

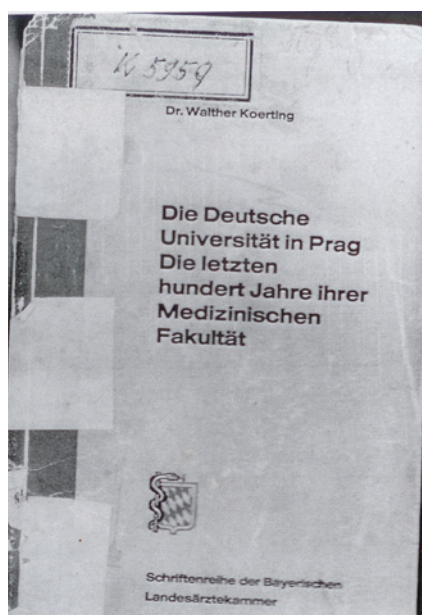
## History of German-Czech relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

# Important German dentists in Prague

This article is dedicated to important personalities in dentistry who worked at the German Faculty of Medicine in Prague. This faculty was created by the division of the University of Prague by a law from February 1882, which stipulated that the former Karl Ferdinand University in Prague was to be divided into a Czech and a German university from the 1882/1883 academic year onwards. This brought to an end the negotiations on the Czech demand that university lectures in Prague be held in Czech. Emperor Franz Joseph I finally chose this solution from several possibilities by imperial decree.



Obr. 1  
Title page of a publication on the history of the German University in Prague.



The German University in Prague. The last hundred years of its Medical Faculty, Walther Koerting, published in 1968.

In 1782, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II replaced Latin, which had been the language of university instruction since the Middle Ages, with German at all universities in the Habsburg Monarchy. However, the citizens of the multinational monarchy had been demanding the right to instruction in their own languages since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Poles promoted instruction in Polish in Kraków, just as Hungarians promoted instruction in Hungarian in Pest. The Czechs in Prague also demanded lectures in Czech.

Ludmila Hlaváčková and Petr Svobodný from the Institute for the History of Medicine published *Biographisches Lexikon der Deutschen Medizinischen Fakultät in Prag 1883–1945* (*Biographical Dictionary of the German Medical Faculty in Prague 1883–1945*) in 1998. This volume contains basic biographical data on all assistants, lecturers and professors at the faculty.

As I was leafing through its pages, I came across a number of Czech names written in German spelling: F. Czapek, V. Hruschka, J. Dworzak, H. Jedlitschka, N. Koblitschek, R. Maresch, A. Tschermak.

For comparison, I also consulted the *Biographical Dictionary of the Czech Medical Faculty* by the same institute, in which I again read the German names of Czech teachers at the Czech Medical Faculty: B. Eiselt, V. Weiss, V. Treitz, J. V. Krombholz., A. Goll, J. Böhm, J. Dienstbier,

J. Kurz. The first elected dean of the Czech Medical Faculty in Prague was Wilhelm Weiss, professor of surgery. This proves that Czech-German marriages took place in Bohemia and that the children born at that time opted for Czech or German nationality.

At this point it is worth recalling the development of Czech-German relations over the past centuries. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the relationship to one's homeland in Bohemia was shaped by so-called territorial patriotism: nationality was determined by where one lived. The philosopher and theologian Augustin Smetana, a member of the Order of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star, referred to the inhabitants of the Bohemian kingdom as "Bohemians of the German tongue and Bohemians of the Slavic tongue". Bernard Bolzano, a native of Prague with Italian-German family roots, was a professor of philosophy, mathematics, and theology and an ordained Catholic priest. In his Sunday sermons, he encouraged both Czech and German students to work together in friendship and brotherhood for the good of their common fatherland.

After the Napoleonic Wars, national consciousness grew in all European countries. Interest in glorious periods of history increased, national languages, folk tales, and songs were cultivated, and linguistic patriotism gradually replaced territorial

patriotism: a Czech was now defined as someone who spoke Czech. The development of the Czech national revival was strengthened by the ideas of the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder. He wrote sympathetically about the Slavs, praising their peaceful way of life and believing in their great future. The linguist Josef Jungmann, a Czech with a German surname, became the unofficial but widely recognised leader of the Czech revival movement.

The revolution of 1848 gradually spread across Europe. Czechs and Germans met in Prague on 14 March to formulate their political demands. The Viennese had already risen on 13 March, calling on Emperor Ferdinand I to proclaim a constitution, abolish censorship, and permit elections for the provincial assemblies and the Imperial Diet in Vienna. The Czechs demanded a transformation of centralist Austria into a constitutional monarchy with a federal structure, ensuring equal rights for all nations within a multinational Austrian Empire. Meanwhile, the Germans in Bohemia looked to Frankfurt, where a pan-German parliament had convened with the aim of uniting all Germans living in the various kingdoms, duchies, principalities and free cities into a single state. This could have included the German-speaking areas of Austria, including the Bohemian lands. But from that moment on, the political goals and paths of the Czechs and Germans began to diverge.

The Frankfurt Assembly ultimately failed to achieve its goals—Austria did not become a federation of individual states.

In the following century, World War I changed the map of Europe. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary in 1918, new states emerged, including Czechoslovakia, which was home to 3.5 million Germans. A new situation called for new solutions. Only the Czechs greeted a separate state with joy. The Czechoslovak constitution guaranteed equal rights to citizens of all nationalities. But the Germans were unwilling to accept minority status.

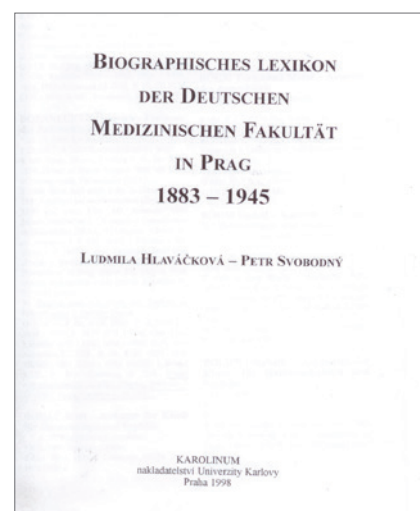
Efforts to achieve mutual cooperation and understanding began to emerge on

both sides, with a “Swiss solution” as a possible goal. President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk undertook to mediate in the negotiations between the Germans and the Czechs and considered the formation of a joint government of Czech and German ministers to be a success. As a result, the Minister of Agriculture nominated by the Czech political party was a German-speaking Czech with the German name of Ladislav Feierabend, while the Minister of Education nominated by the German party was a Czech-speaking German with the Czech name Ludwig Czech.

An example of the cooperation between Czech and German doctors was their joint meeting in May 1929, which was in response to new laws being drafted by the Ministry of Health, which the doctors considered an unacceptable violation of their rights. Representatives of the Czech and German medical associations, professional societies and representatives of Czech and German medical faculties met at the National House in Prague. *Věstník československých lékařů* (*Journal of Czechoslovak Doctors*) published a detailed report of this meeting on 24 May 1929. Here are some quotations from some of the speeches. The doctors present were welcomed by Professor R. Fischl, representing the German university, and MUDr Springer, representing the German section of the Medical Association. Politicians also attended, including Deputy



Augustin Smetana (1814–1851) wrote *Bohemians of the German tongue and Bohemians of the Slavic tongue*.



*Biographical Dictionary of the German Medical Faculty in Prague 1883–1945*, Ludmila Hlaváčková and Petr Svobodný, published in Prague in 1998.

Hackenbergl for the German Social Democrats and Senator Hilgenreiner for the German Christian Socialists. The editors of the German newspapers *Prager Tagblatt*, *Bohemia* and *Sudetendeutsche Tageszeitung* were also present.

Professor R. Fischl began: “On behalf of the Medical Faculty of the German University in Prague, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you. Please accept my assurance that we recognise the legitimacy of your demands and will do our utmost to meet them. Once again, I assure you of our heartfelt sympathy. The fact that we have come together without



Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848), professor at the University of Prague, called for friendly and fraternal collaboration.

the barriers of national affiliation and political persuasion is a significant event. On behalf of the German Medical Faculty, I hereby solemnly guarantee that we will support your demands, fair or moderate, with all our strength and vigour.”

The vice chairman of the German Medical Association, MUDr Reiman, addressed those present as “dear Czech colleagues”. Professor Jan Jesenský, Chairman of the Czech Clinic of Dentistry, proposed the construction of a new building for post-graduate dental education in both Czech and German. The proposal was submitted to both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health but was unfortunately never implemented due to financial constraints.

In order to bring about a rapprochement between President Masaryk and the Czechoslovak Germans, the German writer Emil Ludwig published a book entitled *Denker und Staatsmann. Gespräche mit Masaryk (Thinker and statesman. Conversations with Masaryk)*. Masaryk said: “Our Germans have lived with us for centuries. They are culturally and economically linked to us. They never succumbed to northern, Prussian influences; their connection with the Slavs has enriched them. They taught us about the spiritual richness of the West and gave us good impulses.”

One example of Czech-German cultural cooperation was an event organised by members of the Czech and German theatres. In 1936 they staged a play by Jan

Nepomuk Štěpánek from 1816 called “Czechs and Germans”. In this bilingual comedy, the actors spoke either only Czech, only German or both in their roles. The roles were assigned in such a way that the Czech roles were played by Czech-speaking Germans and the German roles by German-speaking Czechs. The play was performed on the stages of the Czech State Theatre and the New German Theatre.

After the fall of the totalitarian regime in 1989, historians turned their attention to Czech-German relations. In a 1991 statement, they wrote: “The complex, evolving and changing relationship between Czechs and Germans has not always been tense to the point of hostility throughout the entire historical process; on the contrary, there have sometimes been periods of cooperation, understanding and tolerance. It was only in modern history, in the era of nationalism and political and national conflicts, that the paths of the Czechs and Germans who had lived in our country for centuries fundamentally diverged.”

The remainder of this article is dedicated to the life dates and activities of six personalities in the field of dentistry at the German Medical Faculty in Prague, in chronological order of their activities.

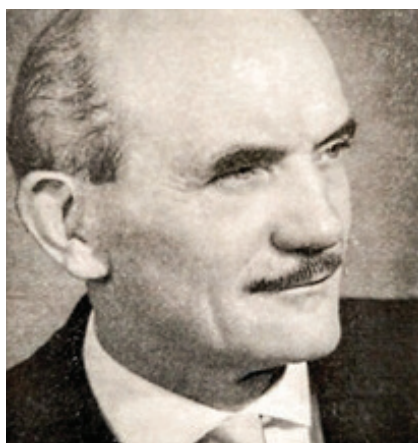
Heinrich Schmidt was born in Prague in 1840 and lived there all his life. He attended grammar school in Malá Strana/Lesser Town in Prague and graduated from the German University in Prague in

1875. He first joined the Institute of Pathology and Anatomy, where he worked as a student demonstrator, and then moved to the Surgical Clinic as an assistant. In 1879, for health reasons, he changed his field of study to dentistry and completed his specialist training after a year’s stay in Vienna. In 1880 he became a lecturer in dentistry in Prague, where he also had a private practice. He was known for his charity, treating poor patients free of charge. He concluded his career in 1889 in the dental department set up especially for him in 1889. He had the reputation of being an excellent teacher. He died in Prague in 1895.

Heinrich Boennecken (1862–1937) was born in Krefeld, Germany. He studied medicine in Bonn, Berlin and Freiburg. After graduating in 1886, he worked as a doctor at the municipal hospital in Elberfeld (now Wuppertal, North Rhine-Westphalia) and after a year took up a two-year post as a ship’s doctor for the Norddeutscher Lloyd shipping company. In 1889 he became an assistant at the surgical clinic of the medical faculty in Rostock. He worked mainly on diseases of the dental pulp and dental sepsis. In order to gain experience, he travelled to the United States and obtained a specialisation in dentistry and a DDS degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. After his return, he received his *venia legendi* in Bonn in 1891 and was appointed professor of dentistry at the German Medical Faculty in Prague in



Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), German author, promoted the Czech renaissance.



Joseph Eschler (1908–1969), professor of dentistry in Prague.



Karl Häupl (1893–1960), professor of dentistry in Prague.

1897. In 1929 he was appointed director of the institute, from which he retired after three years, in 1932. He died in Karlovy Vary/Carlsbad in 1937.

Wilhelm Bauer (1886–1956) was born in Prague and studied at the German Medical Faculty of the University of Prague, where he graduated in 1912. After his clinical work in Prague, he went to Innsbruck, where he received his *venia legendi* in dentistry in 1925 and was appointed professor and head of the dental clinic in 1933. In the midst of a deteriorating personal and international situation, Bauer was retired against his will in 1939 and emigrated to the USA before conditions for him and his family worsened. He took a new position at the Department of Pathology at St. Louis University of Medicine, whose administrator he later became. In 1956, Wilhelm Bauer died in the United States.

Karl Häupl (1893–1960) was born in Austria, in Seewalchen on the shores of the picturesque Lake Attersee. He studied medicine in Innsbruck. He graduated in 1919 and worked at the medical faculty there until 1923, when he decided to specialise in dentistry in Oslo. He received his *venia legendi* in 1927 and remained there until 1934, when he moved to the German Medical Faculty in Prague as an associate professor and head of the clinic for dental and maxillofacial diseases. In 1942 he received a call to Berlin, where he devoted himself to orthodontics and prosthetics. After the war, he returned to Innsbruck in 1945 and then to the Medical Academy in Düsseldorf in 1951. In 1960, he was invited to Basel to speak at the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the local university. Immediately after his speech, he suffered a heart attack and died.

Fritz Brosch (1903–1981) came from Svitavy in Moravia, where he was born in 1903. After studying at the German Medical Faculty, where he graduated in 1929, he worked in the surgical departments of hospitals, first in Šumperk, then in Uničov and finally in Šternberk (all in Moravia). In 1934 he came to Prague to the dental clinic of Professor Karl Häupl, where he specialised in dentistry and maxillofacial

surgery. He continued his education at the University of Vienna and became a lecturer in these fields on his return to Prague. When Professor Häupl was called to Berlin in 1943, he took over the management of the clinic as a full professor. In 1950, he became a professor at the Clinic for Dental, Oral and Maxillofacial Diseases at the University of Hamburg. He retired from the university in 1961 and became head of the dental department at a major Hamburg hospital. He died in 1981.

Josef Eschler (1908–1969) was born in Liska near Děčín on the Elbe. After studying medicine at the German University in Prague, he graduated in 1933 and moved to the Clinic of Dental and Maxillofacial Surgery in Prague, where he qualified as a professor in 1939. A year later, he was invited to be a visiting professor at the University of Tokyo, where he remained until 1945. In the meantime, he was appointed professor in Prague in 1943. After the war, he worked at the Katharinenhospital in Stuttgart. A year later he went to Cairo and then to Bombay as a visiting professor. On his return, he became professor and director of the Clinic for Dentistry and Oral Medicine at the University of Freiburg, where he died in 1969.

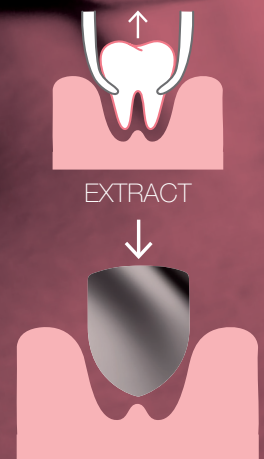
Two hundred years ago, Bernard Bolzano encouraged German and Czech students to work hand in hand for the good of their common homeland. Today we can realise his vision all the more clearly—for our cooperation, for our common friendship, for our common fatherland, the European Union.

Otakar Brazda

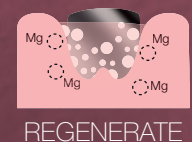
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