

Prof. PhDr. Otto Pick, Ph.D.

Professor Otto Pick was born on 4 March 1925 in Prague to a Czech-Jewish family. His father was the well-known German-speaking journalist, writer, translator and critic Otto Pick. Prof. Pick began his studies in Prague, where he attended an English high school. After the establishment of the Protectorate in Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939, he escaped to the Great Britain thanks to the “Nicholas Winton train”. In the UK, he was able to graduate from high school.



Otto Pick then further expanded his education at Oxford University. In 1943, he joined the Czechoslovak Army in the UK, where he served in various garrisons, and he also participated in the Normandy landings.

After the war he returned to his hometown – Prague. There he worked briefly at the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, and he enrolled at the Faculty of Law at Charles University. After the communists took power in Czechoslovakia, he, as a former member of the Czechoslovak Armoured Brigade in the UK, was forced to emigrate again – this time with his wife Zdeňka – to the UK, where he obtained a position as an editor of the BBC. He also continued his studies in history at Oxford, where he won a scholarship. After his university studies Pick embarked on an academic career. He started out as an assistant at the London School of Economics, where he completed his postgraduate studies. At the same school, his lifelong friend Ernest Gellner – the famous philosopher, sociologist and anthropologist, who came to England together with Pick via the Winton transport – worked as well. Later, Pick came to the University of Surrey in Guildford, where he worked as Dean and Vice Chancellor. There he also obtained the title of Professor of International Relations in 1973. In 1983, he became the head of the Czechoslovak section of Radio Free Europe in Munich, and afterwards he taught at the University of Munich and also at the famous Johns Hopkins University in Bologna.

When he moved back to Prague in 1991, he contributed to the creation of the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University. In 1993, Prof. Pick became the director of the Institute of International Relations and worked there until 1998; his peers and close partners there were the Deputy Director Dr. Jaroslav Janda and the editor of the renewed monthly journal *International Policy* Dobroslav Matějka. Professor Pick, thanks to the power of his extraordinary personality and personal experience and skills, defended the existence of the Institute, and generally elevated its authority, and the Institute developed dynamically under his leadership. At this time, the international reputation of the IIR was significantly strengthened, and its research agenda was interconnected with similar institutions abroad. In addition to the establishment of several control functions, Prof. Pick contributed to the modernisation of the organisation of the research through the creation of a united research department, the transition to grant-oriented research and an increase of the number of research projects. Furthermore, between 1998 and 2006, he worked as a chairman of the Scientific Council of the IIR.

In 1998, he became the First Deputy in the office of Jan Kavan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a focus on the integration of the Czech Republic into NATO. Later, he achieved a series of successes as an Ambassador at Large with a focus on Czech-German and Czech-Austrian relations. He also served as the Czech co-chairman of the Coordination Council of the Czech-German Discussion Forum and as the Czech co-chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Czech-German Fund for the Future. He participated in the reorganisation of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic as its director and later as the chairman of the Academic Board. In the years of 2000-2013, he was simultaneously an advisor to all the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. By 2013, he also worked as

a visiting professor at the Institute of International Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University.

Prof. Pick is considered to be one of the most prominent internationally recognised experts in the field of international relations. He authored many books, articles and papers, which are focused mainly on foreign and security policy.

He was awarded the Czechoslovak Medal for Valour against the Enemy (1945) and the Federal Cross of Merit (Bundesverdienstkreuz) for the support and development of democracy and he was appointed as a member of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (2002) by Queen Elisabeth II.