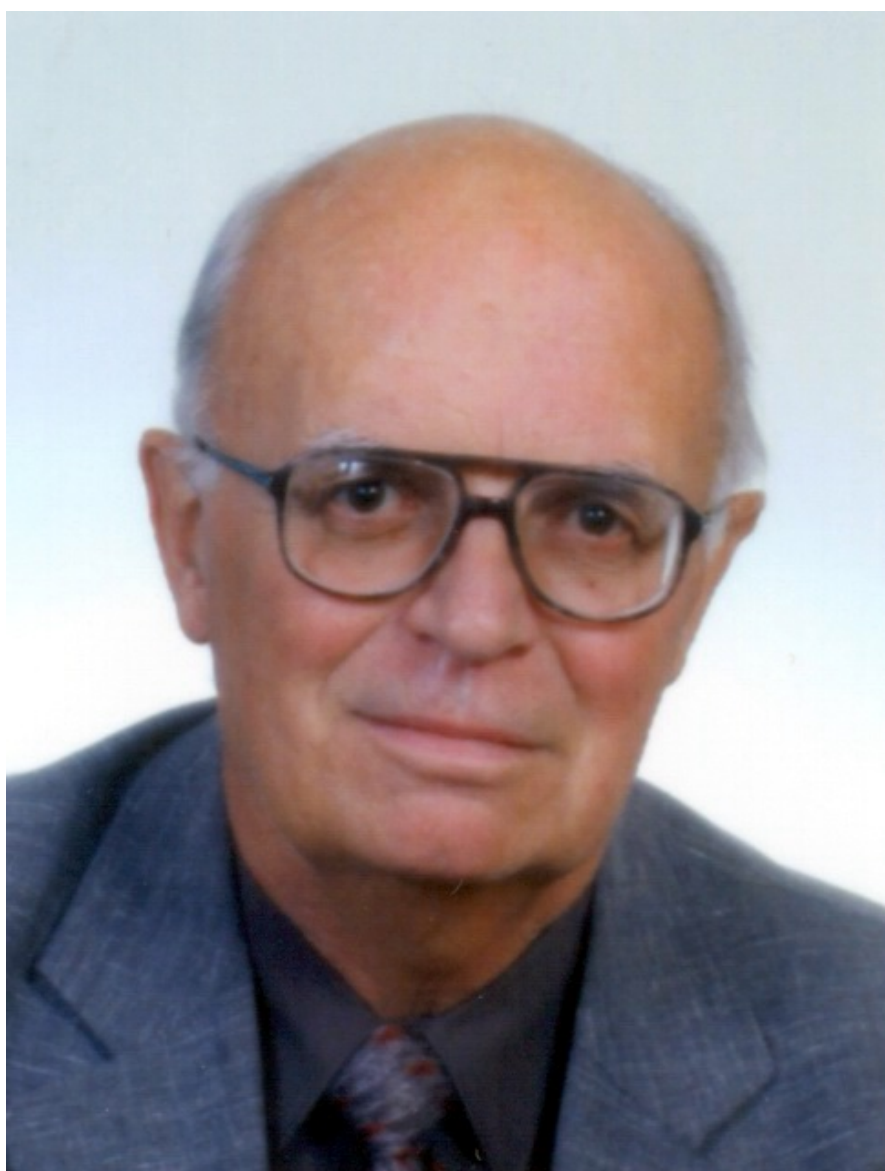


Obituary

KAREL HAMAL, 1932 - 2007

Professor, Czech Technical University in Prague

Passed away suddenly, 8 February 2007



Karel Hamal joined the Czech Technical University in Prague in 1962 after spending some time working for the Tesla radio communication company. His primary interests at that time were in microwaves and radar. At the university he founded the study of a newly emerging technology – solid state lasers. He established a world class laboratory and formed a team of international collaborators. This lab became world famous both for its scientific and educational results.

In the nineteen seventies and eighties he formed international ties between the Czech Technical University and scientists and labs in other countries and he headed the international network of satellite laser ranging stations under the roof of INTERKOSMOS. Satellite laser ranging was his main interest for more than three decades. He was one of the initiators of the international workshops on laser ranging and was involved in the organization of all the workshops for 35 years. The International Laser Ranging Service represented by its Central Bureau awarded Karel Hamal with the “SLR Pioneer Award” in 2002, for his longstanding contributions the subject, in particular, for his early technical leadership in developing and deploying the INTERKOSMOS systems, which helped to create a truly global satellite laser ranging network. Recently Karel Hamal was involved in research and development of solid state photon counters and their applications in laser ranging and space science, in millimeter precision laser ranging and new trends in information technology. Two deep space probes carried his laser ranging and photon counting devices toward the planet Mars late nineties, another two space mission are under completion in Europe and in China to be launched on Earth orbit soon.

Along with the science, Karel Hamal taught several generations of students Physics, ranging from MSc students, PhDs up to research scientists. In the early nineties, he was the driving force behind the reorganization of education at the university.

The passing of Karel Hamal is a significant loss for the University and to the world scientific community. Education and science are losing an expert and unparalleled organizer, the students are losing an excellent teacher and his colleagues are losing a man, who always erupted with new ideas and human energy.

We all will miss him.

Ivan Prochazka