

# KONDOLENCE ZE ZAHRANIČÍ

## **Prof. John Morison, University of Leeds**

We shall always remember him in Leeds as someone who epitomised all that was and is best in Czech tradition and so as a figure of hope even when times were bad. It was a great moment when you both came to Leeds for his honorary degree ceremony. The degree was awarded as a tribute to his world-wide reputation as a scholar, but secretly I also saw it as a tribute to him as a person and as a recognition that honesty and integrity can survive even in the most difficult of circumstances.

## **Prof. Emma Vorlat, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium**

I have always admired Jan as a linguist, truly one of the most outstanding ones in the twentieth century. He continued a unique European tradition and helped turn it into the kind of linguistics that worldwide has a future ahead of it.

Jan was also a noble human being. I admired his thorough knowledge and love of the Bible, his sincere belief, his profound faith and trust in God.

## **Prof. Kristin Davidse, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium**

How we will all miss his kindness, his warm friendly humanity, his exemplary religious sense, his courage, and his devotion to work. Having known your husband was truly a privilege for which we are deeply grateful.

## **Prof. Nils Eric Enkvist, Åbo Akademi, Finland**

... of all the many linguists I have known, Jan was the one I most respected. As a scholar he was indefatigable and succeeded in combining the best of the so-called Prague school tradition with new and brilliant insight. He succeeded in teaching and training a number of students to continue his line of work. He was loved by those he taught, who always spoke about him with admiration. In spite of his brilliance and world-wide fame, he was as modest and humble in his writings as he was gentle, kind and generous to those he met. I thought I could sense his attitude to the difficulties he had to face was coloured by a deep faith and a loving and supportive wife and family.

**Prof. Greville G. Corbett, University of Surrey, Guildford**

I was very grateful that I knew Jan. He was unusual in being very learned and very helpful. He was a delightful man to know.

**Prof. Peter Newmark, University of Surrey**

My most dear friend, who was so kind and honest and mild, was an inspiration to me, as well as to many of his friends and colleagues. (...) A humanist and a Christian, his serenity was a joy to share.

**Prof. Martin Davies, University of Stirling, Scotland**

Our love and prayers come to you and your family at this stressful time, and we hope that you know that all the world over – I got the news from Angela Downing, in California – people are expressing their gratitude not only for the work Jan did, with your help and comfort, but also for his life, and his essential goodness. We all will miss him very much...

**HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN**  
PHILOSOPHISCHE FAKULTÄT II  
INSTITUT FÜR ANGLISTIK UND AMERIKANISTIK



Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik · Unter den Linden 6 · D-10099 Berlin

Berlin, May 16th 2000

Dear Paní Mgr. Fírbasová,

it was with a feeling of dismay and deep sadness that we heard of the death of your dear husband, the late Prof. Dr. Jan Fírbas. I could hardly believe it when the sad news was conveyed to me by Prof. Dr. Klaus Hansen. Too vividly did I remember the last time I met him here in Berlin, when he addressed a large audience in the Senate Hall of our university on the occasion of Prof. Hansen's 65th birthday. He gave his laudatory speech with a verve that belied his advanced age. It is a painful shock to realize that this exceptional man has gone from the scholarly community forever and left bereaved all the people who loved him dearly. He was the last of the great figures of the world-famous Prague School of Linguistics, which had a profound influence on the research and the teaching of the linguists in the English Department of Humboldt University Berlin. We appreciated him highly as an eminent scholar, but Jan Fírbas was more than a colleague for us: he was a good friend, first and foremost for

Klaus Hansen, with whom he shared so many experiences in a time of political repression with its personal hardships and existential problems. But he also gave a generous share of his friendliness, his good advice, and his fine sense of humour to the next generation of linguists in the English Department, including Prof. Uwe Carls and me. We admired and revered him, and all the more so because in his behaviour he expressed an attitude of deep modesty and unpretentiousness that is the hallmark of the truly great, and a world apart from the noisy self aggrandizement so often found with people of lesser merit.

With Jan Firbas, an epoch has come to an end. A great scholar is no more. May it be a thought of comfort and consolation to you, Paní Firbasová, that we shall always treasure the memory of your husband, to whom we owe so much.

Přijměte naši upřímnou soustrast a věřte, že jsme v myšlenkách s Vámi.

On behalf of all my colleagues,



**Prof. Dr. Peter Lucko**  
Deputy Head of the Department  
Of English and American Studies

**Prof. Hansen, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin**

We admired Jan as an outstanding scholar and we loved him as one of our oldest and best friends.

**Prof. W. D. Bald, Universität zu Köln**

Since I had the privilege of a few glimpses of your family life, I know what an enormous loss you have suffered, but also the linguistic world will be poorer without Jan's immense knowledge and experience, which he was always happy to share with others. (...) I can assure you that Jan's humane contribution to linguistics, and to personal friendship will never be forgotten.

**Prof. Manfred Görlach, Universität zu Köln**

It came as a shock to learn of the death of Jan. I am deeply grieved to lose a friend and eminent scholar whose friendship meant very much

to me. He will be remembered with great affection by many colleagues.

**Prof. Herbert Schendl, Universität Wien**

We greatly enjoyed his company, his gentle sense of humour and his acute academic insight. His contributions both to linguistics and to human relations were unique, and he will be sadly missed.

In particular we have profound admiration for his courage and commitment in the face of oppression throughout most of his professional life. He was an example to us all and will be quite irreplaceable.

**Prof. Leiv Egil Breivik, University of Tromsø, Norway**

... he meant a great deal to us both because he was a wonderful person and also his scholarly work was extremely important to our research. Jan's loss is very great...

**Prof. M. A. K. Halliday, Urunga, Australia**

He was a fine scholar, highly talented, and with respect for the views of others that is all too rare. He was also a kind and thoughtful person; it was always pleasure to be in his company.

**Prof. Dr. H. L. Wesseling, NIAS (Netherlands' Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Science), Wassenaar**

Many people at NIAS and former Fellows remember him very well, not only because of his scholarly reputation and his pioneering work in the field of linguistics, but also because of his warm and modest personality.

**Prof. Angela Downing, University of Madrid**

... we are stunned and sad to know that our best friend Jan has left us all. He was a perfect friend, a great scholar and a wonderful person. A Festschrift was being prepared for Jan's birthday and I was greatly honoured to be included among the contributors.

**Prof. Nevena Alexieva, Sofia University, Bulgaria**

As for me, you know how privileged I have always felt to be one of your friends, as well as to be able to teach FSP to generations of students at Sofia University, and how greatly indebted I am and always will be to Prof. Firbas for all his help and encouragement in my pursuit of syntactic matters.

**Prof. Alexander Shurbanov, University of Sofia, Bulgaria**

We are grieved by the fact that we have lost a distinguished and remarkable friend of our department, for whom we have always had the deepest respect, and on whose help we would rely in times of difficulty. We share the grief of all our colleagues and friends of Prof. Firbas, who will be remembered not only as a scholar of international eminence but also as an exceptionally noble and broad-minded man.

**Prof. Nobumoto Kawamura, Niigata, Japan**

Vor zehn Jahren, als ich Ihren Mann in Brno besuchte, war er mir so freundlich und hilfsbereit. Ich werde ihm stets ein ehrendes Andenken bewahren.