

THE CZECHOSLOVAK SPECIALIST

OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CZECHOSLOVAK PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

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Editor Frank J. Kovarik, 2502 So. Kedzie Ave., Chicago 23, Ill.

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EDITORIAL

The last issue of your little magazine which does so much to acquaint you with those small pieces of paper which you prize so highly, deviated considerably from all accepted standards of the paper. We wonder how many members noticed this? There was no mention of dues! Yet, without your dues, your Society cannot function; without your dues, your publication would become as extinct as the dodo; without your dues, your stamps may even lose in their actual value. Does this sound illogical? Analyze it and make your own deductions and conclusions.

Your new treasurer, Mr. Edward J. Sabol, 350 Jackson St., Bristol, Pa., (can you guess why we included the entire address?) asked us to petition the \$1.00 members to move over to the \$2.00 class and the \$2.00 members to the 5 buck class. Why? Do you realize what you are getting for your money? We challenge you to name one specialistic group in our country dealing with stamps, proofs and essays, other than those of the United States, that can show greater progress than your Society. Sure, you do not collect stamps with an eye to their future value. Yet deep back in your cranium you look at your stamps as an insurance policy. Should fate strike you and you feel you are about to enter into an untimely grave, in your last moments you'll say: "this should be able to take care of my family until my family is able to take care of itself." Say it isn't so and we'll assure you that you are not telling the truth.

Now, dear member! This is an urgent appeal to you! You are paying only one dollar a year to belong to the oldest and best specialistic organization in the United States. O. K. You are paying two dollars. Have you noticed the price increases in Czech stamps as compared with stamps of other countries? Why is this? Your little paper has popularized Czechoslovak stamps, to your personal benefit. Are you Scotch enough to accept this condition without expending one penny out of your pocket? Strike your breast once more with a fervent "mea culpa" and then send in your check for \$5.00 or more and thereby continue to reap the benefits of your investment.

APOLOGIES

In the past we never failed to wish the members, on behalf of the officers and editor, a Merry Christmas. We did not forget you this year, we merely failed to remember at the proper time. (Boy, did we get out of that one!) As this is being typed for the printer, we are still quite far from Christmas. Your editor believes in the efficacy of prayer as much as in the utility of work. He believes as much in the power of the Supernatural as he does in the bigness of human action. May this Christmas bring to every reader of these lines that peace and happiness which we, the common people, so fervently desire. And, lest we forget, to all of you

A HAPPY and PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!

TENTH ANNIVERSARY SHOW AND AUCTION IN CHICAGO

In our last issue of the Specialist we told you that the annual show and auction held under the auspices of the Chicago group has been named "THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY" in commemoration of the 10 years existence of our Society. We are now in a position to give you the date for this great celebration: April 3, 1949. It is imperative that donations toward the auction reach the auction chairman as soon as possible, so that a complete catalog of the auction be published in the March issue of the Specialist. As copy for this issue goes to the printer Feb. 12, it is necessary that the material reach the chairman by Feb. 1, 1949, so he'd have ample time to prepare the catalog. From past experience we know that material which reached the chairman too late to be included in the published catalogue brought less than the material advertised and only those who could attend reaped the benefit. Please cooperate and send your material pronto, right away, in hand, tout de suite, to Mr. Wm. Glawe, Jr., 9640 So. Seeley Ave., Chicago 43, Ill.

We also told you that the show is for every member, not only for members of the Chicago area. We ask every member who would like to exhibit material for competition notify the chairman, Mr. Geo. Kobyłka, c/o Ace Co., 3250 W. 25th St., Chicago 23, Ill. It is very important that Mr. Kobyłka learns early what you plan to show, how many pages you want to exhibit, page size, etc. It is the desire of your committee to give the visiting public a well balanced show; unless information is received well in advance, this plan presents great difficulties. Don't worry about competition! Those exhibitors who won first awards before cannot compete for ribbons. They promise to fill in to balance the show. Our's is not a society which caters to a certain few!

Your publicity chairman, who is also editor of this modest publication, asks those of you who can write about Czech stamps, to do so. You have seen what a few writers have done: Hrivnak, Russell, Lowey, Velek, Greenawalt, Blizil and others. You have notes, but don't know how to prepare the story? Send these notes to the editor with an outline of how you'd like the material presented and the editor will then turn it to his staff of ghost writer and you'll be surprised what a fine article will be published in the "TENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE" of "STAMPS" and later reprinted in our Specialist. Of course, we do not want you to write: "Kindly write an article on the Allegory Issue" and expect a 20 page article published under your name! For further advice on this write to F. J. Kovarik, 2502 So. Kedzie Ave., Chicago 23, Ill. and use any kind of a stamp on the envelope but place it there so that the town cancellation would strike the stamp smack on the nose. Your editor loves that!

Last but not least! there is one more chairman on this committee of chairmen: the general chairman: Mr. Roman Reinowski, 1939 Highland Ave., Berwyn, Ill. The first show and auction was his idea. The second show and auction was forced upon us by his drumming on the idea that the Society should have a fund for some worthy philatelic project. This is our third venture. Again Roman presents the inspiration. Don't disappoint him! No, girls, Roman is married, but, we don't blame you, he is a swell guy.

SCOTT'S 1949 VOL. II CATALOGUE LOADED WITH PRICE CHANGES

Czechoslovakia's Victory Issue Souvenir Sheet of 1945, reproducing nos. 288-292 on a piece of thin cardboard, has been listed as No. 292A.

ON THE "ORLOJ"

In the October 30, 1948, issue of STAMPS appeared an article on the great and famous clock, the "Orloj," from the pen of our president, Mr. Blizil. Some kind soul sent this issue by air mail (a costly project) to the Ministry of Posts in Praha, who thanked Mr. Blizil and let him in on a big secret: a new series of post cards is in preparation to be issued early this year, one of which is to portray the orloj.

THIRTY YEARS OF CZECHOSLOVAK STAMPS

Frantisek Novotny

The first Czechoslovak stamp was "born" December 18, 1918. We know that the design was not an accident but the result of serious study of the great Czech artist, Alfons Mucha.

Mucha once said: "No motif could be holier than our historic Hradchany palaces. Our eyes sought them in serf days, but the view was only a misty darkness. From the windows of the Praha Castle no light shone on Praha; the nation almost stopped hoping that the prophecy of the great Jan Amos Komensky (Comenius) could be fulfilled."

And he continued: "Every nation has its Palladium, to which it offers its fate. Ever since childhood days I saw in the glorious forms of the Church of St. Vitus the material incorporation of this symbol. For this reason I could choose no other design for the country's first postage stamps; these were the first free steps of the Czech nation."

As we contemplate the 30 years of our stamps, let us not forget the author who certainly did not fathom that his final gaze upon the Hradchany shall be clouded with greater haze. He died July 14, 1939.

Truly, first steps, especially of our postal department and its first stamps. If the most famous artist of the nation was requested to create the first stamps we feel sure that already then a special significance was attached to the stamp subjects. Thus was laid a foundation from which evolved a new way, without regard to what the Czechs or Slovaks until then were accustomed to see on postage stamps. A new way with a cheerful aim, its result could be watched year after year.

Ten years ago we were contemplating the twentieth anniversary of our postage stamp and it was then we said that Alfons Mucha created a special type of stamps, which have shown a true Slavonic motif. Though imperfectly printed, we still liked them best. They were like a modestly dressed child making its first steps in this world and at the youthful age of 20 years could match its older friends who have lived almost a century.

The evaluation of the Czech stamp, with but few exceptions, showed constant and steady improvement because it reached a stage where all the elements necessary for perfection cooperated harmoniously: the designer, the engraver and the printer. We go from the 5h Hradchany stamp, to the personification of the Republic issued in 1938. We see the progressive evolution of the Hradchany stamp, Benda's "dove," Brunner's "liberated Republic" and Obrovsky's "husbandry and knowledge." Artistic designs which lacked a printing know-how. Step by step new designs and better workmanship have shown the art and work of the Czechoslovaks. If the Czech work predominated, it was but the result of the one thousand years of Slovakia's subjection to Magyar tyranny.

With the first Czech stamps came a new factor on the international field which in every way showed the Czech's and Slovak's sincere desire for a peaceful and productive work in the construction of a happy home for its nation. It is for this reason that it issues so many stamps with the portrait of that democratic philosopher, humanist and first president, T. G. Masaryk. But already in 1928, the jubilee issue presents views of historic places and constructions. We have here not only historic sites or memorials of a thousand years of culture but also pictures showing social care for the citizens of the Republic.

Not one, but many are the stamps reproducing Czech art of its time and reminds us of great men in its portraits. We sometimes hear criticism that our postal department failed to portray some of the great men of its history, but we mustn't forget that we are surrounded by states who have a 100 year tradition as stamp issuing countries and if we compare the two, this criticism would certainly fit our neighbors.

Mother and child, eternal symbol of life, has been presented on Czech stamps with a tenderness equal to the cultural level of the nation. If for these stamp designs were chosen samples of works of the country's greatest artists, it is also proof that the nation recognizes its artists of the past and the present.

Smetana and Dvorak, Manes and Ales, Komensky, too, can tell collectors in other lands about that little country in the center of Europe.

Military motifs on our stamps were few and used only to commemorate not wars, but battles for freedom. Czechoslovakia lived, created and built for peace. Perhaps for that reason was the awakening so dreadful.

Occupation by the enemies severed progress and trampled into nothingness all that in this field had been accomplished. If someone today decided to write about Czech stamps, he'd have to stop with the year 1938, for 1945 does not mean continuation but resumption, a new beginning. A new beginning because the traditional evolution was damaged by political circumstances, which resulted in several "foreign issues," but even the disunity had its repercussions.

As we look upon the stamps issued in the last three years we cannot help but admire how step by step we are again gaining in our ability to produce products which proudly carry the label "Made in Czechoslovakia." We do not mean that some stamps of these three years did not equal or even surpass products issued before 1948; we merely wish to point out that the struggle is on again and as in the past, we again hope to produce the world's finest stamp emissions.

The sooner we join the gap 1938-1945, the sooner we prove to collectors everywhere, that our's are consistently the best stamps, the happier will all collectors be who collect and specialize in the stamps of Czechoslovakia.

NEW MEMBERS

359. Charles Veselka, 2129 So. Pulaski Rd., Chicago 23, Ill.
 360. John Schuster, Jr., Box 313, Denmark, Wis.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

85. John L. Havers, RD #2, Box 431, Johnstown, Pa.

THE LATEST NEWS

As we go to press we read that by order of the government, all stamp catalogs published in Czechoslovakia must have but one number for any one stamp. We also hear that Zumstein Catalogue will fall in line and number their Czecho stamps likewise. As soon as we learn the new numbering, we, too, shall fall in line, for we believe this an excellent idea.

Your editor has received a Czech handbook, published in Praha by the Ministry of Posts and many members asked how and where they could procure this very fine brochure. Until this week we couldn't answer this query, now we have two answers and advise the members to choose one or the other.

Your president, Mr. Geo. A. Blizil, 2364 Queenston Rd., Cleveland Heights 18, Ohio, writes that the Government sells the books at \$3.00 and any one interested may write to Mr. Blizil, mail him the money plus postage and he'll gladly get it for you from the Ministry, unless you want to go to the trouble yourself.

Mr. Arthur I. Kessler, 527 Fifth Ave., New York 17, N. Y., writes: I am ready to write to the Ministry of Posts and ask them to give our members a rebate, we should be able to get them for \$2.50 prepaid. Have you any idea how many members would be interested?

Ladies and gentlemen, there you have it.

PLEASE

Many members continue to send dues to the editor instead of mailing them to the treasurer. Your editor is a very busy man, and your treasury cannot afford the extra 3 cents postage it costs to mail these to the treasurer, so, please, send them where they belong. Thank you!

CHECK LIST OF THE ISSUES OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

Continued

St. Albert Issue



37

Issued to commemorate the 950th anniversary of the martyr death of St. Albert, Bishop of Praha, and apostle to the Prussians who murdered him instead of embracing his teachings of Christianity.

The design was copied by the engraver, Jindra Schmidt, from a plastic prepared by Dr. K. Dvorak. Large format, rotary press printed and perforated 12½. In the sheet of 100 stamps are found 12 coupons; these were prepared and engraved by J. A. Svengsbir, with the monogram "V" and the text "Sv. Vojtech."

CHECK LIST

Our no.	Scott no.	Drufila no.	value	type	Color
90	326	450	1.60K	37	gray a. with coupon
91	327	451	2.40K	37	rose carmine a. with coupon
92	328	452	5. K	37	blue green a. with coupon

First Day of Issue covers



38

Lidice Memorial Issue



39

The fifth anniversary of the Lidice murder was remembered by a people who suffered much since 1938. The outright murder of the population of Lidice and its complete destruction was even less dreadful than the shackling of the minds and souls of the citizens of once free and independent Czechoslovakia by the Nazi hydra.

The design for the two lower values was the work of K. Svolinsky and the high value was authored by J. Kaplicky. The engraving was done by J. Schmidt. Printed in the large format from steel engraved plates of 100 subjects and 12 ornamental coupons. Perforated 12½.

CHECK LIST

93	329	453	1.20K	38	black a. with coupon
94	330	454	1.60K	38	gray black a. with coupon
95	331	455	2.40K	39	violet red a. with coupon

First Day of Issue cover

(to be continued)

THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC STAMP

The Ministry of Posts of the Czechoslovak Republic announces two commemorative stamps to honor the thirtieth anniversary of the Republic, to be issued October 28, 1948. The denominations will be 1.50 and 3. K.

The design is the work of the youthful generation of creative art as represented by the academic artist of Slovak extraction, Vaclav Sivko. It represents a workingman's family, a symbol of work, the building of socialism, and peace. The design is intended to convey the impression of a mild, contented family.

In the left portion of the stamp is a pastoral scene of Czech landscape with the historic Mount Rip in the background; at the right blast furnaces symbolic of "progressive industry" in the Republic. In the upper right hand corner are the year dates "1918-1948," reminding us of the thirtieth anniversary of the Republic.

The stamps will be printed in the larger format, and as is usual with this size, twelve tabs, in otherwise blank spaces of the sheet, will show a linden twig complete with leaves and flowers, as also the year dates "1918-1948."

The engraving is the work of the young artist, J. A. Svengsbir. The name of the author is in the left below the bottom frame line whereas that of the engraver is at right bottom.

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NEW ADVERTISING RATES

Due to the steadily increasing cost of printing and even the postage goes up! we find it necessary to increase the advertising rates. Beginning January 1, 1949, the new rates are:

	1 insertion	5 insertions	10 or more
1 page	5.00	4.75	4.50
½ page	3.50	3.35	3.15
¼ page	2.15	2.00	1.80
⅓ page	1.50	1.35	1.25
1/16 page	1.00	.85	.75

10% discount to members.

ROMANCE AND DRAMA LIE HIDDEN IN THE STAMPS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

by W. L. Russell

A man said to me recently, "There's not much interest in collecting these European countries. No stories in 'em! I think I'll stick to Australians!"

His imagination, it need not be added, is very meagre. He little knows the drama, the stark tragedy, the poetry, romance, tears, and laughter that are depicted on many of the stamps of Europe, and none more so than on those of Czechoslovakia.

Here, indeed, is a field that will yield enormous returns if you are looking for little stories. Most of the stamps of Czechoslovakia can unfold a tale, if you've a little imagination and a soul that soars above the material limitations of paper, ink, and gum. Let's see what we can discover in a few of its issues.

It is the year 1942. The Nazi terror in the so-called "Protectorate" has failed utterly to quell the spirit of the hardy Czechs. . . . In the blackness of the night a high-flying plane cuts out its engines and comes lower. Three figures drop from it and are swallowed up in the darkness. Days pass, each one bringing closer the morning of May 27. On that day a huge black car eats up the road on its way to the Hradcany. It passes through the Prague suburb of Liben, and slows down to take a steep hairpin bend. As it does so, a man jumps on the running board, drawing an automatic from under his raincoat. It misfires! He jumps off to make way for a companion, who throws a heavy grenade . . . and Heydrich, the butcher of Bohemia, lies mortally wounded in the wrecked car.

"Get them, whatever the cost!" orders Himmler. Ten million crowns are offered for information. Twice this amount brings no response, and the hunt goes on. Three weeks later, on June 18, the men are cornered in the Church of Charles Borromae, near the Vltava river in Prague, and three brave men die. The parachutists' work is done.

Only a tiny fragment of Czech history, perhaps, but one that is conjured up for you by Scott's No. 277, which shows a portrait of Staff Sergeant Josef Gabcik, the leader of the parachutists.

Let's take a happier period in the life of the Czechs. It is the year 1918, and after 300 years, the nation is again free. In the fierce upsurge of patriotism which accompanies the revolution the cry is raised "We must have our own stamps!" Members of the National Committee visit the atelier of the gifted academician, Professor Alfons Mucha, one of the foremost artists and a recognized authority on the history of his country. He is asked to design a stamp which will symbolize the newly-formed republic, and proudly accepts the commission.

He has not much time, nor does he need it. Before putting pencil to paper he muses, thus: "Each nation has some palladium of its own which embodies its past history and its hopes for the future. With us it is undoubtedly the Hradcany Castle, with the spires of St. Vitus's Cathedral beyond it. These, without doubt, will give a vivid interpretation of the Czech state."

He elaborates his theme. The upper corners of his design are given small leaves. Slavic symbols, these. The Czechs and Slovaks have survived many centuries of oppression and the budding leaves are an expression of the ever-awakening national life. He adds two little roosters to the lower corners. They announce, in any language, the coming of a new day! To the right he puts in the cupola of the Church of St. Nicholas, and the design is almost finished.

But what is this? Surely the sun cannot rise behind the Cathedral? That view is of the west, not the east. Ah! One must allow a little artistic license to so great a draftsman. Mucha merely wishes to again symbolize the dawn of a new day!

Thus was born the Hradcany series of stamps which, despite primitive production methods, were to tell the world for three years that Czechoslovakia was on the philatelic map.

For our next drama-in-miniature, let us go back a little earlier in Czech history—back to the days of World War I.

It is 1914, and war has broken out between the Allies and the Central Pow-



ers. In Paris a group of Czechs reside—some are in exile from their homeland, others study at the Sorbonne, all are hostile to the Austro-Hungarian regime.

"France fights Austria!" they cry. "Therefore we shall fight for France!"

They approach Professor Denis, who lectures on Bohemian history at the Sorbonne, and who supports the propaganda of these exiles against imperialistic Austria. He at once agrees that a Czech troop should be created in the French Army. However, it is not as easy as it looks. The French Army authorities are suspicious of these "hostile citizens" and bluntly state, "The Czechs can only join the Foreign Legion!"

Does this deter them? Not at all! Despite the fact that the Foreign Legion contains at this time only the dregs of humanity; despite the mistrust of the French authorities, if the Foreign Legion is the only way to hit back at Austria, they argue, they will join it! And join it they do.

Thus we find that the First Company of the Third Battalion in the First Foreign Legion is composed of Czechs. They call themselves the "Nazdar" Company ("Na zdar" being a customary form of greeting amongst all Czechs, somewhat equivalent to the German "Heil") and go down to Bayonne to train. There, a little later, an interesting ceremony takes place. The members of the Company are paraded to take the oath. At the same time, they receive a standard which the ladies of Bayonne have made for them. It bears on it the double-tailed lion of Bohemia. Behold, then, the spectacle! At the right, beside the flag, stand two French officers—Commandant Salle and Lieutenant Chapoulet. At the left, the troops are formed up to take the oath. The standard itself is held by the standard-bearer, Karel Bezdicek. In front of the standard-bearer S. Svoboda, in the uniform of the French Legion, reads the oath, while in the background is the sponsor of the Company, Ernest Denis. Thus is born the Czech Legion, which grows rapidly thenceforward, serving in France, Italy and Russia. All honor to it!

You like this pen-portrait of an historic ceremony? It is to be seen on Scott's No. 196, a stamp which bears the inscription "PRISAHA ROTY NAZDAR V BAYONNE" ("Administering the oath to the Nazdar Company in Bayonne").

While on the subject of the Czech Legion, let's see what we can discover about one of its most distinguished members.

The year is 1880, and the scene is laid in the village of Kosarisky, near Bresova, in Southern Slovakia. No valley of plenty, this! On the contrary, the land is poor and hard. But it has its history, nevertheless. In Reformation times the district was an asylum for the evangelical preachers of Moravia. Its people are bold and a little rebellious, and their land was the focal point of a Slovak revolt against the Hungarians in 1848.

But to return to our story. There is joy in the home of an evangelical parson by the name of Stefanik, to whom has been born a son, Milan. The Stefaniks have always been thinkers, with a pan-Slav outlook, and young Milan soon exhibits the characteristics of his father. He goes to study, first at Bratislava, then at Prague. His natural inquisitiveness leads him to seek knowledge in all directions, and he pursues many courses, not the least of which is literature and the art of versification. His poems breathe the spirit of revolt against Hungary. He dreams dreams as he walks the streets of Golden Prague.

Eventually Milan decides to devote his energies to astronomy. So, in 1905, we find him in Paris, and there he is welcomed into the home of Jansen, astronomer at the Meudon Observatory, to which Stefanik is now attached. In 1907 he is sent to Mont Blanc, highest of the Alps, and there he directs an Observatory. In the years following, he goes to Spain, to Africa, to Turkestan, to Tahiti. He publishes many learned treatises in French and Italian. War comes, and Stefanik joins the other Czechs and Slovaks in Paris to take up arms against the common foe. The man of Science dons a uniform!

His advancement is rapid—a major in 1917, a colonel in February 1918 and a Brigadier-General in July 1918. He gets around, too! Battle of Arras in May 1915; on the Salonika front against von Mackensen later; Roumania; then to Russia in 1917 where his activities result in settling the internal problems of

the Czechs and Slovaks there. Later in 1917 he visits the United States. In early 1918 he organizes the Czech volunteers in Italy. November of 1918 finds him in Vladivostok, encouraging the 70,000 Czechoslovaks as they end their famous Anabasis.

Now, however, Stefanik is far from well. He has an abdominal cancer, the result of an accident in Serbia, earlier in the war. He is ordered home to Prague to take up the position of Minister of National Defense, and reaches France in a serious state of ill-health. Back in Prague, an honored son of the new Republic, he sets about his duties, and then—

On May 4, 1919, General Stefanik enters a plane in Italy to return to his homeland. With him are three guides. On the drome at Vajorny, near Bratislava, an enthusiastic crowd awaits its hero. The plane, buffeted by violent winds, comes in, falters, turns over and disappears behind a wood. The time is 11:25 a.m. A cloud of black smoke shoots up . . . a brave warrior will not return.

You will find Stefanik on several stamps, always wearing the kepi of a French General. As a matter of interest, when Slovakia issued its own stamps during a brief period of self-government, a stamp appeared showing Stefanik's grave and the head of the General. The Germans refused to allow it to be used because it showed Stefanik in a French uniform! You will find this stamp listed by Scott as Nos. 34 to 37.

One last picture of the Legion before we leave the subject. The date is May 9, 1915, and the French assault on the German lines in Artois has opened. On the German side, to the north of Arras, stands the First Bavarian Reserve Corps. On the French side are the 77th and the Moroccan Divisions of the 33rd French Corps and the whole 20th Corps. At 6 a.m. the barrage goes down and at 11 a.m. it lifts to allow the infantry to attack. With the Moroccans are the "Nazdar" Company of Czechs, and their objective is a partially wooded hill, marked on the map as "Hill 140." Euthusiastically they throw themselves at the first line of German fortifications. As the line explodes their standard-bearer, Karel Bezdickek falls. The first line is taken . . . the second . . . and at last Hill 140, five kilometers from the hop-over, is theirs. But at what a cost! Forty-two Czechs are dead, ninety wounded. That enthusiastic warrior and protagonist of Czech liberty, Lieutenant Ing. V. Dostal is killed. With him falls the chief of the Sokol movement in Paris and many another sincere patriot.

Today, along the road from Arras to Lens, not far from the village of La Torgette, is a monument. From it, eternal light from a beacon tells the world that below are buried the Czech volunteers who shed their blood for an ideal.

The statue is the work of Jaroslav Hruska, and on a tablet, written in the tongue of those in whose uniform they fought, are these words: "Here, on the 9th May 1915, the Czechoslovak volunteers fought for their country and for France."

Twenty years after the battle of Arras, two stamps appeared to commemorate it. Your catalog lists them as Nos. 206 and 207.

For our next pen-picture, let us take a flashback of more than 100 years. The Czech nation is undergoing a period of heavy oppression. There are constant attempts to suppress the Czech language, Czech culture, to submerge the nation altogether. . . .

Two men are seated beside a piano, one pleading, the other arguing, as his fingers stray idly over the keys. "You WILL write this melody for me, Frantisek?" asks the pleader. "How can I, Josef? My wife is seriously ill. I could not put mind to it!" answers the other. In the end the pleader has his way and the musician agrees, despite his anguish of mind. The music is written and, together with the words, is heard for the first time on December 21st, 1884. The occasion is the premiere of the Czech play "Fidlovačka" ("Village Dance") by Josef Kajetan Tyl; the venue is a theatre in Prague; the singer is that popular basso, Karel Strakaty.

People leave the theatre humming fragments of the song . . . it catches on . . . becomes not only well-known, but well-loved. The words are redolent of the deep and fervent love for his native land that is inherent in the Czech. The melody touches the softest strings of his heart. "Kde domov Muj" ("Where

is my Home?") has arrived!

Let us again span the years. It is October 1918. The Republic has been proclaimed and freedom reigns where once were the chains of slavery. National airs are played and sung. Oftenest are heard the haunting strains of "Kde domov Muj?" The authors of this lovely folk-song built better than they knew. That the words of Josef Tyl and the music of Frantisek Skroup would eventually become the morning star of their nation's regeneration could hardly have been envisaged by them, yet that is what happened. The melody of "Where is my Home?" inspired the legions fighting abroad for their nation's freedom. It was adopted by the Czechoslovaks as the National Anthem. And thus, in 1934 the Czechoslovak Government honored the work of Tyl and Skroup with two stamps, Nos. 200 and 201. They went further and published the largest miniature sheet in philatelic history, bearing 15 stamps with the music and words above and below.

"Kde domov Muj?" may be freely translated as follows:

"Where is my Home? Where is my Home?
Streams are rushing through thy meadows;
Mid thy rocks sigh fragrant pine groves,
Orchards decked in Spring's array,
Scenes of Paradise portray;
And this land of wondrous beauty
Is the Czech land, Homeland mine,
Is the Czech land, Homeland mine."

And now, is there need for more? Would you learn of the persecution of that voluminous and volatile writer, Komensky, during the Hussite wars? Or the blood-bath of the students of Charles University during the Nazi regime? Though centuries apart, both events are remembered in Czechoslovak philately . . . Did you know that the first paragraph of the First Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John is printed in the Slovak tongue on the stamp which features those Slavonic Messengers of Faith, Sts. Cyril and Methodius? . . . You have for years listened to the music of Dvorak and Smetana. These are names that belong to the world, and yet they were Czechs. You will find them on the stamps of Czechoslovakia.

Of symbolism alone there are a hundred tales that could be told. Take the falcon. To us it is a bird—no more. To a Czech it is also the symbol of the Sokols, and the Sokols played an enormously important part in keeping Czech nationalism from being swamped by Austrian imperialism. What tales could be told of Tyrs and Fugner, and the works they put into building up the Sokols (National Gymnastic Clubs) . . . of keeping the flame of Czech patriotism steadily burning!

Another symbol is the Linden Leaf. When Milton wrote "Thick as autumnal leaves . . . in Vallombrosa" he might have penned the phrase particularly for Czechoslovakia. The Linden Leaf besprinkles half the stamps this country has issued, and forms the design of its only watermark. Even in the grim days of the Protectorate, the Linden Leaf played its part and helped to keep morale high.

And so one could go on. Are you still uninterested in the stamps of Czechoslovakia? You should open your catalog again and take another look. There are a hundred stories there, at least—and every one of them as interesting as your favorite novel.

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