

Josef Janáček, machine factory, Slévárna Ransko owned by CTU in Prague

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Abstract: *Emanuel Šlechta (December 19, 1895 Kutná Hora - March 17, 1960 Prague) was a Czech and Czechoslovak politician of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party, the main representative of the post-Communist Czechoslovak Socialist Communist post-February course, a member of the National Assembly of Czechoslovakia and Minister of Czechoslovakia.*

Keywords

History of Science and Technology, History, Czechoslovakia, Minister of Technology, after 1945, Emanuel Šlechta authorized civil advisory engineer,

1. Introduction

Locksmith and former employee of the Dietrichstein iron works, Josef Janáček founded his company for the production of grinders, cutters and other machinery in 1873 in the building of the original one-story inn from 1840.

After the death of the founder of the factory in 1906, his minor children acquired the property. During the First World War, the plant had to be involved in arms production as well, which is evidenced

by a photo of the production of grenades from 1915.

By successive contract dated November 8, 1937, Jan Janáček transferred his half to Mrs. Růžena Janáčková, the wife of Ing. Josef Janáček. In 1940, engineer Josef Janáček died and his wife became the sole owner of the company after the inheritance proceedings.

Although the family came from Starý Ransk and Krucenburk, in the 1930s they no longer lived here and managed the company from Prague.

The production focused on various machines for industry - it produced machines for sugar factories, distilleries - various presses, mixers, shakers.

The unfavorable years of the economic crisis of the 1930s were replaced by arms production during the Second World War.

At the time of both wars, production was purposely changed for the needs of the arms industry. In 1937 it employed 229 employees, of which 130 were male, 20 female, 19 clerks and 60 apprentices. From the time occupation, an estimate of the value of the factory is known, in 1940 it was 1,785,000 CZK.¹ The factory was damaged during the war by a fire that broke out in the summer of 1942 and caused damage of 40,000 CZK.²

¹ STÁTNÍ OKRESNÍ ARCHIV HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ, Státní oblastní archiv v Zámrsku, fond 8871 Josef Janáček, továrna na stroje, Staré Ransko (1871) 1872-1945 (1950).

² STÁTNÍ OKRESNÍ ARCHIV HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ, Státní oblastní archiv v Zámrsku, fond 8871 Josef Janáček, továrna na stroje, Staré Ransko (1871) 1872-1945 (1950).

At the time of the occupation, an average of up to 750 people worked in 3 shifts and up to 90% of production capacity was involved in wartime production as a subcontractor to Zbrojovka and Škoda plants.

Between May 12 and July 3, 1945, the plant was occupied by the Red Army numbering 800 men under the command of General Tuliev; on June 5, 1945, employees were only allowed to enter the factory

In 1945, a national administrator was appointed to the company and it was prepared for nationalization.

National Administration in the sense of Decree No. 5/1945 Coll. meant a significant limitation of property rights. The scope of the owner's right of ownership was reduced to a minimum and was essentially limited to the fact that he continued to be the formal owner of the property, without being able to use or dispose of it.

Filip Janáček, who had been in the service of the company for 35 years as a technical employee, became the provisional national administrator, already the third in the order, on 14 September 1945 with the authorization of the Regional National Committee in Prague and whose wife worked in the company as an accountant.

On September 28, 1945, Mrs. Růžena Janáčková died childless and in her last will made her brother Rudolf Aron the universal heir with the express determination that the factory with all accessories, rights and obligations should be handed over to the University of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering in Prague.

The company was nationalized on 27 October 1945 as a company with a higher number of employees. The nationalization was carried out by Decree of the Ministry of Industry No. 1898 of 27 February 1946.



Pict. 1.1 trade license of Růžena Janáčková (source: Archive of Hradec Králové)

2. Description of the default state

After the war in 1945, the College of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering of the Czech Technical University in Prague inherited 3 industrial companies (Kameníček (future TOS Hostivař), Velinský (an armory), Slévárna Janáček (also an armory during the war), which were bequeathed by their deceased owners.

From the relevant minutes of the faculty meeting, it appears that on November 3, 1945, the then minister of industry Bohumil Laušman visited the college of mechanical and electrical engineering and discussed with the dean of the faculty of engineering, Jirák, about possible assistance to the school and also about the inheritance of the companies Kameníček and Velinský. Dean Jirák also subsequently took part in the meeting on November 8, 1945 regarding the legacy of the factory worker Ing. Velinský.



Pict. 1.2 Minister of Industry Bohumil Laušman
(source: ČTK)

A month later, a copy of the last will of Růžena Janáčková, the widow of the factory owner Janáčková, owner of the Ransko factory (protocol number 2231/45), in which Mrs. Janáčková bequeaths the business to CTU, arrived at the dean's office from the rector's office. A member of the Commission, Professor Jareš, discussed this letter with the foundation officer of the Regional National Committee in Prague, who considered inheritance difficult and recommended contacting the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The faculty of the university agreed to take over the business and run it under its own direction. At the dean's office in Prague II., no. 293, Karlovo náměstí 13, a meeting was held at which the congregation established the Commission for the Takeover of the R. Janáčková Factory in Ransko, composed of Dean Prof. Ing. Jaromír Jirák (head of the Institute of Electrical and Mechanical Technology) and prof. Ing. Dr. tech Vojtěch Jareš (head of the Institute of Materials Science and Metallography and, for now, also the Institute of Machine Tools and the Institute of Mechanical Technology). Complex negotiations began on how to accept the

inheritance and take the company out of nationalization.

The faculty first wanted to verify whether Ransko really had the right to the production company. He requested a statement from the Ministry of Industry, under which the enterprise fell, and later also the Ministry of Education.

At the beginning of 1946, Dean Jirák announced at a meeting of the faculty how the school would respond to the legacy of Ms. Janáčková. According to him, the administration of the company in France was to be taken over by the faculty, which would elect an administrative committee of 5 members.

These would be dean Prof. Dr. Jaromír Jirák, Prof. Dr. Vojtěch Jareš, Ing. Otakar Maš'ovský, Dr. Václav Krouza, Prof. Ing. Dr. Josef Řezníček and Dr. Emanuel Šlechta. The replacement would be Professor Brunhofer.

The determination, especially of Dean Jirák, to take over and operate the Ransko Foundry was considerable.

Dean Jirák viewed my experience with ownership of Slévárna Ransko optimistically and saw it as a great investment for the future.

The most experience with company management was Emanuel Šlechta, who headed the Institute for Management of Industrial Enterprises at the College of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering of the Czech Technical University.

In the years 1927-1939, he worked as a consulting engineer for Czechoslovak industrial companies, including the Baťovy závody in Zlín. In the years 1927-1947 he was a silent partner in the Strojírny Aupěk in Kutná Hora.

He had both practical and theoretical experience. By being well versed in the current legal and economic legislation, he helped companies with operational lending. Before the war, he worked for many years for Moravobanka, which provided loans to Slévárna Ransko for a long time.

His political connections were a significant benefit. After returning from the Buchenwald concentration camp, he was appointed chairman of the Economic Council of the National Socialist Party and, at the same time, chairman of the national administration of Živnobanka.

The fact that Dean Jirák and Emanuel Šlechta were members of the National Social Party, as well as the new Minister of Education prof. JUDr. Jaroslav Stránský. They were trying to ensure that the business did not fall into the hands of the Communists.

Although his election took place already in 1945, he had not yet been officially appointed a professor. Thus, he could not participate in faculty meetings and could not even act officially on behalf of the school. However, as an expert on the issue, he was invited to the meetings and his recommendations carried considerable weight.



Pict. 1.3 Professor Emanuel Šlechta (source: Archives of the Masaryk Institute AV, Stanislav Špaček fund)

Šlechta had a number of reservations about taking over Slévárna Ransko. It was clear that the company had value, but if the link could not be resolved

quickly, the machinery added and production started, its price would drop quickly. CTU would take over property that would be beyond its means. As the inheritance proceedings dragged on, the financial situation of the company began to surface.

In addition, it was becoming clear that two other bequeathed companies, Kameníček and Velinský, would want the ministry industry and trade to be left for nationalization. Only the least profitable Slévárna Ransko should have gone to CTU in Prague.

On March 22, 1946, the Ministry of Industry announced that CTU will definitely not acquire the Kameníček company, which will be included in the nationalization. In doing so, CTU deprived the College of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering of a significant profit, but in return promised to equip the company Janáček Ransko with new production equipment.

First, however, it was necessary to complete Mrs. Janáčková's last will. On May 31, 1946, the estate of Mrs. Janáčková was discussed at the municipal court in Chotěboř. However, the invitation came late at CTU, and Dean Jirák therefore asked the company's national administrator to represent CTU at the meeting. Meanwhile, elections to the Constituent Assembly took place in June 1946, which were won by the Communists and the National Socialists, despite considerable ambitions, came second. The elections completely changed the political situation in the country.

There was a change in the post of dean. At that time, the College of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering elected a dean for only one year. In the school year 1946-1947, the school was headed by dean Josef Řezníček and vice-dean Jaromír Jirák. After the holidays, outgoing dean Jirák visited the Ministry of Education and Education to introduce his successor, dean Řezníček, and on this occasion discussed with the presidential head of the ministry, Dr. Kudrnovský

legacy of the J. Janáček factory. Dr. Kudrnovský assured them that the ministry is fully on the side of the school in the matter of dedication to the university.

Subsequently, Dean Řezníček, Vice-Dean Jiráček and Professor Jareš visited Minister of Industry Laušman to discuss again assignment of the Ransko factory. Minister Laušman advised them to inform the Minister of Education Stránský about the entire matter and at the same time request a visit from Prime Minister Gottwald, where they should emphasize Laušman's positive opinion.

The management of the faculty therefore sent a letter to the Minister of Education and Education Dr. Stránský and vice-dean Jiráček visited the official Hemzal at the ministry. He explained to him some of the legal obligations resulting from the request for the allocation of the J. Janáček factory, and assured him that he would correct the mistake in the new wording of this request. Another three months passed before everything was resolved.

3. Negotiations with the national administration

On 11 December 1946, Dean Řezníček, together with Vice-Dean Jiráček and Professor Šlechta, received a delegation from the Slévárna Ransko company. The meeting was attended by the national administrator Filip Janáček, the chairman of MNV L. Janáček and members of the racing council Mr. Měřínský and Mr. Blecha. After the welcome, company representatives informed about the visit of Minister Laušman. The minister promised to support their request that the factory be exempted from nationalization and handed over to the Czech University in Prague, and he should present this matter to the government on Friday or Tuesday. Deputy Prime Minister Msgr Šrámek informed them in a letter that he had no objection to this, and Prime Minister Klement Gottwald requested files on the matter.

After a thorough discussion among all members of the faculty, it was resolved:

1) Add to the original committee, which consists of members Dr. Jareš and Ing. Jiráček for other members: Professor Mast'ovský and Professor Šlechta.

2) This commission was authorized by the faculty to draw up a precise proposal after ascertaining the state of the factory in France, which was to be carried out by Professor Šlechta, how to proceed in the matter of assigning the CTU factory. The proposal was to be presented at the next faculty meeting.

The company needed a bank loan for its operation, and for that it needed to have a clear owner.

4. Opinion of Živnobanka

On the basis of this resolution, in January 1947, Professor Šlechta assessed the economic condition of the machine shop.

Since he did not have all the necessary data available, he agreed to carry out an on-site review by experts from Živnostenská banka. Emanuel Šlechta thus made it possible to find out the financial status of the factory at the expense of Živnostenská banka and submitted a report on this matter to the university dean's office. For the sake of completeness, he stated that benefits from the increase and from the property were not considered in the audit report.

After a detailed report by Emanuel Šlechta, it was resolved that the next meeting be discussed by the commission together with the foundation officer of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Mr. Hemzal.

Subsequently, the dean's office of the Faculty of Engineering received from the CTU rectorate a decree of the Ministry of Education and Education dated 19/02/1947, No. A-39.374/47-VI/1 requesting the processing of the letter of the Ministry of Industry dated 11/02/1947

regarding the exclusion of Josef Janáček's machine factory and foundry in Ransko from the nationalization action. To the letter of the Ministry of Industry dated February 12, 1947, No. IV/2-59565/47, the Dean's Office sent a reply on February 24, 1947, No. pr. 590/47.

The commission consisting of dean Řezníček, vice-dean Jiráček, Ing. Dr. Nobles and Ing. Dr. Maš'ovského, met on 21 February 1947 at a meeting attended by Dr. Hemzal.

After Dean Řezníček's initial explanation, Professor Šlechta presented his opinion, in which he stated that it is still unclear how the bequeathed property will be burdened by tax arrears and recommended postponing a decision on the ownership of the business until such time as the estate is settled.

Dr. Hemzal distinguished a "bequest" which was to be a simple encumbrance, whereas the obligations were to accrue only to the estate. Dean Řezníček noted that the last will states that the factory bequeaths all rights and obligations to the Czech Technical University in Prague. However, this does not resolve the issue of pension tax. Dr. Hemzal pointed out that the issuance of a provisional foundation deed would only allow the withdrawal of the inheritance.

Professor Šlechta proposed that the Ministry of Industry appoint a new national administrator in the meantime, possibly as a trustee of the Czech Technical University in Prague. In addition, he proposed to apply for the postponement of income tax and benefits. Dr. Hemzal pointed out that the national administrator can take appropriate action if the legal situation is not clear. The foundation's losses cannot be covered from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture, but obtaining a loan would be easier.

Dr. Maš'ovský reminded that even then the question of the company's prosperity remains unresolved. Dean Řezníček stated that the approval of the general director of the metal industry for

exemption from nationalization was tied to compliance with the prescribed production program. Professor Šlechta noted that he assessed the company as early as 1937. The current assessment of Živnostenská banka requested the reorganization of the administration and technological procedures and emphasized the need for a quality manager.

Dr. Hemzal reminded that if the enterprise is assigned to "KOVO", it will be closed. Foundation administration would be more flexible.

Dr. Ing. Maš'ovský noted that the prerequisite for the company's prosperity is a suitable plant location, good layout of buildings, their construction, quality of machinery, business reputation, etc. Professor Jiráček pointed out that the company does have its shortcomings, but also development opportunities. CTU's interest in its ownership can be tied to a number of conditions, such as tax breaks, support for "KOVO", etc.

Dr. Hemzal recommended a conditional takeover of the business until the estate is discussed. Professor Maš'ovský asked what the consequences would be if the takeover failed. Dr. Hemzal noted that liquidation would certainly be difficult and the yield probably less than if it retreated immediately. He further noted that foundation enterprises are generally highly active. Dean Řezníček was worried that the company was outside of Prague and out of date. Failure would make it impossible for CTU to do similar things in the future.

Professor Jiráček took the final stand: The school insists on its request, even though the company's situation has worsened significantly due to the delay and profitability assumptions have changed to a disadvantage.

Professor Maš'ovský recommended, if possible, to give up taking over the company. Otherwise, take over the company only with the reservations stated by Vice Dean Jiráček. Professor Šlechta also supported this opinion.

Dean Řezníček agreed to take over the company only if it was possible to guarantee its prosperity. Vice-dean Jirák was convinced that without outside intervention, conditions in the company would continue to improve.

Vice-dean Jirák dictated Dr. Answer to Hemzal's letter from the Ministry of Industry. Dean Řezníček handed over leadership of the meeting to Vice-Dean Jirák:

"Given that settling the matter in the government poses certain difficulties and the company's financial conditions have changed since CTU's application, the university, in an effort to facilitate the resolution of the whole matter, leaves it to the discretion of the government. Considerable difficulties in the assessment are caused by the fact that the probate proceedings are not finished, so it is not possible to get clear ideas about the financial situation of the company and its prospects for prosperity.

*In the event that the government decides to nationalize the company, we ask that the payment of compensation, as a legacy, not be burdened with taxes and property benefits."*³

Prof. Ing. Dr. Šlechta and Ing. Dr. Maštovský submitted a compromise proposal:

"The conditions have changed for the worse, we would be interested in the assignment if certain prerequisites were met. Otherwise, we would leave the decision to the government".

Vice-dean Jirák did not change his opinion and did not recommend withdrawing from the request. However, optimism would have to be collective. Dr. Hemzal agreed with Professor Jirák's opinion. Professor Šlechta noted that one cannot rely too much on the promises of the ministries.

Vice-dean Jirák, along with professors Jareš, Šlechta and Maštovský, took part in a meeting at the Ministry of

Industry on April 8, 1947 regarding the taking over of the factory in Ransko.

Subsequently, the Commission for the Factory in Ransko met on 6/27/1947, composed of Dean Řezníček, Vice-Dean Jirák, Ing. Dr. Jareš, Ing. Dr. Šlechta, Ing. Dr. Hýbl. It was a letter from the Race Council of the Janáček company in Ransko dated 6/20/1947 (protocol no. 2296/47) in which the company asked the Ministry of Industry for a quick agreement with CTU if the plant was to be exempted from nationalization and transferred according to the legacy of the former owners of CTU, or it will remain nationalized.

The race council asked for a quick solution. The entire matter was debated by all present and the difficulty of the whole situation was pointed out. In the end, it was decided to insist on the conditions given to the Ministry in the letter dated 24/02/1947 No. 590/47⁴ and to request an expedited discussion of the estate.

Šlechta noted in his diary: 27/06/1947⁵: Work for the school until 10 a.m. Commission for Ransko, resolved to insist on the current resolution. Meeting of the Faculty until 8 o'clock in the evening.

According to the preserved documents, it is clear that the company urgently needed a loan for its further operation, and the unclear structure of the owners complicated lending.

Apparently, the matter was not satisfactorily resolved in time and negotiations she dragged herself. It was not possible to settle the estate satisfactorily, which was one of the basic steps to take over the business.

In the meantime, there was another change of dean. In the school year (1947-1948) was elected Prof. Ing. Dr. Josef Stránský and vice-dean Prof. Ing. Karel Brunhofer.

At the beginning of June 1947, Emanuel Šlechta was appointed an important member of the United Nations subcommission and at the same time

³ ARCHIV ČVUT: Zápis schůze profesorského sboru 2. 5. 1947

⁴ ARCHIV ČVUT: Zápis schůze profesorského sboru 27. 6. 1947

⁵ ABS fond Emanuel Šlechta, sbírka Zvláštní operativní svazky (ZO), arch. č. ZO-111 MV.

received an invitation to the UN Congress in Lake Success, New York in November 1947. In October 1947 he traveled to the USA, from where he did not return until the end of the year.

In the meantime, the political situation in the country escalated, and the possibilities and ability to resolve the whole matter with France were diminishing.

5. Conclusion of the whole case

Attempts to acquire Slévárna Ransko by the Czech Technical University were finally closed by the February coup. The paths of former colleagues from the Commission for the Takeover of the R. Janáčková Factory in Ransko have dramatically diverged. While Emanuel Šlechta accepted the position of Minister of Technology in the changed government of Klement Gottwald, the Ministry of Education and Culture by decree of 19 March 1948, file no. A-58.286/48-V/3⁶, on the basis of the measures of the Action Committee, transferred with immediate effect the expected prof. Ing. Jaromír Jirák (prot. no. 1063/4) on leave from April 1, 1948.

On April 23, 1948, Ing. Novotný from the Ministry of Industry, who telephoned the university and announced that, due to the fact that some government resolutions are canceled by changing the system, the allocation of the factory in Ransko to CTU is also canceled. The factory will not be assigned to the school, but CTU will receive guaranteed compensation from the net profit from the link. At that time, Professor Šlechta was already the Minister of Technology.

The same Ing. Novotný telephoned Dean Řezníček. After stating that the Commission for the establishment of the requirements of Ransko exists, it was further resolved that the members of the

commission should also participate in any further meeting.

The faculty would probably have given up their inheritance even without the February coup. Rather than taking over Slévárna Ransko in a situation that was not good. The company was in worse shape than he expected. Since the end of the war, she has been trying to recover from the loss. If the faculty wanted to keep the company on the market, they would have to operate it under conditions that would make sense for both parties, both the school and the state.

In 1948, the plant was incorporated into the První brněnské a Královopolské strojírný KG. In 1951, the plant was incorporated into n.p. Chotěbořské kovodělné závody, Chotěboř, as operation II.

The poor condition of the buildings and the small production capacity led to the definitive closure of operations in 1954 and the transfer of production to Nové Ransko. Most of the original buildings have been preserved to this day. The site is currently home to a company that has been freely following engineering production here since 1992.

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⁶ ARCHIV ČVUT, osobní spis Ing. Jaromír Jirák (č. prot. 1063/4)

[2] ARCHIV ČESKÉ NÁRODNÍ BANKY, *fond Živnostenská banka, úvěrový spis firmy Josef Janáček, továrna na stroje, Ransko z let 1929-1948 (sign. ŽB/6021/10)*

[3] ARCHIV ČESKÉ NÁRODNÍ BANKY, *fond Živnostenská banka, úvěrový spis firmy Jaroslav Velinský z let 1942-1952 (sign. ŽB/7013/2).*

[4] JOSEF FOŘT (ed.), *Hlavní katalog. Všeobecná zemská výstava 1891 v Praze k oslavě jubilea první průmyslové výstavy 1791 v Praze* (díl 2., Seznam vystavovatelů a vystavených předmětů), Praha 1891, s. 174; *Národní listy*, 5. 2. 1892, s. 6; Josef Janáček, *Listy cukrovarnické XXV, 1906–1907*, s. 66; *Národní listy*, 6. 12. 1915, s. 2; Ransko na Českomoravské vysočině, *Národní listy*, 1. 1. 1930, s. 4 přílohy; *Národní listy*, 28. 9. 1934, s. 10; *Národní politika*, 2. 9. 1942, s. 7 inzerce; J. Starý, *Josef Janáček, továrna na stroje ve Starém Ransku 1871–1945* (inventář ev. č. 937, SOA Zámorsk), 1971; Eduard Veselý, *Janáčkov strojírna ve Starém Ransku, Havlíčkovobrodsko XXV, Havlíčkův Brod 2011*

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