

# THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE  
CZECHOSLOVAK PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

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## EDITORIAL

Our President is dead! Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who has done more for our avocation in our country than any other president because he never denied his love for stamps, has gone to that part of Heaven reserved for philatelists. Though all his work as president was difficult, the war years were most difficult and trying. In our histories we read how war wore down leaders of America as Lincoln and Wilson. We read frequently that when Mr. Roosevelt was most tired, he would retire with his stamps and in the company of these little bits of paper he always managed to find relief and relaxation. A stamp collector can understand this. His connection with stamps has been known so well that other nations have shown their regard for him philatelically. Two nations have honored him by portraying him on their postal adhesives during his lifetime. Many nations donated to him collections of their stamps in especially prepared albums, unique items. We are sure that the best memorial this country could prepare to honor this Number One philatelist would be with at least one memorial stamp, possibly two or more. The three cent for domestic use and a five cent for international use, would be very appropriate. Because of his great interest in the coming San Francisco Conference, it would be fitting to issue the stamps at some time during these sessions.

## NEW MEMBERS

- 156 Lt. Karl Zerk, Co. D, 209th I. T. B., Camp Blanding, Fla.  
157 Lt. (jg.) Frank L. Stack, Communications Office, Commandant, Navy 128, Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif.

## FROM THE SECRETARY

One of the chief aims of the founders and charter members of our Society was to make it possible for our members to contact collectors in Czechoslovakia, when the country would again be liberated in order that they might exchange, buy or sell.

The time has now come to give this matter serious attention and open a discussion as to the best ways and means by which this could be realized.

Some time at the beginning of 1944 an idea came to me which I thought would appeal to the membership and during one of the meetings of the New York Chapter I informed the members present about my plan. In brief it was as follows: Shortly before the liberation of Czechoslovakia we would have a special issue of the Specialist printed in Czech and Slovak. The issue was to have articles of interest to collectors in the homeland. Among these there should be one to tell the history of our Society from its inception to date. Then would follow articles dealing with postal issues and events connected with them in honor of

Czechoslovakia. Substantial space would be reserved for advertisements for our members and dealers. It was planned to have a large printing made and the issue to be distributed through certain pre-war channels.

When I was in Chicago last May, I discussed this matter with our editor. Mr. Kovarik, however, was able to convince me that we could not realize so ambitious a plan, for various reasons. It would take up too much space here to give all the details, but to be specific on one point, — we could not afford it financially. Printing costs could not be covered by advertising pledges I had obtained.

A short time ago, Editor Kovarik has hit upon an idea which seems a lot better than my original plan. Though it retains the original aims and purposes, it would eliminate all financial expenditures.

Mr. Kovarik proposes that several articles be written by members of the Society to be published in a leading Czechoslovak philatelic magazine as soon as this is permissible. May I add to this the following information.

Prior to 1939 I have been on excellent terms with the editor of a magazine which had the largest circulation. Some of my articles about U. S. Philately were published therein. I have almost definite proof that it has continued to appear during this war though in restricted size and under supervised conditions.

Mr. Kovarik has offered as his share to write a detailed story of the Czechoslovak Flag Stamp released in this country in 1943. The undersigned will write an article dealing with the Souvenir Sheet Overprints, released at the Czechoslovak Pavillion at the New York World's Fair in 1939-1940.

I believe that in addition to these two articles we should submit several others. I am fairly certain that among our members there is a number capable of using excellent Czech and is able to write such articles. I shall leave it to them to choose their subjects which would cover one or two printed pages the size of our Specialist.

In particular does my appeal go to Consul Novy and President Zahradnicek. Mr. Novy in one of our past issues had an article dealing with the Lidice designs. This article could be enlarged by giving a detailed description of dedicating the town of Lidice, Illinois. Since Messrs. Novy and Zahradicek both reside in Cleveland, it should be quite easy for them to collaborate on the article.

Other members whom I believe able to cooperate are: Egon Berka, A. J. Hrivnak, F. S. Meisel, Dr. Stolfa, Rudolf Secky, Bert Zenaty and others.

Of course, articles would be published with the name of the respective authors.

I shall be glad to hear from the above named gentlemen or from others who may have suggestions to offers.

Now a few words regarding possible post-war exchange with collectors in Czechoslovakia. Those who speak Czech and have had contacts over there will probably not require help. They themselves will be able to get in touch with their old acquaintances. However, the overwhelming majority of our membership does not speak or write Czech. To them I offer my help. If they will write me and let me know 1) which Czechoslovak issues they need, 2) what they can offer in Czechoslovak, U. S. or other stamps in exchange, 3) particular wishes, I will try to establish contact for them. Of course, results can not be expected the moment Czechoslovakia is liberated but reasonable time must be allowed to elapse.

J. W. LOWEY

#### BACK NUMBERS

Once in a while we receive a request for back numbers of the Czechoslovak Specialist, especially from the new members. We know there are a few members who want their Specialists bound but must wait until they get some back numbers that are missing or are badly mutilated. To these, this is a warning. We have on hand most issues from May 1940 to December 1941; all from then on to date. There is nothing to be had from Vol. I and the first issues of Vol. II. Many of those on hand are fast becoming scarce and we advise all members to check over their back numbers and fill in the vacant spaces. For the present we will ask members to pay us postage only for copies issued during their membership and those copies issued before they became members will be sold for five cents each.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

All members who change their address should report this to the editor; failure to do so costs the Society money for return postage. If you have a zone number, please use it. Thank You.

### REVIEW

We have before us Kessler's Specialized Postage Stamp Catalogue of Czechoslovakia, Eastern Silesia and Siberia for 1945. It is a wonderful catalogue — the best specialized catalogue of Czechoslovakia ever published in our country. Mr. Kessler, who has been a member of our Society almost from the beginning, issued price lists of Czechoslovak stamps in previous years, — Using Scott Catalogue numbers. It is obvious that these numbers cannot be used for a specialized catalogue — yet many of us want to make some comparison between Kessler and Scott; even in this detail the Kessler catalogue helps us with a table of Scott and Kessler numbers. The Catalogue goes into detail on all major varieties; this is a great help to those who collect these and who want to know just what can be had. The prices in the catalogue are more in keeping with present market prices, which means they are higher than previous listings. All in all we'd say: It is a very fine piece of work and something we need very much. The price is 50c as noted on the cover and may be ordered from Arthur I. Kessler, 551 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, New York.

We also have before us a revised edition of Billig's Handbook, Vol. 1. The revision, in our estimation, took good care of the change in prices and in all follows the line of the Kessler Catalogue. There are some differences, however, as we note the listing of the "Vejprt" Forgeries, illustrations of pre-Czechoslovak Republic cancels from various towns (Austrian stamps, of course). This Handbook contains, besides Czechoslovakia, a specialized listing of U. S. New York Foreign Mail cancellations, Allenstein, Angra, Austria, Bosnia, Carinthia, Dalmatia, Danube Steam Navigation Company, etc. The price listed in the book is \$3.50, is bound in cloth and may be had from Fritz Billig, 151-14 85th Avenue, Jamaica 2, New York.

Mr. Billig acquaints us that a specialized listing of some Hradchany stamps will appear in a forthcoming volume of his Handbooks. That this may be good, we are sure, because some parts are written by Mr. John Velek, whose work on the 40h Hradchany appeared in the Czechoslovak Specialist in 1942.

### EVERY STAMP TELLS A STORY

By Dr. Gerald Druce

Every one of the hundreds of Czechoslovak stamps has a story to tell about the home land, its history, natural beauties or interesting personalities of this and past ages. These stamps tell of glorious days and of times of grief.

The Scout Stamps were the first of Czechoslovakia's own postage stamps. The over-printed Austrian and Hungarian issues in 1919 were an obvious consequence of the events of October 28, 1918, when liberty came to the people.

The first definite issues showing Hradcany Castle serve to remind us of the nerve-centre of so much Czech history. The pictorial issues that came later give us glimpses of other cultural and interesting places like Podedbrady, Nitra, Karluv Tyn and Krumlov. Romantic beauty spots like the Tatra lakes and mountains, the Ruthenian Wooden church at Jasna have also caught the spirit of Czechoslovakia and the part played by the Czechoslovak Legions in the last war on the various fronts were also commemorated in philately.

There were, of course, series with portraits of President Masaryk and later of Pres. Benes. Besides these, General Stefanik appeared on a number of value simultaneously with those of the presidents. Stefanik was the Slovak collaborator who worked with them for the nation's liberation in 1918. Then there were portraits of the composers, Smetana and Dvorak; the founders of the Sokol gymnastic clubs, Tyrš and Fugner; the pedagogues, Komensky and Purkyne and in 1929 a thousand years after his martyrdom, a series was devoted to "Good King Wenceslas."

Mention is made above of the stamps commemorating the exploits of the Legions. At the time these exploits led the British Prime Minister (Lloyd George) to telegraph, "We shall never forget the debt we owe to you," but twenty years later another Prime Minister (Neville Chamberlain) referred to the Czechoslovak nation as "a people of whom we know nothing." Let us therefore now learn all we can about Czechoslovakia and its people through the country's stamps. Now that they are difficult to obtain their worth has been brought home to us, for there was a time when it was generally cheaper to buy Czechoslovak stamps in England and America than in the country of origin.

Besides contemporary history, we can learn something of Czechoslovak art for some of the nation's best artists and engravers worked upon the designs of various issues.

Among the later issues was that known as the Little Entente series, that appeared in conjunction with similar Yugoslav and Rumanian issues under the title "Petite Entente" and recalls the efforts towards peaceful collaboration before the German menace overpowered Europe. After the series of castles (each with its long history) there were pictorials of industrial Pilsen or Plzen as the Czechs spell it, and Kosice cathedral. Then in 1933 came the series of Slovak stamps with Hlinka's portrait. These, and the single stamp of the Carpatho-Ukraine, together with the "Protectorate" issue recall the tragic days of 1938 and 1939. Now that victory seems within sight many friends of Czechoslovakia look forward with keen anticipation to the first issue of new stamps from a re-born Czechoslovakia.

### DR. BENES AS A CZECHOSLOVAK

By an English Student

The writer heard it stated recently, by a Czech, that Dr. Eduard Benes could not be regarded as a typical representative of his countrymen. The reasons adduced were that the President does not drink, smoke, frequent cafes or roister in any way. Now, let it be said at once, this observation was not seriously meant and has no particular significance. It carries with it, however, certain implications which might usefully be disposed of.

In the first place, an Englishman may perhaps be permitted to remark that this kind of observation calls to mind the rather unfortunate habit, which enjoyed a vogue among certain members of Prague's intelligentsia in the inter-war period, of deliberately disparaging their own most admirable qualities and at the same time endeavouring to acquire the far less admirable, if, possibly, more picturesque, characteristics of other nations. The merest glimpse into Czech history at once explains and excuses this tendency, but it is a dangerous one and the innocent foreigner is probably to be pardoned if he interprets it, quite unjustifiably, as indicating a feeling of inferiority or even insincerity. The remarks quoted, suggesting as they do that the Czechoslovak people really correspond to the popular British conception of "White Horse Inn" Austrians or jolly Bavarians, are an illustration, carried *ad absurdum*, of this point.

Notwithstanding, it remains a fact that Dr. Benes cannot be accurately described as a typical, average Czechoslovak. It is a simple truism to say that no Czechoslovak can. On the other hand, it does appear to the disinterested observer that the Czechoslovak President strikingly represents, in many ways, the most fundamental and valuable qualities and characteristics of his people.

The history of the Czechs and Slovaks is essentially a history of struggle in which they have always been up against the big battalions, in which every step forward has been made at the price of heavy toil and sacrifice, in which the goal of liberty and independence could only be attained through eternal vigilance and unceasing work. That history has left its heritage clearly to be seen in the broad mass of the Czechoslovak people of our day. Eduard Benes naturally shared in that legacy and its influence was strengthened by the fact that the history of his nation had a parallel in his own personal history.

It is a far cry from the Bohemian village of Kozlany to the castle of Prague, from a peasant home to the leadership of a vigorous nation. For Eduard Benes that progress entailed much toil and self-sacrifice. In his early years it meant much hard study to make his way from the village school to the Charles University of Prague, much hard work to maintain himself as a student by free-lance

journalism and coaching, much courage and determination to choose, as part of his preparation for life, a financially precarious period of study in France and Germany. Of his part in the struggle for Czechoslovakia independence it is almost superfluous to say that, here again, Benes was called upon to face a long period of patient, unspectacular, unremitting labour, coupled with personal hardship and danger. Nor did 1918 herald, either for Dr. Benes or for the Czechs and Slovaks, a period of respite and ease. It merely inaugurated yet another era of toil and vigilance. The very qualities that, in the Czechoslovak people, enable them to achieve and deserve their independence are those which, in Eduard Benes's own character, enabled him to contribute so powerfully to the struggle.

In 1918 the Czechs and Slovaks were, practically speaking, an unknown quantity outside Central Europe. As, subsequently, contacts with the West developed and increased, they came to be generally liked and respected for their industry, their practical sense, their consistency and reliability, their thoroughness and their technical ability. This was the light in which they appeared to their business associates, to visitors and to others who acquired a personal knowledge of them. It is remarkable how plainly those same characteristics were reflected in the principles and methods employed by Dr. Benes in his conduct of Czechoslovak foreign policy. In international political circles his diligence became a by-word; he pursued with the utmost consistency the fundamental purpose of security which corresponded exactly with the deepest instincts of his people; he worked tirelessly and enthusiastically for this but never permitted his hopes to lure his actions away from the practical realities of a given situation; when ambitious projects on which he had lavished strenuous labour and high hopes fell short of realization, he refused to be discouraged but set to work at once to examine with equal zeal the alternative possibilities that might still advance the cause he had at heart; where other ministers were surrounded with their technical staffs, Dr. Benes, with his amazing knowledge, thoroughness and attention to detail, was able, if necessary, to be his own expert. In short, the attributes which the Czechs as a nation have acquired in the course of their hard, grim history were all brought into play with the most valuable results by this man who for seventeen years held the key position of Foreign Minister and subsequently became the head of the Czechoslovak State.

That the Czechoslovaks can revel and be gay, that they have a sense of humour and a taste for enjoyment, anyone who has lived among them knows and appreciates full well; but to set these qualities above the sterling merits just discussed is unreal. If it be true that Dr. Benes is sober and serious, conscientious and assiduous, undemonstrative and unflamboyant, then it is surely due in large degree to the great weight of responsibility which he has carried so long and so willingly in the cause and to the immeasurable gain of the Czechoslovak people. And just as, in the present war, Winston Churchill, that epitome of the best fighting qualities of the British people, has stood out so magnificently as a great leader of his country, so has Czechoslovakia been well served by the profound, solid and essentially Czech qualities of Eduard Benes.

### THE CZECHS AS AMERICANS

Dr. Joseph Cada

Reprinted from "Rieger" — official organ of Rieger Club, Chicago.

It is a rather common axiom which holds that we know least about and abuse most those who are closest to us. Our knowledge of the Bohemian people in America is no exception to this rule. We dismiss our embarrassment to a question concerning our own people here in America with a shrug or with some such excuse as: "Oh the Bohemians, yes, I guess they're allright. You really should ask So-and-So; he knows more about it."

What are the facts concerning those people? What, if anything, had they contributed to that cultural and cosmopolitan complex known as America?

The accurate sources concerning Czech life in early Colonial America are several. One is the reference to Augustine Herman, who settled in New York about 1650 and who ended his days on the BOHEMIA MANOR, a 20,000 acre estate in Maryland. Another source points out to Bedrich Filip, a prosperous New York merchant, whose manor house has become the city museum of Yonkers, New York. A third reference is a letter of the early governor of Massachusetts,

John Winthrop to the effect that John Amos Komensky, the world famed Czech educator, has been invited to become the first president of Harvard University. The 1750's saw a number of Bohemian Protestants, the so-called "Bohemian Brethren" settle in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, where on Christmas Eve, of 1741 they named their settlement Bethlehem. — now America's famous steel center.

During the Revolution and in the first fifty years of the XIXth century only few Czechs came to America. Some of them, nevertheless, acquired either great wealth or fame. Francis Vlasak, a partner of Jacob Astor, became a millionaire. M. Dignowity, the first Bohemian physician in the U.S.A., practiced medicine in Texas beginning with 1832. Chas. Hruby taught modern languages at Miami College, Ohio. Charles Jonas eventually became the Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin, and the Korbels Brothers established famous vineyards in California.

In the generation following 1850 some 25,000 Czechs came to America. They settled in those cities and states which henceforth lodged their important colonies; namely, Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Omaha, and Milwaukee, and Texas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri. Occupationally they were tailors, brewers, cigar makers, wood workers and metal craftsmen. They established their first fraternal society in St. Louis during March of 1854 and published their first paper, the "Slovan Amerikansky," later renamed the "Slavie," at Racine, Wisconsin, in 1860. In 1857 and 1864 they founded their first Czech parishes, the first St. Johns in St. Louis, the second St. Vaclavs, in Chicago. These evidences of Bohemian energy and culture were the beginning of that active life in America which had resulted in the appearance of some 350 different journals and periodicals during a span of eighty years, in scores of fraternal societies of Catholic, Freethought, and Protestant nature, and in hundreds of Catholic and Protestant churches scattered throughout the country.

After 1880 immigration from Bohemia grew rapidly. Up to 1903 the Government Census showed an arrival of approximately 5,000 persons per annum. From 1903 to 1914 the figure leaped to 10,000 per year, the maximum being reached in 1907 when 13,554 came. According to census figure of 1920, the number of Bohemians of first and second generation amounted to 622,796. The Slovaks by the same census numbered 619,866. By the count of 1930 the total number of Czechoslovaks was 1,382,079, or one one-hundredth of America's total population.

Though proportionately small in numbers the Czechs left an appreciable influence upon the country. Even though they could not claim as large a share of that wealth of contribution which the English, French, or German settlers had given the new country, and while they had not participated in the drama which liberated America or endowed it with its political immigrants did bring to the U.S.A. certain factors now forming a part of America's national heritage. They came to this country with a tremendous faith in its greatness, destiny, and courage. They appreciated its hospitality and repaid it for what they had received with an ardent devotion. Such tendencies as they had at times manifested in the propagation of their own heritage, were not always separatistic attempt but rather indications of a desire to contribute to the American complex from such values and things as they themselves possessed or enjoyed. In times of crisis they had a childlike trust in America's power to survive and became an optimistic force fighting all defeatism. They were thoroughly democratic, refused to recognize social stratification and never attempted discrimination in their own ranks. Specifically, they brought to America a love of music, art, and decoration. They influenced its methods of agriculture. They built new neighborhoods, formed a valued part in America's skilled labor, and contributed to invention. They held out with a dogged passive resistance in the most unfavorable kind of environment, fighting nature in the bad lands of the West and resisting the debilitating influence of American industry and sweat shop in the manufacturing centers. Though the country might receive them calously or even brutally, they were grateful for its freedom and opportunity. They identified the best interests of their people with good Americanism and took an active part in the pulsating life of a young nation testing its strength and seeking to build a new future of humanity. Finally they paid their newly adopted land the greatest compliment by endowing Czechoslovakia, whom they helped to free, with the same political forms and institution which the United States had evolved in the course of its destiny.