

Prague January 17th 1950

Dear Sir,

On Prof. Pražák's request I have copied in the enclosed letter the questionnaire we sent last year to the World Biography in New York.

Now I have in hand your letter in which you speak about a biographical sketch I think prof. Pražák's information very dry and saying nothing about his great and rich personality.

I made up my mind to add a few words about him, although he would hardly agree to my doing that. He has been my family's friend for many years and I am doing occasionally secretarial work for him and helping him with foreign correspondence.

Professor Albert Pražák devoted all his life to assiduous work. Unusually productive he wrote a vast variety of books /about 60, by now) and studies /about 700/. To live means to work for him. He is a man of a powerful intellect and of immense learning. His knowledge embraces all the contemporary literature of the world as well as that of the past. He devoted himself to the history of Czech and Slovak literature. He is of an exuberant vitality, overflowing with initiative ideas. His power of memory is wonderful. He is a thorough master of the Czech language and a magnificent speaker. His lectures enjoy great popularity and are fascinating not only for experts but for the public at large as well. He is full of life and sparkling with wit. The charm of his personality makes gather round him his colleagues and collaborators, he is loved and esteemed by everybody he meets. In character he is modest and unassuming and of a most kindly disposition, devoted to the education of students and always ready to give advice and help.

His father was a gardener in the services of Prince Thurn-Taxis and was an expert in his branch. He died young and left his wife with 6 children. All of them were very gifted, all were studying and all did very well in life. /Pražák's brother Frank was twice in U.S.A. and wrote books about his stay there, especially about the American child/ Pražák took a vivid interest in literature since his school-years at the grammar school and in his 20th year began to write critical studies for prominent Czech periodicals. He became acquainted with our great poet Vrchlický whose lectures at the University he attended and although so young became his collaborator and his friend. This friendship meant much for his development. Among his other University teachers T.G. Masaryk exercised a great influence on him and showed him the way to new methods in work and new conceptions. His first great essay was about Vrchlický (1903). When taking his degree as doctor of philosophy he was awarded a prize for his written work about Neruda /1906/. When teaching at Grammar schools he continued studying and writing, His work was interrupted by the Great War. He took it up again in 1919. When he was appointed professor at the new University in Bratislava /capital of Slovakia/ he took - being a great organiser - took part in building up this university in the organisation of scientific life, of the Slavonic branch of studies. He was the founder of scientific societies and periodicals. He also gives foundation to the scientific literary research in Slovakia. During his stay in Slovakia he devoted himself to the study of Slovak Literature but after his return to Prague /Charles University/ he took up the study of Czech Literature, as well. As you may see from the list of his books his great love is the period of the Czech national revival. He is approaching his 70th year in full possession of his forces, is an active professor at the University, is writing, lecturing, leading the Slavonic institute and the Institute for Czech Literature.

I may say a few words about the May Revolution. How happy we were when we heard that Prof. Pražák was the President of the Czech National Council. With what ~~xxx~~ feeling of relief and joy we were listening to this news from the radio. And how we trembled for his life. The Council ~~was-changing-~~ had to transfer its dwelling from house to house while the Germans were bombarding and shooting. After the Revolution Pražák laid down his function returning to his task of professor and writer.

My letter has turned out longer than I intended and may be I am taking up too much of your time. But it has been a pleasure for me to give you a piece of information about Prof. Pražák whom I highly esteem and love and who did not tell you in a sufficient way about himself what he is to us Czechs.

I should be very obliged if you could ~~have~~ let me have a copy of your paper when the sketch is published there. May be it would give me the impulse to learn Spanish, I do not know this beautiful language, but many of my copatriots are learning it now.

I am, Dear Sir, yours very truly

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