

95TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK OPHTHALMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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SUMMARY

After the end of the First World War, the most important event in the history of our country was the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918. Professor Deyl repeatedly spoke about the need to establish a Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society. Only his successor, Professor O. Lešer implemented Deyl's idea and, in agreement with the Heads of the Bratislava and Brno Departments of Ophthalmology, convened the opening General Meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society on 3 April 1926, in the auditorium of the Czech Department of Ophthalmology, with the participation of 37 ophthalmologists. Not all Czechoslovak ophthalmologists were present at this first meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society; their number can be estimated at about 55 in 1926. Immediately after the founding of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society in 1926, a Yearbook of congress works began to be published in the same year, every year until 1932 – a total of 7 volumes. By the decision of the General Meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society, held on 15 May 1933, the publication of congress works was built on a new basis. The current form of the collection was abandoned and the Czechoslovak Ophthalmology periodical journal was founded. In 1954, the Slovak branch of the ophthalmological section of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society was founded, which quickly developed its activities and biannually organised very successful and scientifically valuable congresses with rich participation and discussion. The name of the organisation: "Slovak branch of the Ophthalmological Section of the Czechoslovak Medical Society of J. E. Purkyně" was chosen. In 1969, under the Federalisation Act, medical societies were reorganised; the Czech and Slovak Ophthalmological Society was established. The Federal Committee has since consisted of the Chairs and Secretaries of the two National Committees, who take turns in the leadership of the Federal Committee during their term of office. After the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the name of the journal changed. Until 1994 it had been published under the name Czechoslovak Ophthalmology, and from 1995 the name was changed to Czech and Slovak Ophthalmology. The first issue was published in February 1995, the continuity of the journal and the numbering have been preserved.

Key words: Czech Ophthalmological Society, Slovak Ophthalmological Society, journal Czech and Slovak Ophthalmology, history

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After the end of World War I, the most important event in the history of our country was the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918. In his article – 40 years of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society [1] – Vejvodský writes the following: "... healthcare underwent major development, because, in addition to the University of Prague, the University of Bratislava was established in 1919 and the University of Brno in 1920. Eye Clinics were of course also opened at both universities; in Bratislava, Prof. Dr Roman Kadlický became the Head, and in Brno Prof. Dr Bohuslav Slavík was Head, both of whom had been students of Prof. Deyl. New hospitals were gradually built, new Eye Departments opened in large cities, new staff numbers grew, and the small number of ophthalmologists, that

at the time of Austria-Hungary could have been counted on the fingers, grew rapidly."

Jan Deyl (1855–1924) is considered as the founder of the Czechoslovak School of Ophthalmology [2,3,4]. On 16 August 1899, Deyl was appointed Associate Professor, and in 1902 Deyl became Head of the Czech Eye Clinic, and was appointed as full Professor on 24 August 1902. (Figure 1) [5]. Deyl's charitable activities are extensive: on 17 March 1910, Deyl opened the Czech Institute for the Blind on Maltézské náměstí, which was later named after him. He made a significant financial contribution to the purchase of the building. He founded the Deylův obzor journal for the blind in 1917 [6].

Deyl spoke repeatedly about the need to establish a Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society. This was based

on the following idea: "To group Czechoslovak ophthalmologists into a scientific and professional association that would look after the development of Ophthalmology in our country through the use of the press and words. A new path to deeper education opened up and an independent forum was built in our scientific life [7]."

Vejdovský [1] says the following regarding the establishment of our Society: "Deyl was preparing for its establishment, but he did not live to see it come to fruition, as he died prematurely on 16 February 1924. Only his successor, Prof. Dr O. Lešer (Figure 2) [8] implemented Deyl's idea and, in agreement with the heads of the Bratislava and Brno Clinics, convened the constituent General Meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society on 3 April 1926 in the lecture room of the Czech Eye Clinic (now the 1st Eye Clinic in Prague). The meeting was convened by Prof. Lešer, with the participation of 37 ophthalmologists (Figure 3) [7].

"The motion to establish the Society was unanimously and enthusiastically adopted. Prof. Lešer was elected as Chairman, Prof. Kadlický as the first Vice-Chairman (Figure 4) [9], Prof. Slavík was the second Vice-Chairman (Figure 5) [10], and MUDr Bruckner from the Prague Eye Clinic was elected as Managing Director. At 14:00 that afternoon, the scientific programme for establishing the Society was launched; 11 conveyances were presented. In the evening at 20:00 there was a friendly meeting at Hotel Gráf; the scientific programme continued on Sunday – 20 conveyances were presented. The Zeiss company from Jena organised an exhibition of ophthalmic devices."

Vejdovský [1] further states: "Not all Czechoslovak

ophthalmologists, whose number can be estimated at about 55 in 1926, were present at this first meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society. The photograph immortalises 37 participants in the inaugural meeting (including six women), 17 of whom were still alive in 1966."

We learn the following from Kurz's [7] conveyance: "Scientific life developed in the young Society in a calm flow, but it usually bore fruit at Annual Meetings, which were a display of year-round hard work. They took place alternately on an irregular rotation in all three university cities of the time, with the exception of the 11th Annual Congress, which was held in 1936 in Moravská Ostrava and Opava.

"In mid-January 1931, Vejdvovský, then still Head of the Eye Clinics of the Olomouc Provincial Hospital, organised a meeting of ophthalmologists from Haná and the surrounding area, which included fine scientific content. Thus, the time passed until 1938, when the 13th Congress of the Society was held in Prague in the stifling environment of the tense international situation. As the territory of our country crumbled, life melted before our eyes and only a small handful of us were left, and silence grew even in destitute offices."

Kurz [7] continues in his subsequent commentary: "After a long break of ten years, we met again at the beginning of October 1948 at the newly established 2nd Eye Clinic in Prague on the occasion of the 14th Congress of our Society. We painfully look over the sparse ranks of those who have never been absent from Annual Meetings before, but we rejoice in the refreshing influx of young staff from several work centres of new universities."



Figure 1. Prof. Dr Jan Deyl [5]



Figure 2. Prof. Dr O. Lešer [8]

In his article, Kurz describes the activities of the Society after World War II [7]: “As part of the activities of the Ophthalmological Society, regular working meetings have been taking place since 1946, and seminars are being held at the clinics – they also include valuable dis-

cussions, which are unfortunately not published – scientific research is deepening, and thematic activities are developing more and more. Close contact with practice is also not being neglected; in May 1946 and in June 1947, Vanýsek organised extraordinary working meetings of



Figure 3. Participants of the Csl. Ophthalmological Society Congress on 3.4.1926 at the Czech Eye Clinic [7]



Figure 4. Prof. Dr. Roman Kadlický [9]



Figure 5. Prof. Dr. B. Slavík [10]

the Society in Hradec Králové, which were rich in content, and less than a year later, Knobloch enabled a carefully prepared meeting in Pilsen, at which he demonstrated the programme of his clinic, and in early June 1950 Teissiger enabled a beautiful and very instructive meeting in Liberec. All of these activities deserve special recognition and full admiration, because our scientists are still – and perhaps more than ever – burdened with exhausting routine work, many burdensome responsibilities distract them, and they lack calm, without which any scientific work is difficult to do, which is also hindered by haste.”

Immediately after the founding of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society in 1926, the Anthology of Congress Works began to be published in the same year, and annually until 1932, amounting to a total of 7 volumes (Figure 6). Lešer was an excellent organiser who was in at the cradle of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society, of which he was the first Chairman, and he was also in at the birth of the Ophthalmological Anthology – works presented at ophthalmological congresses. In the article, Časopisy českých a slovenských očních lékařů (Journals of Czech and Slovak Ophthalmologists) [11], Řehák S., Řehák J. state: “If we monitor the content of individual conveyances, they mostly consist of case reports, summarising papers, evaluation of new treatment methods – there is a negligible amount of experimental and histological works. The composition of the speakers was also quite stereotypical throughout, with a few exceptions, two-thirds of which consisted of Clinic Heads or future heads of clinics, along with some senior consultants and important physicians.”

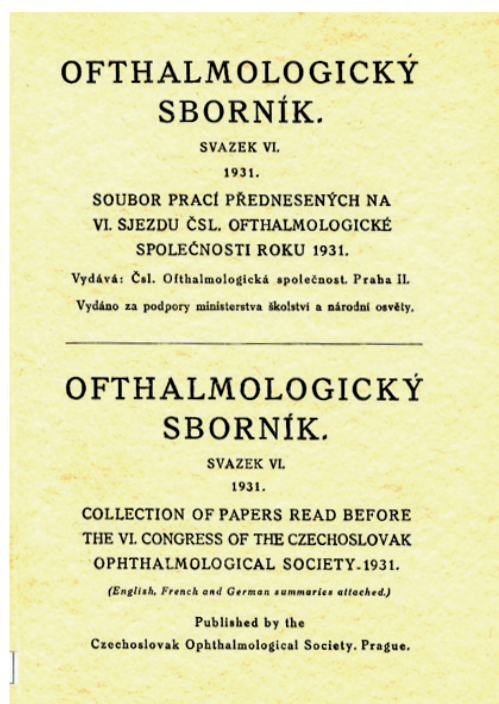


Figure 6. Yearbook of Congress Works, volume 6, 1931

Via the decision of the General Meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society, held on 15 May 1933, the publication of congress works was built on a new basis. The existing form of the anthology was abandoned, and the Czechoslovak Ophthalmology periodical was founded (Figure 7). The journal was published quarterly, every alternate year, i.e. it was published in 1933, 1935 and 1937, and it was numbered consecutively. “The Heads of the three Eye Clinics of the time, Kadlický, Slavík and Gala, were commissioned to publish and manage the journal, the Editor of which was Kurz. Its publication was interrupted by World War II – it was not published from 1938 to 1947. After a ten-year break, caused mainly by the Nazi occupation, the journal’s fourth edition was published in 1948. Published and managed by: Gala, Kurz, Slavík, editor Kurz [11].”

Certain selected reports on the activities of the Ophthalmological Society are subsequently presented, available in the Ophthalmological Anthologies and Czechoslovak Ophthalmology journals. The description of the meetings is literally quoted as they appear in the press – none of them has a specific author:

Prof. Dr. O. Lešer then ended the meeting of the 14th Section of the Congress (of the Ophthalmological Society), thanked all the present ladies and gentlemen for honouring the meeting with their presence, thanked all the lecturers and debaters and additionally welcomed Prof. Szymanski, who came from Vilnius to attend this Congress. “The lively debate on the various issues of Ophthalmology proves the importance and significance of these congresses. The growing interest of colleagues

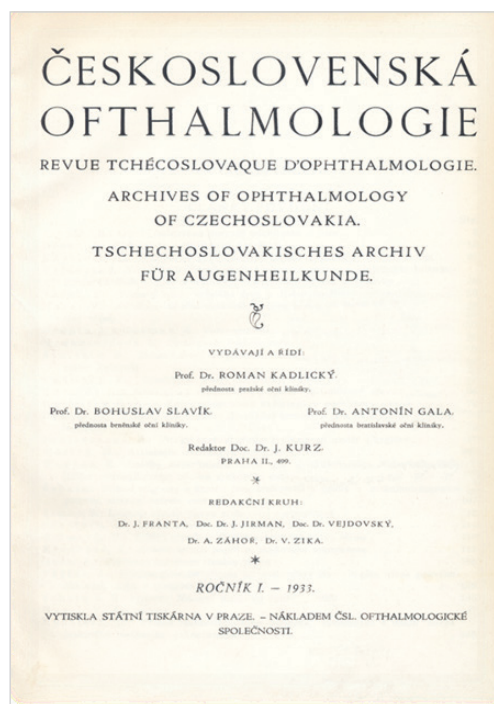


Figure 7. Archives of Ophthalmology of Czechoslovakia. 1933;1 – historically the first volume of the journal

in the congresses is proof of the need for the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society and is a promising sign for further congresses in the future. According to the resolution of the Committee of the Ophthalmological Society, 'Occupational Eye Disease' was chosen as the main topic for next year. I would like to cordially thank all of you again and I hope that we will all meet again next year at our Congress. See you next year [12]."

On 11 and 12 May 1935, the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society organised the 10th Annual Congress in the auditorium of the Eye Clinic in Bratislava.

Agenda: Saturday, 11 May at 16:00 – opening of the Congress by the Chairman of the Society Prof. Dr Kadlický. Two parts of the Meeting followed, with the first comprising 19 lectures and the second 14 lectures.

The Society Committee added a note in the Agenda: "The maximum time allowed for a lecture is 10 minutes, with 5 minutes for discussion and demonstration. We ask the lecturers to submit the presented works, typewritten and prepared for printing, together with the shortest possible summary in three copies, to the Society's Managing Director immediately after the lecture.

On behalf of the Society Committee,
Managing Director Doc. Kurz and Chairman Prof. Kadlický."

Sunday, 12 May at 08:00 – General Meeting: Reports of Officials, Editorial Report. Free proposals [13].

Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society. Meeting of 21 September 1947 at the 2nd Eye Clinic in Prague – chaired by Prof. Kurz.

1st conveyance: Assistant Exnerová demonstrates Marcus Gunn phenomenon in congenital ptosis.

2nd conveyance: Assistant Votočková, allergic manifestations after newer ophthalmic drugs – debate: Prof. Kurz, Doc. Jirman, prim. (Senior Consultant) Hynie, Dr Votočková.

3rd lecture: Assistant Klíma: some experiences with Anistine.

4th lecture: Dr Klenka: The phenomenon of the blue mask – debate: Prof. Diviš, Doc. Jirman, Prof. Kurz, Dr Klenka.

5th lecture: Senior Consultant Teissler: Contact lenses – debate: Prof. Kurz, Doc. Jirman, Doc. Michal, Senior Consultant Svoboda.

At the end of the meeting, Prof. Kurz reports on the latest preparations for the publication of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmology journal and explains the necessary economic measures, which, although tough, seem necessary for the time being. He also calls on his colleagues to support the journal, primarily by obtaining advertising or other financial support [14].

There is an Editorial Board notice to authors in the journal [15]: "In order to save space and the cost of the printing rate, it is necessary that the cited literature be mentioned only in abbreviations. Here are some examples of abbreviations: A. f. O.: Graefe's Archiv für Ophthalmologie; A d'O.: Archives d'Ophthalmologie; Am. J. of O.: American Journal of Ophthalmology; A. f. A.: Archiv für Augenheilkunde; A. of O.: Archives of Ophthalmology; Br. J. of O.: British Journal of Ophthalmology; Č. L. Č.: Journal of Czech Physicians; Čsl. O.: Czechoslovak Ophthalmology..."

The General Meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society was held on 3 October 1948 at 08:30 as part



Figure 8. Prof. Dr J. Kurz [8]



Figure 9. Prof. Dr A. Gala [20]

of the 14th Annual Congress in Prague. It was opened by Prof. Slavík in recognition of the activities of the deceased Chairman of the Society, Prof. Kadlický. All members who left our ranks during the administrative period since the last General Meeting of the Society in 1938 were also mentioned. The number of active members of the Society was 198 (117 in Bohemia, 43 in Moravia and 38 in Slovakia). Prof. Kurz reported on the renewed scientific activities of the Society in 1946, changed mainly in that working meetings are now held at two-monthly intervals in Prague. He always invites all colleagues, particularly those outside Prague, to these meetings on the first Friday of every even month at 18:30. These meetings are often attended by a significant number of colleagues. In addition to the Prague evenings, there was a working meeting in Hradec Králové in 1947 and in Pilsen in 1948. He also mentioned the screening effect of the Society's Action Committee. The event was successfully completed, and no one amongst the members of the Society was found to have transgressed so much that the Action Committee would submit a motion to have them expelled from membership in the Society. The Society received donations of 5650 Czechoslovak crowns, which were acknowledged with thanks and, following the decision of the Committee, were allocated to the pressing needs of the Society. He also reported on the action of the Czechoslovak Optics Association, concerning efforts to improve the professional level of their status. At several meetings with departmental authorities, these requirements of opticians were supported, particularly their efforts to have the optical field recognised as a licensed trade, to emphasise the need for the professional

manufacture and individual adaptation of glasses, and the importance of the professional technical training of youth in the optical sphere. After hearing all the reports, the General Meeting gave approval to the Committee, and a new Society Committee was elected by acclamation – Chairman: Prof. Kurz (Figure 8) [8], Vice-Chairman: Slavík, Gala, Managing Director: Michal [16].

The Society Committee met on 29 April 1949 [17]. Kurz provided information on the new situation that had arisen due to the reorganisation of the Association of Czech Physicians. The proposed Articles of Association were discussed, and comments were made regarding individual points. Given that the new Articles of Association of the Association of Czech Physicians had not yet been approved, it was recommended that individual companies not change their internal structure yet, but noting that it would be necessary to do so later. The number of members of the Society in 1949 (as of 6 September) is 204 (Bohemia 117, Moravia 47, Slovakia 40).

Report on the General Meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society in Bratislava on 8 October 1950.

"In order to register the members, it will be necessary to obtain a new catalogue of members of the Society. Therefore, the Managing Director suggests that everyone re-apply, and that membership be confirmed via ID cards. Member contribution is approved in the amount of 30 CSK. The Managing Director also reports on the issue of the reorganisation and incorporation of the Society into the supreme and unified Society of J. Ev. Purkyně. This incorporation is certainly to occur soon, and therefore the Managing Director submits that the Society consider whether or not to elect a new Committee. The General Meeting gave approval to the old Committee and decided via a vote that the current Committee will continue to function until the incorporation of the Society into a single top medical organisation. To this end, the Managing Director recommends that the Committee be refreshed by the co-optation of new Community members [18]."

Extraordinary General Meeting of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society on 27 April 1951 [27.14.1951] in the lecture room of the 2nd Eye Clinic in Prague.

"Kurz assessed the activities of the Society since the last General Meeting and justified the merger of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society with the Czechoslovak Medical Association of J. E. Purkyně, and it is to become its 11th section. The proposal that the assets of the Ophthalmological Society be transferred to the Czechoslovak Medical Society after its final establishment is unanimously accepted. Dr Šuster declares on behalf of Slovak ophthalmologists that he is not thinking of establishing a separate section for Slovakia. Elections of the Committee of the Ophthalmological Section of the Czechoslovak Medical Society of J. E. Purkyně – Chairman: Kurz, 1st Vice-Chairman: Gala, 2nd Vice-Chairman: Vejvodský, 3rd Vice-Chairman: Borovanská-Pexiderová, Managing Director: Klíma.

Kurz, Diensbier and Šuster were elected delegates to the Ophthalmology section at the inaugural meeting of

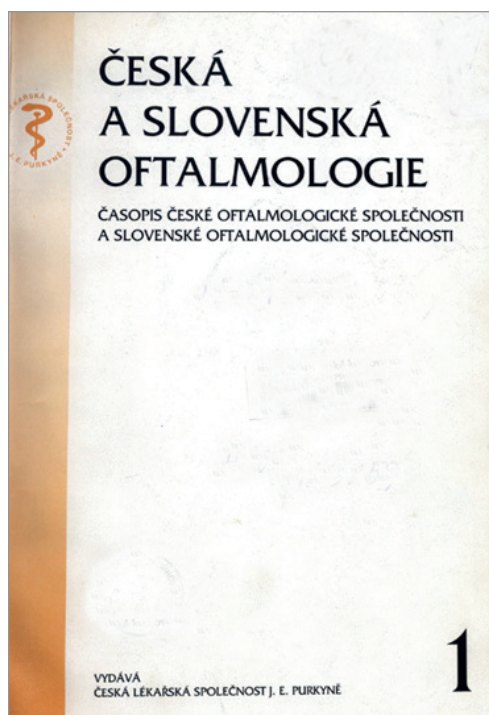


Figure 10. Czech and Slovak Ophthalmology 1995;51(1)

the Czechoslovak Medical Society [19]."

In 1954, the Slovak branch of the ophthalmological section of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society was founded, which quickly developed its activities and organised very successful and scientifically valuable congresses with rich participation and discussion biannually. Veselý describes its origin and development on the 30th anniversary of its existence: "After the end of World War II there were about 30 specialists in Slovakia. At the 19th Annual Congress of the Czechoslovak Ophthalmological Society in May 1954, a group of Slovak ophthalmologists met in Nový Smokovec to discuss the need and possibilities of establishing their own society. The Inaugural Meeting of the Slovak Branch was held on 4 December 1954 in Bratislava, the plenary meeting on 24-25 November 1955 in Bojnice. The name of the organisation was chosen to be "The Slovak Branch of the Ophthalmological Section of the Czechoslovak Medical Society of J. E. Purkyně" (Slovenská odbočka Oftalmologickej sekce Československej lekárskej spoločnosti J. E. Purkyně). The preparatory Committee included: Kubík, Mazalán, Šuster, Veselý, and Wachsmann.

A Committee was elected at the All-Slovak Conference of Ophthalmologists on 25 November 1955 in Bojnice. Prof. Gala was elected as Chairman (Figure 9) [20] and Dr

Mazalán as Secretary [21, 22]."

In 1969, in accordance with the Federalisation Act, the medical societies were reorganised, and the Czech and Slovak Ophthalmological Societies were established. The Federal Committee has since consisted of the Chairmen and Secretaries of both national committees, who have taken turns at holding senior positions during their terms of office in the Federal Committee, and two other members of each National Committee. The Federal Committee had 8 members [23].

The division of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic took place on 1 January 1993 on the basis of a resolution of the Federal Assembly on the division of the Federal Republic (CSFR) into two independent states – the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. The common state of Czechs and Slovaks had existed for 74 years, 2 months and 3 days.

The name of the journal also changed after the division of Czechoslovakia. It had been published under the name Czechoslovak Ophthalmology until 1994. From 1995, the name was changed to Czech and Slovak Ophthalmology. The first issue was published in February 1995, and the journal continuity and numbering have been maintained (Figure 10).

The joint journal and a number of other activities are proof of the collaboration between ophthalmologists from both countries.

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