

RUDOLF BÁRTA (1897-1985)



With the death of Professor Rudolf Bárta on 1 March 1985 after a long illness, thermal analysis has lost one of its most outstanding international figures and strongest proponents. Born in Prague in 1897, the son of a cement and lime manufacturer, Rudolf Bárta became a skilled stone-cutter and gained industrial experience in his father's factory, thus laying a strong foundation for the future, before entering university. Graduating M.Eng. from the Technical University, Brno, in 1918, in the following year he was awarded the first Ph.D. in Technical Sciences in Bohemia from the same university, where he was then Assistant Lecturer. In 1927, he was appointed Assistant Professor in Brno and later moved, in the same capacity, to the Technical University, Prague, where, in 1938, he received a Personal Professorship in glass and ceramic engineering. From 1919 to 1941 he also held various posts in the building industry as director, consultant and manager. Incarcerated in the Concentration Camps of Terezin and Osvětim in 1941, he was, on his release after the War, appointed Professor at the Institute of Chemical Technology, Prague, that appointment being back-dated to 1938. He became Vice-Dean of the Institute in 1952-53 and retired from active educational work, but not from his scientific labours, in 1958.

Professor Bárta was instrumental in establishing modern materials science education in Czechoslovakia and in instituting specially designed post-graduate courses in silicate chemistry and technology. A strong advocate of the effectiveness of thermal analysis, thermoanalytical techniques featured prominently in his teaching and publications, which, among many others, included a 1000 pp. volume on the chemistry and technology of cements. He instigated a series of thorough investigations on oxide refractories by modern techniques and, through his many international contacts, ensured his students and colleagues were fully conversant with the contemporary work of leading laboratories abroad. Not only did he educate many leading figures in the fields of thermal analysis, cements and ceramics in Czechoslovakia, but he also established three new journals—in 1920, *Stavivo* (Building Materials), in 1932, the Archive for Industrial History and, in 1957, *Silikaty* (Silicates), which has received worldwide recognition for its standards and which he edited until relatively recently.

An active participant in many societies, both national and international, Professor Bárta also received many honours. From 1917 to 1957 he was General Secretary of the Czechoslovak Association for Research and Testing as well as of the Czechoslovak Ceramic and Glass Society. He also served as Chairman of the Chemical Section of the International Association for Materials Testing. As early as 1928 he was made an Honorary Member of the American Ceramic Society—the first from Czechoslovakia. He also took a particular interest in the International Confederation for Thermal Analysis, serving on the Organizing Committee for the First International Conference in Aberdeen in 1965, being Vice-President of ICTA in 1968–71 and being appointed Honorary President for 1971–74. In 1974 he retired from most of his activities because of a serious illness brought on and aggravated by the treatment meted out to him in the concentration Camps.

An erudite man of great learning and integrity, Professor Bárta was yet the humblest of mortals and, from one's first encounter, established himself as a true friend. He was an exceptional teacher who imparted both breadth and depth of knowledge, as well as his own enthusiasm, to his students in a manner that will always be remembered. Yet he also had about him that indefinable air of authority that enables his personality to be summarized in the old phrase: "a gentleman of the old school". To those of us who knew them, Rudolf Bárta will always rank along with Lev Germanovich Berg as a gentle giant of great charm and intellect who has left an indelible mark on our science.

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