
NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

VÁCLAV PŘÍHODA, 1889–1979

Václav Příhoda, the Czech educational reformer, psychologist, and teacher, died in Prague on November 18, 1979. He was ninety. His personal dynamism and clear thinking indelibly impressed all who knew him. It was Příhoda, more than anyone else, who introduced the teaching profession of the interwar Czechoslovak Republic to advanced American ideas in psychology, curriculum design, and school organization. These ideas stimulated a movement for educational modernization which Příhoda led in the decade before World War II and briefly after it.

Příhoda was born in Sány, near Poděbrady, on September 7, 1889, one of ten children. After studying philology at the Czech University in Prague, he taught languages in secondary schools, but then turned to pedagogy under the influence of František Krejčí, Otakar Chlup, and other academic positivists. In the 1920s he visited the United States, where he took courses at the Universities of Chicago and Wisconsin and at Columbia University with John Dewey, Franklin H. Giddings, and Edward Lee Thorndike. Impressed by these men, especially Thorndike, he returned to Czechoslovakia an apostle of the elective system, the unified school, textbook revision, standardized testing and measurement, and democratic school organization. He advocated that religion be removed from public education, that instruction be systematized, and that schools imbue democratic ideals by precept and example. Later in life he conceded his excessive enthusiasm for his beliefs, but he never abandoned them.

In the twenties and thirties Příhoda taught in Prague at the School for Higher Pedagogical Studies, the Pedagogical Academy, and Charles University, where he attained the rank of full professor in 1945. After his *Habilitationsschrift* was published in 1924 as *Psychologie a hygiena, zkoušky*, he went on to produce over four hundred articles, brochures, and books. During World War II, under the Nazi occupation, he helped an underground teachers' movement to plan for postwar educational reforms, but his hopes were dashed when the Soviet school model was imposed instead. His criticism of Minister of Education Zdeněk Nejedlý on this issue led to the closing of his university seminar in pedagogy in 1951 and his transfer to the department of psychology, where he served until retirement in 1960.

On a visit to the United States in 1924, Příhoda met and married Melissa Clark, an American artist, who became his devoted companion till her death in 1977. Well into his eighties Příhoda exhibited great mental and physical energy. He bicycled thirty-five miles daily, took Turkish baths regularly, and guided visitors on brisk walks through his beloved Prague. The fourth and final volume of his most ambitious work, *Ontogeneze lidské psychiky*, appeared in 1974, and he revised earlier volumes published in the 1960s for second editions. Thereafter he completed a book-length manuscript describing his experiences as a teacher, and, until the onset of blindness at eighty-eight, was writing his memoirs.

A foe of dogmatism, a zealous teacher, a warm friend, Václav Příhoda was an extraordinary man.

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JAN MARINUS MEIJER, 1923–1980

Jan Marinus Meijer, professor of Russian philology and literature at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands, died in Amsterdam on April 22, 1980, after a long and bravely endured illness.