

Jaroslav (Pavlo) Němec: Between Chech, Ukraine, and the World – From a Literary Dynasty to Agricultural Science

Jaroslav Němec (1842–1898) exemplifies a transnational figure whose personal, political, and socio-economic circumstances led him to become deeply involved in the historical processes of multiple nations (Czech, Ukrainian, Russian) and states (Austro-Hungary, Russian Empire). This transnational engagement influenced the collective memory of this significant figure, resulting in the near loss of information about him and his contributions to cultural and scientific development. The case of Jaroslav Němec provides a unique opportunity to trace the formation of international and intercontinental scientific connections, as well as the role of scientific and public communities in shaping and disseminating ideas.

A descendant of one of the most renowned families of the Czech National Revival—writer Božena Němcová and public activist Josef Němec—Jaroslav dedicated the majority of his life to Ukraine. He embodied the best qualities of both Czech and Ukrainian cultures, serving as a bridge between these two nations. While maintaining connections with his family and the Czech intellectual community, he built his career in the Ukrainian territories of the Russian Empire, where he achieved significant recognition in the field of education. His professional journey began as a drawing teacher and culminated in his appointment as director of some of the most prestigious secondary schools in the empire, including those in Odesa, Rivne, and Vinnytsia. As an innovative educator, he developed numerous methodological approaches. However, his most significant achievements were in the scientific field, where he became the leading authority on pomology in the Russian Empire.

In 1895, as an amateur fruit grower, Jaroslav Němec received financial support from the Russian Empire's Ministry of Agriculture to conduct an expedition to the United States and Canada to study industrial fruit growing in North America. The goal of this mission was to uncover the secrets behind the large-scale success of the sector and adapt American strategies to the conditions of the Russian Empire. His selection as the leader of this scientific

project was based on his professional reputation as the foremost expert on American horticulture within the empire. Alongside his educational career, he had been deeply engaged in pomological research for many years, having been introduced to the field by his elder brother, Karel Němec, a well-known Czech pomologist.

Jaroslav Němec's primary scientific interest was in American pomological innovations, their study, and their acclimatization to the conditions of Ukrainian lands. He actively contributed to specialized horticultural journals, initiated discussions on industry development, and was recognized with numerous awards at professional exhibitions. He established a private pomological research garden in Vinnytsia, which housed the largest collection of American fruit varieties in the Russian Empire. As a result of his expedition, he authored the first comprehensive study in the Russian Empire on the development of industrial fruit growing in the United States and Canada.

The findings presented in his book stimulated further research into American horticulture within the Russian Empire and facilitated the application of American agricultural strategies across various regions. The strategic development plan he formulated laid the foundation for structured experimental research in horticulture in Ukraine. Němec's recommendations sparked public interest in fruit growing, leading to the establishment of horticultural departments within local agricultural societies. These, in turn, initiated further advancements, including the organization of exhibitions, the creation of fruit nurseries, and the establishment of state-funded pomological research stations to serve specific regions. Today, his ideas are reflected in the scientific research network of the Institute of Horticulture of the National Academy of Agrarian Sciences of Ukraine.

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