Epidemiology and Microbiology at the National Institute of Public Health, Prague, Czech Republic

Kříž B., Petráš P.
National Institute of Public Health, Prague

contributed to the development of the Czech microbiology, among others, by identifying and describing two novel bacterial genera Budvicia and Pragia, with two novel species: Budvicia aquatica and Pragia fontium.

In her honor a novel species described by Bercovier et al. was named Yersinia aldovae.

On January 1, 1949, the Department of immunological products was separated from the Institute to be converted to the State Company for Sera Production (currently called Sevapharma). On February 23, 1949, the National Institute of Public Health was split into five Departments including the Department of Microbiology and Epidemiology headed by Professor Raška and further divided into six units: microbial research, microbial and serological diagnosis, manufacture of diagnostic products, research on and diagnosis of viral infections, research on and diagnosis of tuberculosis and health statistics.

Shortly after the liberation, the Department of Microbiology and Epidemiology became a basis for the creation of new branches of the National Institute of Public Health in the Czech regions. The Department provided not only training in microbiology and epidemiology to physicians and technicians but also material and personnel assistance in building up the laboratories in Brno, Ostrava, Přerov, Uherské Hradiště, Ústí nad Labem, Karlovy Vary, Plzeň, Jihlava, Havlíčkův Brod, Tábor, Liberec and other cities. The Department manufactured diagnostic sera and antigens and issued recommendations for standardization of microbiological diagnosis. These activities were essential for the development of microbiological diagnosis in the field. A national collection of pathogenic microorganisms was created within the Department. Mobile laboratories utilized to control epidemic outbreaks and to solve complicated epidemiological problems also provided methodical guidance to the newly created laboratories.

In 1952, the Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology (IEM) was established. Professor Karel Raška, MD, DSc, was appointed director of the Institute and in 1963 also became director of the Division of Infectious Diseases of the World Health Organization in Geneva.