
INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL PROFESSOR D. B. FRY

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is my privilege to speak to you on behalf of the Permanent International Council for Phonetic Sciences. My first duty, and one which I undertake with the very greatest pleasure, is to welcome you all to this, the Sixth International Congress of Phonetic Sciences. The Permanent Council does indeed offer to all the Delegates and Members of the Congress a very warm welcome.

I am sure that you will allow me also to speak on your behalf and to say how sensible we all are of the deep debt of gratitude we already owe to our friends in Czechoslovakia who have so kindly invited us to hold the Congress here in Prague. The organisation of such an international congress entails an immense expenditure of time and effort, even to reach the stage we are at this morning of assembling the members for the opening meeting, to say nothing of the work involved in carrying through the programme. We would like Professor Hála and his colleagues to know that we are sincerely grateful to them for undertaking this formidable task.

There are many reasons why it is a particular pleasure to be able to welcome you to our congress in Prague. The first of them lies quite clearly in the city of Prague itself, a city famed for its beauty not only throughout Europe but in every part of the world; so much so that the beauty of Prague has become a legend to many people who have never had the good fortune to visit it. For those of us who may be seeing it for the first time, it is indeed somewhat overwhelming to find that the experience of the reality transcends even the legend.

But the fame of Prague rests not only upon its beauty; it has been for centuries a centre of scholarship, whose reputation has through the years remained unsurpassed among the seats of learning in Europe. By its long unbroken tradition of scholarship Prague has conferred the greatest benefits upon our civilisation and we feel ourselves honoured to be invited to meet in this historic place.

Yet we have even more specific reasons for our pleasure in meeting here than the academic tradition in a general sense. No one whose work lies in the field of the phonetic sciences could fail to experience what our French friends might call "a certain emotion" upon visiting the home of the "Prague School". It is now considerably more than thirty years since many of us first became aware of the studies being carried out by the brilliant and devoted band of scholars who formed that School. The research

which they carried out ad the ideas which they developed permanently influenced the course of work in phonetics and phonology and today we recognize with deep gratitude the debt which we owe to them.

We do not, however, live in the past, no matter how strong its influence may be, and indeed we cannot. So we come to the essential reason why we are meeting here today and why it gives us all such particular pleasure, and that is that the great traditions of scholarship that I have spoken of are carried on so worthily by Professor Hala, Professor Romportl and by their many colleagues, too numerous to mention on such an occasion as this. It is by their kind invitation that we meet here in Prague; it is their devoted work that has made it possible and it is for their sake that we count it a particular privilege to hold the Sixth International Congress of Phonetic Sciences in the Charles University. We thank them most warmly for all their efforts and we know that through their organisation and under their guidance the congress will be a signal success.