermák

### Visit of the President

Czech President Petr Pavel visited Palacký University with First Lady Eva Pavlová. He began his two-day visit to the Olomouc Region by a debate with students in the jam-packed auditorium of the Faculty of Arts. Pavlová visited Fort Science, where she took part in the grand opening of the Faculty of Law's Centre for Conflict Resolution and Mediation. (map)



doctor honoris causa

text: Milada Hronová  
photos: Jakub Čermák

# Jazz pianist and composer Emil Viklický receives honorary doctorate

Emil Viklický, a prominent Czech jazz pianist and composer, received the Doctor Honoris Causa degree at the Archbishop's Palace in Olomouc. On the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the establishment of Olomouc's university, he received its highest honour for his extraordinary merits and contributions to jazz.

Viklický is a remarkable personality on both the Czech and international music scenes of the 20th and 21st centuries. He received the honorary doctorate upon a proposal of the Scholarly Board of the UP Faculty of Education, which was confirmed by the UP Scholarly Board.

"Emil Viklický is one of our alumni whose names we mention with pride and respect, while basking in the rays of glory and success they have achieved in their careers through their efforts, skills, and diligence. This is especially true in the case of Mr Viklický, as he studied the natural sciences at Palacký University, not music – to which he has dedicated his life and thanks to which he has gained a worldwide reputation," said UP Rector Martin Procházka.

When Viklický studied numerical mathematics at the UP Faculty of Science, he was already fully immersed in music. Before he started his professional career as a jazz musician, he founded his own quartet *Musica Magica*, then the Jazz Sextet of Emil Viklický. He was also hired by the "Big-band" of Věroslav Mlčák, where he gained swing and big band music experience by playing at dancing lessons and balls. Dur-

ing his military service he played in the military art ensemble Pavel Bayerle's Orchestra, and in the early years of his professional career in various groups, for example in Karel Velebný's SHQ. Since jazz, along with other free-minded artistic expressions, was rather suppressed in the Czechoslovakia of the time, these experiences of his were crucial for the development of Czech jazz.

The laudation in honour of the laureate delivered by Vojtech Regec, Dean of the UP Faculty of Education, mentioned that the jazz rock band *Energit*, later called *Energit* of Luboš Andršt, also played a formative role in Viklický's career. It was in this group that Emil Viklický fully emerged as a distinctive soloist and composer.

In 1976, when he succeeded in the International Jazz Piano Competition in Lyon, and then in a composition competition in Monaco, he was offered a scholarship to Boston's prestigious Berklee College of Music. Before he left for the USA, however, he released his album *V Holomóci městě* [In the Town of Olomouc]. It won the 1979 Supraphon Prize and was hailed as "emphatic", "original", and "exciting".

Viklický's intensive artistic activities, as well as many years of cooperation with outstanding jazz musicians in the Czech Republic and abroad, have borne copious fruit – not only in the form of albums, but also in respect for Emil Viklický as a personality. Nevertheless, he never forgot that he had studied at the UP Faculty of Science and was always proud of his alma mater.



"It is so special and emotional for me to be on the premises of this university after so many years and at such a solemn moment for me. I gladly remember not only the time of my studies, but also some of the teachers," said Viklický in his doctoral address. Above all, he highly spoke of the Czech mathematician, composer, and choirmaster Miroslav Jiroušek, who supervised his thesis in algebra. "Determinants, and hence symmetric polynomials, were considered a dead end or a marginal direction at best in algebra in 1970. Prof Jiroušek, however, was of a different opinion. I remember the extremely interesting meetings at his house. Apart from mathematics, we talked about music, about Wagner, about his Tristan chord, and also about Schillinger's musical method. I defended my thesis successfully and was urged to study for a doctorate. I am sorry that he is no longer with us and that he cannot take part in this great honour for me," said the new honorary doctor from Palacký University, who also received a commemorative medal.

# Christoph Cardinal Schönborn receives honorary doctorate

Upon the proposal of the Scholarly Board of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology (CMFT), Palacký University Olomouc has awarded the honorary degree of Doctor Honoris Causa to one of the most important theologians of the late 20th and early 21st century, Archbishop of Vienna Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, who also contributed to the renewal of academic theological studies in the Czech Republic after 1989.

He received the honorary doctorate during a ceremony at the Archbishop's Palace in Olomouc, as part of the celebrations of this year's 450th anniversary of the foundation of university in Olomouc, from UP Rector Martin Procházka. "I am particularly pleased that Palacký University is awarding Christoph Cardinal Schönborn the title of Doctor Honoris Causa in the year in which we commemorate the 450th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Olomouc. After all, the origins of the second oldest university in the lands of the Bohemian Crown, as well as the continuity of higher learning in Olomouc over the centuries, are linked to learning in the field of

theology. Your Eminence, let me wish you much energy, health, and success in your future work," said the UP Rector.

Cardinal Schönborn was introduced to those present by UP CMFT Dean Vít Hušek, who emphasised especially his merits in the preparation of the new Catechism of the Catholic Church and highlighted his relations with Olomouc: the cardinal worked closely with the local Dominican Order and lectured at Olomouc's theological faculty in the past, and to this day is connected with it both professionally and through friendships.

Cardinal Schönborn appreciated the honorary degree as a very moving gesture, not only on a personal level, but also for the Czech Republic, Austria, and the Catholic Church in both countries. "Such an award is always also a commitment for the recipient and a bond between the donor and the recipient," he said at the beginning of his speech, dedicated to his personal and family history connected with the Czech Republic and especially the topic of freedom in the context of Czech-German relations in the past as well as in the context of current crises and wars.

"Why is Europe the destination of so many refugees today? There is no other reason than the one that drove my mother to flee with her two children to Austria in 1945. I am grateful to God with all my heart that today no one flees from a united Europe for the same reasons. I hope that we are all gratefully aware that such a situation in Europe should not be taken for granted. Therefore, I thank Olomouc's university from the bottom of my heart for the grand award of an honorary doctorate," he said, in closing.

By being awarded the honorary degree by UP, Cardinal Schönborn has joined the ranks of personalities such as Václav Havel, the former Czech and Czechoslovak President; Charles Merrill, UP benefactor and founder of a programme enabling Czech and Slovak students to study in the USA; chemist Antonín Holý; and Tomáš Cardinal Špidlík, who were awarded honorary doctorates by Palacký University after 1990 for their contributions to the development of science, culture, and other activities for the benefit of society and humanity.



popularisation  
of science



RESEARCHERS'  
NIGHT



# Czech European Researchers' Night: "Mystery" was the theme

text: Martin Višňa

photos: V. Duda, M. Višňa, A. Vymazalová, L. Blokša, O. Blahoušek

The popular Czech European Researchers' Night offered thousands of visitors the opportunity to peer into the "mystery" of many scientific fields and their practical applications, learn something, and also have fun. During the first Friday night in October, science enthusiasts had access not only to labs and classrooms, but also to an exciting programme of activities at all UP faculties, CATRIN, Fort Science, UP Library, UP workplaces, and University Hospital Olomouc. Various chemistry and physics experiments, quizzes, lectures, guided tours, film screenings, workshops, and games were on offer, as well as virtual trips to space and a fire show.

Revealing fragments of the "Mystery", the event's theme, was possible literally all throughout Olomouc. And beyond. For the first time, the College of Logistics in Přerov also took part in European Researchers' Night, interesting activities were prepared by the Geniátor (GeniusMaker) group in the cultural centre in Hlubočky, and a re-

cently declassified military bunker near Přáslavice was made open to the public.

This year's long night of the sciences was not to be missed for example by Pavla Mročková from Frýdek-Místek. She visited Fort Science, and the newly-opened Envelopa Hub building, among others. "My family has been coming to Researchers' Night for several years now. This year we especially liked the new UP\_LAB and the exhibition on vacuum pumps. It's cool how UP students are able to explain complex natural phenomena in a way kids can understand. We also liked taking pictures in front of the planet models," she divulged.

Violist Jakub Fodl, who went with his friends to the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, where they visited the Anatomical Museum, was also impressed. "We all agreed it was scarier than going to a haunted house. We made it through, but some of the exhibits were tough to look at," he laughed, adding that they had to make careful plans about what to see that night.

"Researchers' Night always goes by so fast!"

Martina Pálušová, who went with her son to the Faculty of Education, echoed his words. "The only negative which Researchers' Night has is that it's too short and nobody can see it all," she said. Her son Nikola added that this was his sixth time.

The individual stations were packed until the last minute, sometimes even after the official closing hours. According to the event coordinator, Ondřej Martínek of the UP Marketing Division, Czech European Researchers' Night attracted 10,000 people, the most since 2011, the first year UP participated.

The popular science event Czech European Researchers' Night was initiated by the European Commission in 2005 with the goal of showing the public that science is not boring, and that researchers in scientific institutions are doing work which benefits us all. For more info, visit [www.nocvedcu.cz/en](http://www.nocvedcu.cz/en).





## Destination: Olomouc. An invitation to alumni

Memories, the joy of meeting again, and a curiosity for what's new. Alumni Day in September took place in this spirit, held by the university on the occasion of its 450th jubilee. Hundreds of former students from throughout the country and from abroad came together in the city.

The registration stand in front of UPoint on Olomouc's Upper Square was eyed by groups of excited people long before its official opening at 9 am on 9 September. The university was on display directly on the town square. In addition to the spot in front of UPoint, it also "served" a relaxation zone in front of the Town Hall at the Arion Fountain. University deck chairs beckoned on-lookers looking to relax on the hot sunny day, and their blue and white colours could not be missed. Everyone appreciated the coinciding of Alumni Day with European Heritage Days, which had a rich programme in

the city, and many alumni planned a visit to their alma mater as a family outing.

But the focus of alumni interest was on the university – above all, touring the places they studied. They could go to the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, where their knowledgeable guide was Dean Milan Kolář himself; to the Faculty of Science, where they could attend the christening of the UP Experimental Brewery; and to the Faculty of Arts. The latter prepared an extremely special day for twelve alumni whom it lauded for furthering the good name of the faculty. During Alumni Day two silver graduations took place: at the Faculties of Law and Science.

Alumni Day also offered a pub quiz, and the evening culminated in a concert by the HB Band in Jazz Tibet Club. Even its close was symbolic, for band members included UP alumni.



text: Ivana Pustějovská, Egon Havrlant  
photos: Jakub Čermák

interview

A man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, is walking on a paved path in a park. The background is filled with trees with yellow and orange autumn leaves. The man is looking towards the camera with a slight smile.

**Michal Malacka on Czech society: Once more, we are looking for someone else to take care of us**

Remember the riddles from your fairy tales? We have an upgraded version... guess who we interviewed! He writes fairy tales, but he's not an author. He's able to listen and give counsel, but he's not a therapist. He often thinks about terrorism, but he's not a terrorist. Who is he? He is Michal Malacka, a man of many interests and professions: a lawyer, teacher, and UP Vice-Rector for Strategy and Regional Affairs. And also a record holder. For "MM" became one of the youngest deans in the Western world a few years back. It was 2001, and he was twenty-eight when he was made Dean of the Faculty of Law. And just as he did not think about age limits, nor has he let himself be restrained by other limits – geopolitical or professional. He has studied in Olomouc, Austria, and the USA, and worked in Switzerland. He is the co-author of books on international terrorism and international trade, and he spends a lot of time thinking about the world, the university, about where we are going – and where we could go, if we tried.

— We're living in strange times. We watch the attacks by Americans on their own symbol of democracy, the Capitol, and we see a group of "Czechoslovaks" who deny the existence of our republic, cutting up their ID cards. Are we prepared for such manifestations by anti-establishment movements – do we have a strong enough rule of law in our country?

I believe that an education-oriented society should have its sort of reflection in the spiral of history. We should be aware that everything we are experiencing now has happened here before. But they didn't just cut ID cards, other forms were used. We've had the Roman Empire, which broke apart on the same scheme, the same social and economic platform that we have now. We ought to maybe stop and think about whether from our cultural and historical experience, we're not going pell-mell down that slippery slope again.

— Is Czech society an education-oriented society?

Yes, mostly. It's partly lacking in terms of investment, but yes, we in the Czech Republic are a knowledge-oriented society, with the majority of necessary prerequisites. But how many people know or care about the difference between an education-oriented society and an educated society...? I think I'm more concerned about the level of our society's education. Let's take a look at election results, for example. We can already get a clear idea, just according to how many people were willing to go to

the polls. That's number one. Then when we analyse the motives for why they went to the polls, we get another answer. Recent elections, in my opinion, show that we are a society interested in democracy, interested in what is happening here, but at the same time, we are unable to counter populism. We are a society which is not literate enough to resist various populist and negative constructs.

We're not alone in this inability to confront populism. We see it in Central Europe, and the EU is experiencing it now when they say Russia is waging a hybrid war.

In my opinion, populism can be divided into two consumerist frameworks. One is protest. We're hearing the vox populi of those who define themselves in opposition to the current "ruling elite". The second is pure consumerism. We buy the promises the populists make, which are completely non-constructive. I see a much greater danger there – with Slovakia, Hungary, and even our country as typical examples.

— One part of your work is connected with the German-speaking countries. You also have a degree from Graz, and you are an arbitrator at the Chamber of Commerce in Vienna. Though we are a part of Europe, sometimes it seems that we are more enchanted by the Anglo-American world, as if we had forgotten the world of our close neighbours. What's your opinion?

I don't think that we should be particularly enchanted by the United States. But as a society, we had a huge, forty-year gap – when we didn't really take care of ourselves. To put it in an ugly way: we were sheep and didn't care who sheared us. So now we're looking for a shepherd once again, someone else to take care of us. In my opinion, nearly every second person thinks someone else will take care of things for them. Maybe that is why we look up to those super-successful global models. But we don't realise the "B" there. That adopting some model is not enough. That a lot of hard work is required in order to prosper.

— How has the German-speaking environment influenced you personally and what is its influence on you today?

I've definitely been influenced, in the sense that I perceive how the people there know what to expect when they work, and what to expect when they do nothing. In Austria, I experience what I do not here – the signs of global contentment, calm, faith in the future. When I'm walking the streets of Vienna, I see people who are at ease, who know what awaits them. They are sure that they



**Michal Malacka (b. 1973)**

Lawyer, university teacher, UP Vice-Rector for Strategy and Regional Affairs. A graduate of the UP Faculty of Law, which he later headed as dean. He studied law in Austria and political science in the USA, with internships in other countries. He is an expert in private international law and its related branches. He is an arbitrator and mediator at the Vienna Chamber of Commerce and an arbitrator at the Arbitration Court of the Czech Chamber of Commerce and the Arbitration Court attached to the Agricultural Chamber of the Czech Republic in Prague. He is a member of the Czech Bar Association. Michal Malacka is the author or co-author of monographs on the subjects of terrorism, international purchase of goods, and mediation.

will not be surprised by some economic or social sucker punch – neither from the left, nor from the right – because their country has a certain historic developmental and economic lineage, and it is socially “just” in the literal sense of the word. I don’t see very many people like that on our streets, and that’s not good. It’s a great shame that we are still a nation of complainers. At the same time, we have no reason to be, because from the economic and social points of view, we’re doing better than we ever have at any time in our history. I find the dissatisfaction of many people, looking to completely blame someone else for their misery, often incomprehensible. For when you talk to them, you will find that, in reality, they’re actually doing fine. In fact, they’re even happy, unless they have the misfortune to be suffering from health problems or some catastrophe in their personal lives.

— How does it look to the Swiss when a Czech lawyer shows up as mediator? How do they perceive us?

Switzerland is just fine with that; in many ways, it is closer to the competitive Anglo-American environment. When you show them that you know your job, they accept you, because they’re all about success. As far as Austria is concerned, we’re closer to them in nature, it’s enough to get over that first step, the language barrier. Germany is more complicated, because first we must determine whether we are speaking to the former eastern part, or the western part... In the East, we find a number of complainers similar to ours, unwilling to make a positive sacrifice and do something for themselves. Many are waiting for the government to support them, even at a cost of others having to pay for it. That’s like here. The German West sees us this way. That’s a pity, because we’re better in many things. I think we’ve shown that historically, many times, if we really want something, we’re very skilful and capable.

— You’re also involved at the university in thinking about the world. You’re active in the Aurora European University Alliance, which brings together several European schools. Thanks to Aurora, staff and students are travelling for experience, teaching is expanding, students have access to teachers from multiple countries via online platforms, etc.

In my opinion, Aurora is a lovely, beneficial project, because it doesn’t force anyone to do anything; it offers. It’s about the “constructive freedom” I love so much. To be part of such an alliance is also a huge motivation for our university. It has three members ranked among the top 200 universities

in the world. And since Aurora, based on its previous record, has again been granted several years of support from the European Commission, Olomouc now has the opportunity and time to gradually get closer to our partners. That is a huge motivation, and a challenge.

— It is quite beneficial sometimes to get out of your comfort zone and go abroad to gain experience. But that’s something you know well, isn’t it?

I think that you can see from my life that when a person studies in two or three countries, then they have a completely different perspective, and the only thing that can irritate them is human envy and stupidity, because everything else can be dealt with somehow. I wish others would see the light and understand that Aurora is no battle cruiser; it’s a shining star, not only in the EU, but also on the global level, one that can improve us. We’re sharing knowledge, experience, opportunities. We’ve already shown that they cannot consider us “a university from the former Eastern Bloc”. We’re partners. We have something to offer Europe... and the world.

— We’ve spoken about our skilfulness... what kind of skills does it take to be a good lawyer? You teach law students...

It’s complicated in the Czech environment. I see a good lawyer as someone who has a huge theoretical foundation, but at the same time, practical experience. They have to be able to connect theoretical knowledge to how the law, which is on paper, is projected into people’s lives, and how it affects them. In comparison to some foreign systems, where a person becomes a good lawyer only after some practical experience, I consider that as a certain deficit in the academic environment here.

— In other words, a lawyer has to mature as a person as well. What about the lawyers we see in American films, fulminating in the courtroom – have you ever considered that kind of law?

There is a huge gulf between the activity and service of a lawyer in our legal environment and that which we see on the screen. By the way, the TV version by no means reflects the reality in the USA. In the American system, a lawyer gradually climbs the branches of the legal tree. First, they complete part of their service in the public and private sectors, and only after do they have the possibility of becoming a judge. Here it is different. At the age of twenty-six you choose your field and after-

wards your professional profile does not change. I think the professional “spiral” is much better, when you gradually gain experience until your legal palette is complete. So no, I would not want to be a lawyer like in films. But real advocacy continues to attract me.

— Why do I have the feeling that sometimes the law is not the ultimate victor, but rather the person who knows best how to take advantage of its weak points?

This is a question of the perception of the law versus what the law actually is. If we see the law as a set of rules, and lawyers as those who know them and are able to work positively within the legal environment in order to benefit society and each individual, then life would be better than when thinking “laws are bad and lawyers are there to bamboozle us”. Every lawyer has both a legal and an ethical framework in which they operate. They need to harmonise them, and know the limits of how far they can go. Sure, just like in other fields, there are lawyers who prioritise profit. But there also exist pro bono firms, those who help people without economic might. So there is a choice. It’s a shame that people are not informed about where to look for help.

— Good and evil accompany you outside your profession: I’m referring to the fact that you write fairy tales. How did a lawyer become a storyteller?

By chance. Every night since my daughter was three, I’ve been telling her a different bedtime story. We recorded the best ones. It’s strange when I come home sometimes and hear my own voice bellow from the bedroom and my daughter is either adding something to it, or contradicting it, making a funny kind of fusion. The stories were always original, both in terms of the characters and the plots. I told Lucie for example a story about a gardener who raised flowers that had different powers. When a person sniffed one, they started laughing; another one could tell whether someone was telling the truth or lying. They could be used perfectly to save the princess from the princes who didn’t really love her, because all the princes had to sniff the second one in order to see whether they were telling the truth. And in the end... the gardener turned out to be “he of true heart”. And because that made papa king so sad, they gave him the first flower, which made him laugh.

— We could use those flowers... and not just at the university! I’m working on it.

# Tribute to Prof Jaroslav Peprník



Minister of Education Mikuláš Bek awarded his department's highest honour, Medal First Class, to Prof Jaroslav Peprník. The award's laureate, the prominent Czech philologist, linguist, American studies scholar, and university professor, works at the UP Faculty of Arts Department of English and American Studies.

"I am extremely honoured to present this medal to the Czech legend of English and American Studies. I congratulate you not only for this award, but also for all the students you have taught, and for the respect of the academic community – these are priceless," Bek said during the ceremony.

"I appreciate this medal very much; it is an extraordinary honour for me. On one hand, I accept it somewhat bashfully; on the other hand, I understand it as a symbolic honour for all teachers of English, and as a tribute to the university which has made such a lovely work environment for me – during a tenure nearly as long as that which the late Elizabeth II enjoyed," said Prof Peprník. In his acceptance speech, he also remembered UP Rector Emeritus Josef Jařab, who passed away this year. "It's a real pity that Josef Jařab, one of my first students, is not with us today."

Jaroslav Peprník (b. 1927) began studying history and English at Masaryk University Brno, despite having never taken a single class in English previously. His studies at secondary school were interrupted by World War II, when he and all his classmates were sent as forced labour to the aviation factory in Bučovice, when he began to learn English on his own. He has worked at the UP Faculty of Arts since 1954, though during the "Normalisation" period, he was not allowed to teach, due to his democratic opinions.

"Thanks to my longevity, I have been able to be active in three areas. The first is teaching, the second is textbook writing, and the third has been marked by gathering materials on the history of Czech contacts with English-speaking countries. During all this time, I have been lucky to have had such friendly and inspiring colleagues," the laureate added.

In his thank-you speech, he emphasised his respect not only for the supportive environment of his family, but also for those who liberated the country from communism. "I'm glad that I could spend the last third of my life without fear, in freedom – both the freedom of speech, and the freedom to travel," said Prof Peprník.

Prof Jaroslav Peprník accepted the medal at the ceremonial event held in the UP Rector's Office from Education Minister Mikuláš Bek, with Rector Martin Procházka, UP FA Dean Jan Stejskal, and other guests in attendance.

## Gala night in Manhattan: alumni, partners and diplomats celebrated our jubilee

The beauty of the Olomouc city and region, exchange programmes for students and academicians, cooperation with US partners and more was presented by Palacký University in the Czech Center in New York. UP also celebrated its 450th anniversary in the Bohemian National Hall in Manhattan. “We presented our university in the context of traditional European educational institutions that not only draw from their rich history, but also contribute to today’s society and to the future through education, research, and innovation,” said Rector Martin Procházka. Around one hundred and fifty guests from both the USA and the Czech Republic attended the gala evening, featuring a piano recital by David Kalhous. Among the guests was the famous UP graduate, Dr Bohdan Pomahač. (Pictured with UP Rector Martin Procházka.) (eg)



## The City of Ostrava Prize in memoriam for Josef Jařab



Prof Josef Jařab, the first post-communist UP rector, who died this spring at the age of 85, was awarded The City of Ostrava Prize in memoriam for his extraordinary contribution to the development of the city in politics, science, culture, and sport. Jařab lived in Ostrava for two decades, taught at the VSB – Technical University Ostrava, worked briefly at the local steelworks, and in the 1960s organised Student Fridays attended by hundreds of young people. The award was received by his partner Ingeborg Fialová. (vim)

## State decorations for UP personalities

Czech President Petr Pavel awarded several dozen personalities with state decorations on the national holiday, 28 October. Among the laureates was Dina Štěrbová, a teacher, mathematician, and mountaineer who worked at the UP Faculty of Science for almost thirty years. President Pavel awarded her the Medal of Merit for service to the republic in sports. In memoriam, two UP Faculty of Arts graduates, Rector Emeritus Josef Jařab and diplomat Martin Povejšil, also received Medals of Merit for their services in the field of state and citizen security. (ipu)



## kaleidoscope

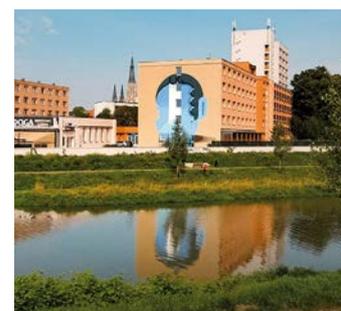
### New doctors and associate professors

In the auditorium of the Faculty of Education, students of doctoral programmes at UP ceremoniously concluded their studies. Fifty graduates took the oath and received diplomas confirming their PhD degrees during two graduation ceremonies. At the same time, UP Rector Martin Procházka handed appointment decrees to the new associate professors, including Lucie Brulíková from the Department of Organic Chemistry (FS), Hana Studentová from the Department of Oncology (FMD) and University Hospital Olomouc, and Martin Stašek from the Department of Surgery I (FMD) and UHO. (vim)



### Palacký the Great

A seventeen-metre-high mural commemorating František Palacký can be seen on the UP campus in Envelopa. The large-scale graffiti mural representing a stylised face of the personality whose name the university bears in its modern history was created during this year’s Street Art Festival. Its author is painter Zbyněk Linhart. (ipu)



# A month in Indonesia: Unusual diagnoses and relatives sleeping in patients' rooms

“If I had ever wanted to see and experience something before graduation which I would probably never encounter here, I can say I’ve done that now. At the same time, I appreciate our healthcare system all the more.” That’s how UP med student Matěj Šňupárek summed up his month-long internship in the university hospital in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, which he and several fellow students completed thanks to the partnership between UP and Universitas Gadjah Mada.

He chose to intern in Neurology, the field in which he feels most confident and is considering after graduation. His female supervisor is a specialist in neuromuscular disorders and neurogenetics, Dr Indra Sari Harahap.

“I encountered diagnoses I wouldn’t see at home. Frequent examples were tuberculous myelitis, an extremely rare complication here; and super-refractory status epilepticus, when a person has seizures for longer than 24 hours, despite treatment. I saw a number of patients with spinal muscular dystrophy, which can arise from a mutation in one of two specific genes. I also recollect a patient who had a combination of both gene mutations, though she had no se-

rious symptoms,” said the med student. His supervisor was glad to hear that in the Czech Republic neonatal screening focuses on this disease, for which gene therapy is available.

The university hospital where he interned is similarly equipped as University Hospital Olomouc, in his opinion. “But differences can be seen in the approach of the personnel and in the care the patient receives. For example, I was surprised how inconsistent the sterilisation procedures are prior to surgery, which is later reflected in how often patients have serious post-op complications and infections, and then have to take a lot of antibiotics,” Šňupárek explained.

“On the other hand, it was nice to see how important a role the patient’s relatives play in their care. Indonesians accompany their loved ones to their examinations, and stay in the hospital with them as psychological support, and in some cases as intermediaries between the patient and the doctor. They sleep in the same room, on the floor at the patient’s bed,” the student described, who also experienced how even the hospital environment reflects the country’s Islamic faith and associated lower status of women. “This was rather the experience of my fe-

male classmates. Nevertheless, when I tried to communicate with the young female doctors there, I could feel their nervousness, they did not believe that they were worthy enough to advise or consult with me.”

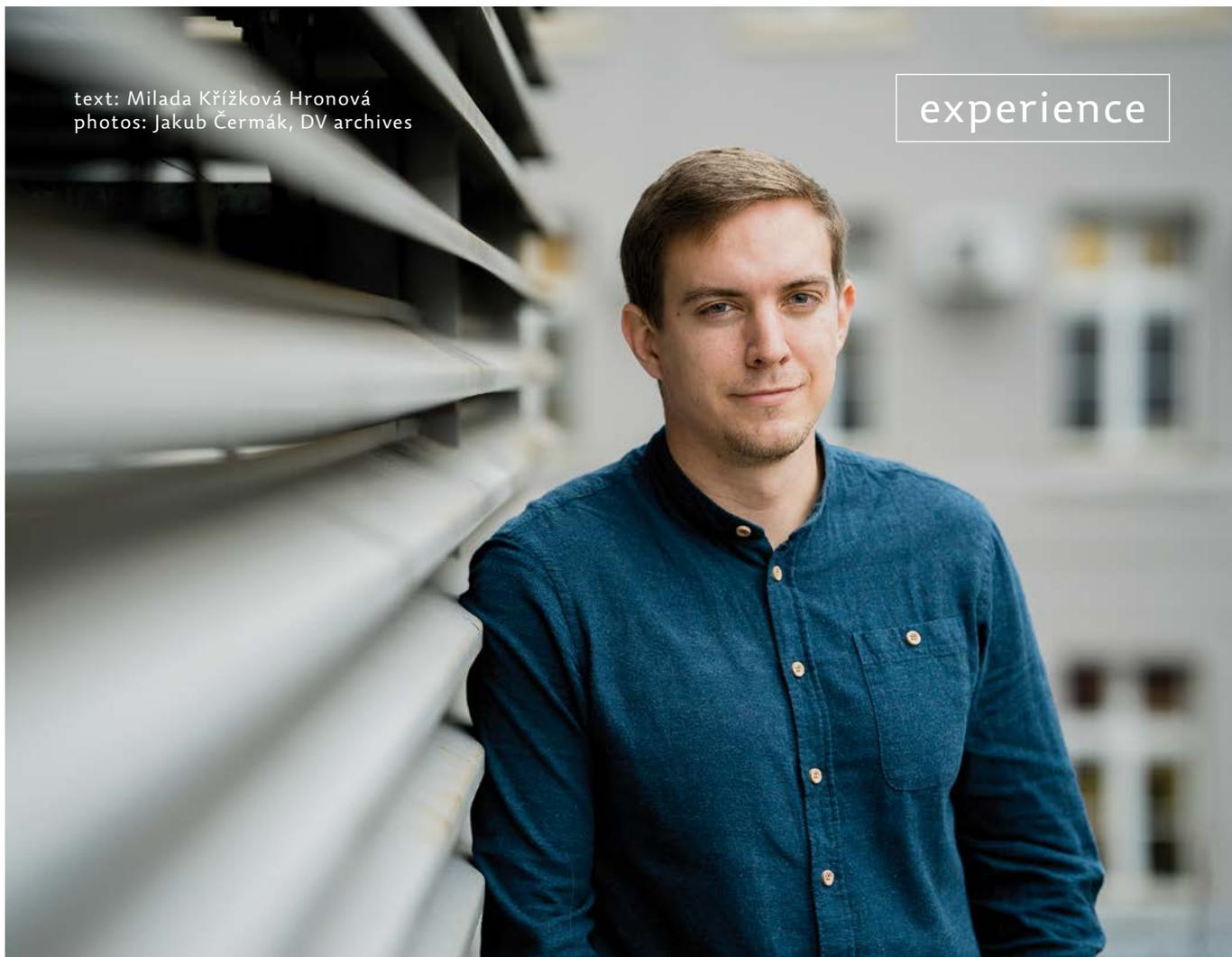
He got to experience Indonesia not only as an intern. They were able to take several trips to the local landmarks and volcanoes around Yogyakarta. And they attracted the attention of the locals. “I don’t know if it’s true, but I heard it brings good luck to take a selfie with a white person. We were often stopped in the street to get a photo with us, we got a lot of looks. But we felt safe there, I never had the feeling I was being threatened. We also stood out due to our height,” Šňupárek laughed.

He didn’t have many problems during his temporary stay on Java. Before travelling, he had to undergo a series of required vaccinations, but the administration of his internship went smoothly. “We didn’t spend much on accommodation and transportation there; even though we took taxis, they were relatively cheap. We spent the most money on food, because we didn’t want to eat only basic dishes, like fried rice,” he concluded.



text: Milada Křížková Hronová  
photos: Jakub Čermák, DV archives

experience



# The most meaningful holiday I've ever had

Getting up every day at 4 am, hours of meditation, completely breaking contact with the outside world, and suppressing all longings and desires. Dominik Voráč, a doctoral student at the UP Faculty of Education, lived the life of an ascetic for ten days in a Buddhist temple in Thailand.

He said the main reason why he travelled to the Thai temple was meditation. “Although I’ve been thinking about such a trip since secondary school, up until now I’ve only meditated at home. And that wasn’t quite it,” admitted Voráč. He would stick to it for one or two months, and then give up.

“Meditation takes motivation and discipline,” says the 29-year-old PhD student in Reading and Media Education at the UP

Faculty of Education. A teacher of Czech and Social Sciences, he’s focussing his doctoral studies on a very topical field in today’s society: media education and digital technologies.

“In that respect, the ten-day stay in a Buddhist temple was a thought-provoking experience. Although I teach about social networks and how they influence us, I have to admit that I’m addicted to them, too. So it was interesting to hand over all electronics upon entrance and try to see what it’s like to completely unplug yourself for 10 days. After a few days, it is a really strange feeling to not know what’s happening online. Not knowing if someone wrote to me on Messenger, Instagram, or texted me. →

## **Dominik Voráč** (b. 1994)

teaches at the UP FE Department of Czech Language and Literature; he is also a doctoral student at UP FE in the programme Reading and Media in Education. He is the author of manuals on media education and a lecturer in media literacy, as well as the author of the project Media Education in the 21st Century. He is a member of the UP Academic Senate.

What is even more strange and liberating, is the knowledge that during those days, nothing did actually happen.”

Dominik decided on the trip to the Buddhist temple in January 2023. He had been thinking about it for a decade but made his decision quite suddenly. The timing was right. His life was full of accumulated stress: at work, in his studies, in his personal life. The day came when he said to himself, “Time to take care of me.”

“I’m not the kind of person who hurls myself into new situations and environments. But this time it was a completely spontaneous act. I made up my mind, and inside a fortnight I was on a plane to Bangkok, and from there another 10-hour train journey to the temple. There were about 80 of us, from all over the world. And what awaited me there? A stone bed, a wooden pillow, and two meals a day: 8:30 am rice

pudding, 8:30 pm rice with tofu. The daily regimen? Meditation.”

Every morning at 4 am, being woken by the bell; every morning at 4:30 am, meditation: concentrating on one’s breathing.

“I meditated eight or nine hours a day, sometimes sitting, sometimes walking. You do not speak to anyone; you are on your own, focusing inward,” he said, describing the reality of the ten long days, and adding that more interesting thoughts arise once a person limits their needs. “However, it’s essential for you to begin to notice them more, be aware of them.... You can also learn how to better free yourself from some of them. During those ten days, I experienced a few powerful moments which I would call spiritual experiences in which at first, I felt pain, but later, great relaxation, freedom, and happiness.”

He adds that the path of searching and self-discovery is not for everyone. “But if a person has this need, and enough motivation, such a stay will take them much further. Immediately after I left the temple, I felt incredible gratitude. For everything. I now perceive to a much greater extent just how important gratitude is in one’s life. I became more aware that the corner of the world I live in is one of plenty, where all my needs are met. If I were to speak of the stay like a holiday, I’d say that it was the most meaningful one I have ever had. I learned how to meditate. I now meditate more, and think that it has significantly increased my knowledge and abilities. I’m convinced that it is good for us to have a lot to learn, and sometimes even suffer a little. Only in this way can we find abundance, whether in the world around us or in the world within us.”



text: Milada Křížková Hronová  
photos: Viktor Čehovský, ZL archives

alumna

# Zdeňka Lammelová: Euroculture connects





**Zdeňka Lammelová (b. 1980)**

She graduated from the Charles University Faculty of Humanities in Prague in sociology, and the Euroculture programme at the UP Faculty of Arts and Universidad de Deusto in Bilbao. She has worked for Czech Centres, in the Arts and Theatre Institute in Prague, and has managed various artistic and cultural projects. She coordinated the Democracy programme in the Prague office of Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. Her areas of interest are proactive policy education; social innovation; empowering women, minorities, and citizens' initiatives; sustainable urban development; and fair shared cities. She is a consultant for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. She is an amateur photographer and interested in eco-somatic art and dance.

An international environment, an abundance of personal stories, mutual exchanges of experience, learning in which you are constantly involved, and lots of shared experiences. Today Zdeňka Lammelová, a Euroculture alumna, looks back upon all this with gratitude. She studied in this Master's programme, a joint degree in the prestigious EU Erasmus Mundus group of study programmes, at Palacký University and Universidad de Deusto Bilbao.

Already during her Bachelor's studies at the Charles University Faculty of Humanities, she went to Australia for half a year to improve her English. When she was thinking about what to do after graduation, she got excited by a friend's tip. She heard that in Olomouc, an interesting field had opened up: Euroculture.

"Not only the content of the programme but also its international aspect appealed to me. I was thrilled that part of the study would take me abroad," said Lammelová. And with the passage of time, she's still convinced that the field of study gave her not only a good springboard into life, but also the capability to ask questions and to look at problems as a challenge.

The Euroculture follow-up Master's programme is a unique study programme with European accreditation. It combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills, whereas its foundation is the international environment created by students from all over the world. It already has a quarter-century of tradition at UP and Zdeňka Lammelová was one of the first students to graduate from it.

"I'm part of the generation of students who had to read the faculty bulletin boards during their Bachelor's studies in order to find an opportunity to study abroad. It was before our country joined the EU, before we had Erasmus, so such opportunities were quite limited. At that time, under certain conditions, you could only travel to the USA, Canada, or Germany. I remember well the thirst students had to see and experience things on studies abroad. The Euroculture programme offered me all that."

Euroculture's content was also something close to her heart. She was able to study politics, history, themes connected to Europe, culture, and art. "Our fifteen-member group was made up of students from all over the world. We had students with Bachelor's degrees in media, communications, history, law – there

were future teachers, too, even an economist. Today, I recognise this mix of fields as being hugely beneficial. Our society needs professionals in specialised fields, but it also needs people who are capable of synthesis. The world is becoming more connected and complex, and so are the contemporary problems we must solve as a society," she adds.

The first semester took place at Palacký University, the second in Spain at what is today Universidad de Deusto Bilbao, and the third semester was spent in Prague in the press department of Czech Centres, who promote Czech culture abroad. Her Master's thesis was on minority art – Roma art: both how the Roma minority in the Czech republic is perceived through the visual arts, and how this minority is depicted by artists outside that minority. It was the international environment, the abundance of stories, mutual exchanges of experience, and shared experiences which Zdeňka Lammelová sees as most beneficial.

"The approach to students, the teaching style which constantly involved us in something, our debates, our presentations, they have all stuck with me to this day. We also worked in groups, and the more of us there were, the more challenging the work became. I remember situations when we were supposed to work on a project in a five-member group, but two students weren't participating, it wasn't working out. When we told our teacher, she said we had to handle the situation on our own. A person had to learn how to cooperate and resolve various difficult situations – which can happen a lot when you are abroad, in an international environment," said the graduate of the Olomouc Faculty of Arts, who worked as the Democracy programme coordinator in the Prague office of Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

"And though I have been shaped to a large extent by other work, my studies were a great impulse in understanding European values. Euroculture students are special in that they are able to process the context. These are people who are able to deal with a topic from multiple perspectives. They are also well-equipped for working in an international environment. In that respect, as the world becomes more complicated and divided, I think it is very much in need of such people. They can help in finding common ground among groups with different opinions."

text: Martin Višňa  
photos: Martin Višňa | Vojtěch Duda

lifestyle



## František Palacký Grove: To mark volunteering

Support for volunteering at UP has been given a new dimension. For the first time ever, an Employee Volunteer Day was held, prepared by UP together with the Olomouc Region. On the occasion of Arbour Day, volunteers from both institutions planted more than 1,700 trees at František Palacký Grove near the villages of Mírov and Mutkov. They also helped to prepare the Flora Olomouc Exhibition Centre and the Olomouc Zoo for the winter season, and contributed to the upcoming opening of a community garden at the Svatý Kopeček Hospice. Foreign students also took part in planting trees near the university dormitories.

At the beginning, the idea was to plant trees in honour of František Palacký as part of the celebrations of the 450th anniversary of Olomouc's university. The idea eventually grew into a volunteer day involving two hundred employees of Palacký University and the Regional Authority of the Olomouc Region.

"We were looking for volunteering opportunities that would contribute to im-

proving the environment in which we live and work. At the same time, we wanted these activities to be team-oriented, so that volunteers would work and travel together and have the opportunity to get to know their colleagues. Some working groups conceived the event as teambuilding," said Vladimíra Sedláčková, manager of the UP Volunteering Centre.

She was glad that the idea appealed to the university staff and that it worked out. "The moment we announced the event I started receiving nice feedback. And it made me even happier to see the volunteers returning from their mission and getting off the buses with big smiles; most of them told me on the spot that they wanted to take part again next time. They came back feeling they had done something for their community and themselves, and that they had gotten to really know some of their colleagues. In the days following, several participants sent me a message saying that their backs were aching but that it was worth it."



# Physics helps in aquatic therapy: UP Endowment Fund in research

Eliška Vodáková, a student of the doctoral programme in Kinanthropology at the UP Faculty of Physical Culture, swims competitively and even teaches swimming, and as she says, when something bothers her, she jumps into the water to calm her head. And not only that: as part of her PhD research, she is studying the effect of aquatic therapy on gross motor skills and spasticity in children with physical disabilities. She would like to contribute to better awareness about the methods and possibilities of this therapy in the Czech Republic. Her research was supported by the UP Endowment Fund.

The beneficial effects of water on the human body have been known since time immemorial. Water stays can be used not only for relaxation but also for rehabilitation. Eliška Vodáková got acquainted with aquatic therapy as a form of rehabilitation when she was looking for suitable activities as a swimming instructor, for example for children with quadriplegia. After completing an international course with practical sessions in Malta and Ireland, she became an aquatic therapist.

“The therapy in an aquatic environment uses the physical laws and properties of wa-

ter. The buoyancy makes movement easier than on dry land and puts less strain on the joints; the higher temperature of the water also has a positive effect, helping to reduce spasticity and to relax muscles. There are several approaches in aquatic therapy taking into account different diagnoses, however the basic principle is always that the practitioner focuses on a single client. Therapy with children is playful, using lots of toys and diverse tools,” she explained.

As part of her research, she observes changes in the gross motor skills of children with physical disabilities aged 6–7, who are trained by her in the water for three months. “The assumption is that if the child improves during that time with their movements in the water, where it is easier for them to exercise, they will also improve when moving on dry land. My goal is to process ten case studies, but it is not easy to find children for the research,” noted Vodáková, adding that according to foreign studies, children with cerebral palsy can develop motor skills the most until the age of seven. She found suitable conditions for these exercises at the swimming pools in Bohuňovice, Přerov, and at the BALUO

Application Centre at the UP Faculty of Physical Education.

The research focused on aquatic therapy also interested the members of the Board of Trustees of the UP Endowment Fund, which supported the work of nine UP students this year. “I couldn’t have done the research without the support of the fund. With the funds provided, I can pay for pool rentals and pay the physiotherapists who assist me. I was also able to attend a conference in Scotland where I presented the interim results of the research.”

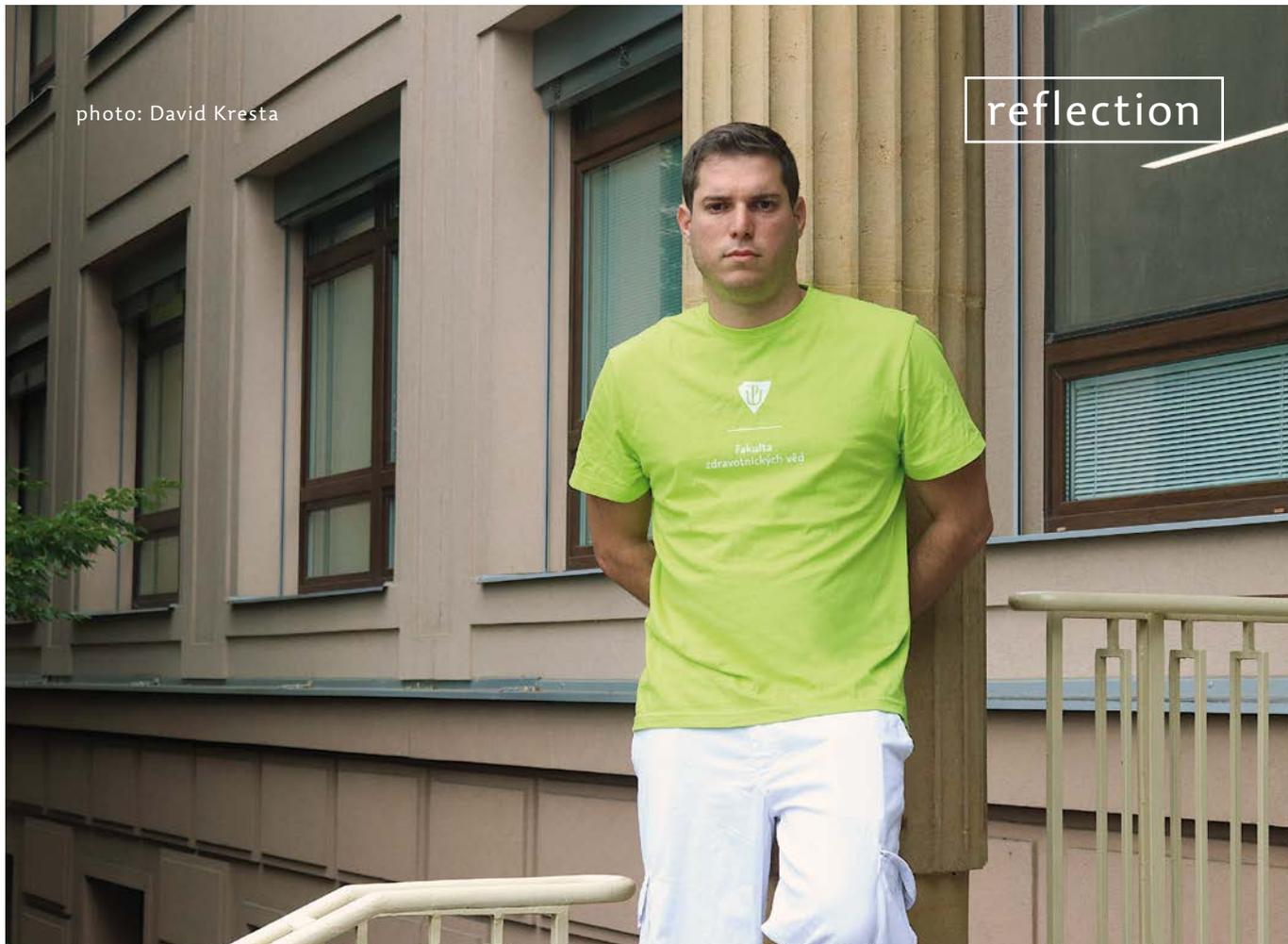
The concept of the UP Endowment Fund appeals to the PhD student. “It’s a way for us students to achieve our goals, while making our work more visible. What is also great is the support in the form of opportunities for further education and personal development,” concluded Vodáková, who also works with people with disabilities and disadvantages outside the water – both as a consultant of applied movement activities for students in the Olomouc region and as an enrolment coordinator at the UP Support Centre for Students with Special Needs.

ENDOWMENT  
FUND



photo: David Kresta

reflection



### Ariel Sherman (b. 1991)

comes from Haifa. He has been living in the Czech Republic since 2018. He studied General Medicine at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry from 2019 to 2022. Then he decided to change his field of study, and since September 2023 has been continuing as a 2nd year student of the Physiotherapy programme in English at the UP Faculty of Health Sciences.

קוראים לי אריאל, אני סטודנט ישראלי, במקור מחיפה. אני גר באולומוץ מספטמבר 2018, וזאת, חד משמעית אחת החוויות הטובות ביותר בחיי.

בהתחלה, זה היה קשה להתרגל לשפה ולמנהגים הזרים, אבל תחת השגחתה של דוקטור גאול, ראשת החוג לפיזיותרפיה בשפה האנגלית, ועם התמיכה של חברי הישראליים מתן ועילי – המעבר היה חלק.

התחלתי ללמוד רפואה כללית, כאן באוניברסיטת פלצקי, אבל לאחר זמן מסוים החלטתי לעבור ללימודי פיזיותרפיה.

השינוי ללימודי פיזיותרפיה עמד בכל הציפיות שלי והתיישר עם המטרות שאני רוצה להשיג.

למרות שאני מתגעגע לים, לאוכל והכי חשוב – לשפה העברית, אולומוץ נהפכה להיות לבית שני בשבילי.

כשזמנים טובים יותר יגיעו, אני ממליץ בחום לכל מי שיכול, לבקר במדינת ישראל היפה, היא מלאה בהיסטוריה, תרבות ואוכל מצוין.

*My name is Ariel. I am an Israeli student from Haifa. I've been living in Olomouc since September 2018, and it's undeniably one of the best experiences of my life so far.*

*The beginnings were challenging, though. I had to get used to a foreign language as well as an environment characterised with different customs. Thanks to the support of Dr Gaul Aláčová, who is the supervisor of the Physiotherapy programme in English, and the help of my two Israeli friends, Matan and Illay, I've adapted myself to the new situation, and it's been an amazing journey.*

*Originally, I started studying General Medicine at UP, but after some time I decided to shift my focus to Physiotherapy. I never regretted this decision. My new chosen field has exceeded my expectations and perfectly suits my vision and the goals I want to achieve in life.*

*Even though I miss the sea, the food, and especially the Hebrew language, Olomouc has become a true second home for me. When better times return, I highly recommend everyone to visit Israel, a beautiful country with a rich history, culture, and delicious cuisine.*

# All events obey laws

## Prof Vladimír Úlehla

The establishment of the Palacký University Faculty of Education on 9 April 1946 brought its first dean, Prof Vladimír Úlehla, PhD, to Olomouc, just after his tenure as dean of the Masaryk University Faculty of Science in Brno. Thus the re-established university could add this outstanding plant physiologist, ethnologist, philosopher, and prolific publicist of Brno provenance to its list of founders. When Vladimír Úlehla was asked why, at the age of nearly sixty, he would sacrifice his successful scientific career for a tiring and thankless academic desk job, he answered, “Because I am my father’s son.”

### War and Science

Vladimír Úlehla’s father was Josef Úlehla (1852–1933), a famous Moravian teacher, a follower of the educational concepts of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and Count Leo Tolstoy (Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, 1828–1910), and he was often transferred as a punishment during the era of the Habsburg monarchy. Although Vladimír Úlehla was born in Vienna on 16 July 1888, thanks to his father’s various teaching “gigs”, he got to know a number of places in Moravia during his youth. He graduated in 1907 from Strážnice in Moravia, where his musical talent found expression in the local folklore environment. Afterwards, he went to the Charles University Faculty of Arts in Prague, where he also studied natural sciences. Working as lab assistant to plant physiologist Bohumil Němec determined his lifelong professional orientation. He received his PhD in natural sciences on 25 June 1911 in Strasbourg, and completed another study stay in Leipzig. After entering wartime military service, Lt V. Úlehla, commander of an ambulance squad, was sentenced in April 1915 to two years in military prison, and was stripped of all his civil and military ranks for “pan-Slavism and fraternising with Russian prisoners”. He was imprisoned until October 1916; later he fought on the French and Italian fronts, and after rehabilitation by the court he went back to the Charles University Faculty of Arts to get a degree in philosophy. During the Czech coup in October 1918, he commanded the

military garrison in Hodonín and was briefly a member of the Czechoslovak Army staff.

### Biologist and ethnographer

Vladimír Úlehla was made associate professor at the end of 1920, in the following year was appointed acting professor, and in 1931 full professor of plant physiology at the Plant Physiology Institute at Masaryk University. He undertook a number of natural science expeditions and study stays, the longest being to the USA from 1924–1926. He won extraordinary acclaim as a scientist, including as a co-inventor and promoter of time-lapse documentary films on plants. Úlehla was just as nimble in his interest in folk music and dance. Not only did he collect folk songs in the ethnographic microregion of Hornácko, initiating the Strážnice International Folk Festivals, but in 1932 he produced and co-directed the feature-length ethnographic film *Mizející svět – Příběh lásky z moravsko-slovenského pomezí* (Vanishing World – A Love Story from the Moravian-Slovakian Border). However, he overestimated the cultural literacy of the film-going public of the day and went into debt, so he was forced to take on a second job as the science editor of the *Lidové Noviny* daily newspaper – writing 1139 articles and reports popularising research in the natural sciences.

He also devoted himself to ecology and philosophy, especially during the years of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. Úlehla’s folklore opus magnum was also in the making – the comprehensive *Živá píseň* (Living Song) folk song collection, published posthumously in 1949 (rptd 2008). Úlehla’s book-length works on natural science include *Rok s rostlinami* (A Plant Annual, 1941) – to name but one. As a natural science philosopher, Vladimír Úlehla inclined toward conditionalism – which “leads to mathematical understanding of all events. For the concept ‘condition’ can be identified with the mathematical expression ‘factor’. Events are then parsed into factors, which are functionally related to each other as variables in a mathematical equation.” Furthermore: “... natural science would cease to be a science if

it abandoned its basic principle, which is the idea that all events obey laws. It will be the task of further development in physical theory to underpin scientific belief in the general regularity of events and place it on a more secure foundation.” Úlehla’s passion for landscape ecology resulted in the publication *Napojme prameny. O utrpení našich lesů* (Let’s Water the Springs. On the Suffering of Our Forests, 1944).

### At Palacký University

The newly founded Palacký University Olomouc Faculty of Education had 49 teachers and 110 students. Prof Vladimír Úlehla introduced himself to the teachers as the authorised dean of the faculty at a meeting on 7 November 1946. At the same time, he initiated the creation of the Biennial of Natural Sciences at the UP Faculty of Arts, and the establishment of the General Biology Department at the Institute of Biology at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. Vladimír Úlehla’s earthly existence came to a sudden end due to a malignant disease on 3 July 1947 in Brno, despite an intricate operation to save his life. His obituary in *Nature* (the journal published continuously in Great Britain since 1869) on 25 October 1947 stated: “His original contributions to science relate mainly to a study of protoplasmic movement in lower organisms, and the influence of various ions on cells and their protoplasm. The borderline of plant and animal life, and the infusoria especially, interested him and he made some physico-chemical investigations on plant colloids and on turgor [turgidity, usually due to absorption of fluids resulting in pressure of cells or tissues – eds.]. Úlehla also wrote two books in Czech of a philosophical nature, ‘Reflexions on Life’ [*Zamyšlení nad životem: Úvod do teoretické biologie* – Reflexions on Life: Introduction to Theoretical Biology, 1939, rptd. several times – eds.] and ‘Beyond the Veil’ [*Za oponou života: Domněnky o podstatě života* – Beyond the Veil of Life: Assumptions on the Basis of Life, 1940 – eds.].” A collective monograph dedicated to the life and work of Vladimír Úlehla, edited by his nephew Ivan Úlehla, was published by Masaryk University in 1994.



photo: Vojtěch Duda

Country, truth, conscience, freedom... The Milada Horáková Library at the Faculty of Law is newly decorated with a piece by academic sculptor Otmar Oliva. Unveiling the JUDr. Milada Horáková Memorial took place during Remembrance Day of the Victims of the Communist Regime, on the anniversary of her execution. The core of the work is a needle-shaped stela of red onyx, around which are wound her words on bronze bands: "I stood the test of my conscience... and maintained my good name..." The work is crowned by the figure of a lion (the Czech national symbol) breaking the bars of a cage.

A detailed historical painting of a city square, likely Olomouc, featuring a large church with two prominent spires, a central stone tower, and a large crowd of people in 17th-century attire. The scene is set under a blue sky with clouds. In the foreground, there is a large stone sculpture with a red cloth draped over it.

# 450

450 years of Palacký University

genius up