

**ON PROFESSOR PAVEL OLIVA
(23 NOVEMBER 1923–5 MARCH 2021)**

Prof. PhDr. Pavel Oliva, DrSc. (birth name Ohrenstein) was born in Prague in 1923. After his studies at the classical grammar school (1934–1940) in Prague-Žižkov, he was imprisoned due to his Jewish origin over the years 1941–1945 in the Nazi concentration camps Theresienstadt, Auschwitz and Schwarzheide. He graduated, upon his return to Prague in 1945, and went on to successfully complete his studies of classical philology at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University (1945–1949).

At the beginning of his career, Pavel Oliva lectured on ancient history at the University of Political and Economic Sciences (1949–1951) and at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University (1951–1952). He received his PhDr. degree at the latter in the year 1951 upon defending his dissertation on the early Greek tyranny. He returned to his teaching activity over the years 1973–1978 as a lecturer at the Faculty of Education of Charles University and over the years 1992–1994 with specialized lectures and classes dealing with the history of Classical Greece at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University.

The great majority of Pavel Oliva's work was as a researcher at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. He first worked at the Institute of History starting in the year 1952, where he became the deputy to the director from 1955. He held a prestigious position as the chair of the scholarly college of history at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences over the years 1962–1969. The most fruitful period in terms of scholarship occurred, however, over the years 1970–1992 at the Institute for Greek, Roman and Latin Studies of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (now the Centre for Classical Studies at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences).

The extensive scholarly and publication activity of Professor Pavel Oliva was concentrated around the history of Ancient Greece. His numerous scholarly and popular publications amount to, in a number of cases, the first detailed treatments of the given issue in Czech or a new perspective on an important theme in classical history on the basis of the newest literature. His scholarship is marked by factual accuracy, an attempt at describing a number of hypotheses linked with the given issue, the use of excerpts from the literary works as well as epigraphic material and an extensive use of footnotes with listings from both Czech and foreign-language literature.

Pavel Oliva was attracted to two basic periods of ancient Greek history: the archaic period and the Hellenistic epoch, the interpretation of which enabled lively discussion of numerous controversial questions in historical research. In connection with the archaic period, he was interested in the early Greek tyranny – *Raná řecká tyrannis* (*Early Greek*

Tyranny, Prague 1954). The emergence of the state of Sparta and its social problems, first and foremost in the archaic and Hellenistic periods, was described in the monograph *Sparta a její sociální problémy* (*Sparta and Her Social Problems*, Prague 1971). The complicated political development of the Greek World in the Hellenistic period was described in detail in the synthetic work *Řecko mezi Makedonií a Římem* (*Greece Between Macedonia and Rome*, Prague 1995).

His work of an explicitly popular focus is also a significant part of his publication activity concerning Greek history. This specifically consisted of a trilogy presenting Czech readers with the political and cultural development of Greece from its neolithic beginnings up to Roman rule: *Zrození evropské civilizace* (*The Birth of European Civilization*, Prague 1995, 2nd edition 2003); *Kolébka demokracie* (*The Cradle of Democracy*, Prague 2000) and *Svět helénismu* (*The World of Hellenism*, Prague 2001). His biographies of a number of renowned figures from Greek history are also of a popular character: *Solón* (*Solon*, Prague 1971), *Démostenés* (*Demosthenes*, Prague 2007), *Polybios a jeho svět* (*Polybius and His World*, Prague 2013).

There was more of a focus on Roman history at the beginning of Professors Oliva's career, including his work about Spartacus: *Spartakus. Povstání otroků v římské říši* (*Spartacus. The Slave Rebellion in the Roman Empire*, Prague 1954) or *Spartakus. Povstání Spartakovo a Spartakovská tradice* (*Spartacus. The Uprising of Spartacus and the Spartacus Tradition*, Prague 1960, along with Věra Olivová). Oliva also wrote a key monograph on the history of Rome, *Pannonie a počátky krize římského imperia* (*Pannonia and the Onset of Crisis in the Roman Empire*, Prague 1959), which dealt comprehensively with the history of this province at the time of the Principate. He prepared for publication, along with Jan Burian, Zdenka Nemeškalová-Jiroudková and Jaroslav Tejral, one of the volumes of the international project *Tabula imperii Romani* with the subtitle *Castra Regina – Vindobona – Carnuntum* (Prague 1986), which not only included the Czech Lands but also the neighbouring states.

Out of P. Oliva's rich publication activity, one should also mention the first comprehensive treatment of the history of Greece in Czech, for which he prepared the introductory part on the development and importance of ancient Greece for contemporary Greek society. The first to be published was the more extensive *Dějiny Řecka* (*History of Greece*, Prague 1998, along with Růžena Dostálová, Věra Hrochová and Vladimír Vavřínek), followed by the shorter publication *Řecko* (*Greece*, Prague 2002, along with Růžena Dostálová and Vladimír Vavřínek). He provided an overview of the history of the ancient world in cooperation with Jan Burian in the publication *Civilizace starověkého Středomoří* (*The Civilisation of the Ancient Mediterranean*, Prague 1984), which was built upon by an updated version of the same name, published in two volumes (2nd edition: Prague 2015, 3rd edition: Prague 2020). This extremely detailed guidebook depicts the history of the Ancient World from the time of the emergence of the oldest state bodies up to the downfall of the Western Roman Empire; this work is recommended at present as a basic textbook for university students in the Czech Republic. Oliva's textbook *Dějiny starověkého světa* (*The History of the Ancient World*, Prague 1992; expanded version Prague 1993 and 1995) is designated for secondary school students.

Professor Oliva was also involved in important translation work in the final years of his life. His most significant translations include the first Czech translation of Polybius' work

Dějiny (*The Histories I–IV*, Prague 2008–2012) and two collections of the shorter treatises from Plutarch's *Moralia*, entitled *O historii* (*On History*, Prague 2015) and *O politické činnosti* (*On Precepts of Statecraft*, Prague 2014). He also published a complete translation of the political speeches of Demosthenes (Prague 2002) and prepared a new Czech edition of Aristotle's work *Athénská ústava* (*Athenian Constitution*, Prague 2004). He provided all of the translations with learned introductions, extensive commentaries and a list of both Czech and foreign-language literature.

The horrors of the Holocaust and the tragic fates of his own family led Professor Oliva to also turn to this part of his life in terms of publication activity. He recalled the names of his relatives and described their life stories in the books *Holokaust mé rodiny* (*The Holocaust of My Family*, Prague 2009) and *Osudy mé rodiny* (*The Fates of My Family*, Prague 2017). He also made public his own accounts from his time in concentration camps in a book edited by Igor Lisový, *Dialogy s profesorem Pavlem Olivou* (*Dialogues with Professor Pavel Oliva*, Prague 2003) which was published on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. He also translated into Czech and provided an introduction and commentary to the illustrated diary of the Prague native and emigrant Alfred Kantor, who was his co-prisoner and who lived after the war in the USA, entitled originally *The Book of Alfred Kantor* (New York 1971; German version *Das Buch des Alfred Kantor*, Vienna / Munich / Zurich 1972).

The publication activity of Professor Oliva met with deserved attention not only in Czechoslovakia but also abroad. Recognition of his undoubted scholarly importance can be seen in foreign-language editions of a number of his most important books: *Pannonia and the Onset of Crisis in the Roman Empire* (Prague 1962), *Sparta and Her Social Problems* (Prague 1971), *The Birth of Greek Civilisation* (London 1981, Edmonton 1985), *Esparta e sus problemas sociales* (Madrid 1983), *Historia de los Griegos* (Mexico 1983, with Bořivoj Borecký), *Le origini della civiltà greca* (Milan 1983), *Solon – Legende und Wirklichkeit* (Konstanz 1988). Professor Oliva also presented his scholarly work by means of extensive lecturing activities or talks at the Eirene congresses and at meetings of FIEC and CIPSH. His lectures were also heard by listeners at numerous German and British universities, an example of which being his extensive guest stay at New College in Oxford in 1981.

Another important aspect of Professor Oliva's activities consisted of deepening the prestige of Czech scholarship on the Ancient World on the international level. He also contributed to the creation of the Association for Support of Classical Studies in Socialist Countries (the international organisation Eirene) in the year 1957 and the publication of the Eirene international journal (from the year 1960). His philosophy influenced the Czech editorial board to a great extent, which Oliva was a member of from the year 1963 up to his death. He also wrote dozens of reviews for this journal of mostly foreign language literature. Professor Oliva contributed to two of the most successful scholarly conferences organised by Eirene over the period of its existence. These were the IX Eirene conference in Brno in 1966, which resulted in the proceedings *Antiquitas Graeco-Romana ac tempora nostra* (Prague 1968) and the XVI Eirene conference in Prague 1982 (*Concilium Eirene XVI. Proceedings of the 16th International Eirene Conference. Prague 31 August–4 September 1982 I–III*, Prague 1983, along with Alena Frolíková).

P. Oliva also demonstrated his scholarly and organisational abilities with additional Czech and international societies and editorial boards of journals (*Eirene*, 1963–2021, *Klio*, 1961–1991). He was elected vice-chair of the most important Czech society associating Classical Philology in the year 1972: Jednota klasických filologů (the Club of Classical Philologists), which he also held the chair of over the years 1984–2015. He became honorary chair in the year 2015. He also represented the Club in the Fédération internationale des associations d'études classiques (FIEC). He was also a delegate of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in the Union académique internationale – UAI over the years 1968–1992. He also took part several times on behalf of Czechoslovakia in the sessions of the Conseil International de la Philosophie et des Sciences Humaines (CIPSH) in UNESCO.

P. Oliva was named a correspondence member of the Österreichisches archäologisches Institut (1975) for his contribution to the international development of Classical Studies, an honorary member of the Société Hoingroise des Études classiques in Budapest (1983) and a correspondence member of Deutsches archäologisches Institut (1987).

P. Oliva achieved the highest recognition possible at home for a university teacher and scholar for his work. He received the academic title DrSc in 1961 after defending the earlier-mentioned work on the history of the Roman Pannonia and was elected a member correspondent of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1965. He was named professor of Ancient History at Charles University in 1968. He received the Gold Poster of František Palacký on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday in 1988 from the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences for his contribution to the development of the social sciences. He was also awarded a Commemorative Medal on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the end of World War 2 for his participation in the struggle for national liberation over the years 1939–1945 and a similar state medal on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War 2.

Professor Pavel Oliva, the doyen of Czech Classical philologists and historians of the Ancient World, died in Prague on 5 March 2021 at the esteemed age of 98 years old. He contributed significantly to the further development of Czech scholarship on Ancient History and the enhancement of the prestige of Czech science concerning the Classical World abroad through his scholarly, publication, lecturing and organising activities. His coworkers fondly remember him as an obliging and helpful colleague and an excellent social companion, as was demonstrated, for example, at the social gatherings on the occasion of the international Eirene conferences in Prague, Berlin and Budapest, which I had the opportunity to participate in.

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