

## *Beyond Academia and Politics: Understanding China and Doing Sinology in Czechoslovakia after World War II*

Olga Lomová and Anna Zádřapová

### *Abstract*

This article presents the beginnings and early development of sinology in Czechoslovakia, from 1945 when it was first established as an independent academic discipline at Charles University in Prague to 1959 when the Sino-Soviet split occurred. During this period, the foundation for what later has become known as the “Prague School” of sinology was established, with Jaroslav Průšek (1906–80) as the central figure. Using interviews with former students of Jaroslav Průšek, along with written sources, such as the popular journal *Nový Orient* (est. 1945), prefaces and postscripts to Czech translations of Chinese literature, and popular books about China published in Czech, the article demonstrates how popularization, together with academic research, played an important role in Czechoslovak sinology. The sources also reveal a significant persistence of an idealized picture of Chinese culture during World War II that was shared by Czech sinologists of the period with Czech artists and the general public. Following the Communist victory in China, the romantic vision of Chinese culture did not diminish; instead it became fused with the shared ideals of communism.

---

**Olga LOMO VÁ** is professor of Chinese literature at Charles University in Prague. Her research interests include poetry, traditional historiography, and the ideology of modernization in the twentieth century.

**Anna ZÁDRAPOVÁ** graduated from the Sinology and Czech Literature Departments at Charles University. She is currently a Ph. D. candidate working on Czechoslovak sinology and Jaroslav Průšek.