



# Náš Svět

Czech Komenský Club • University of Nebraska Lincoln

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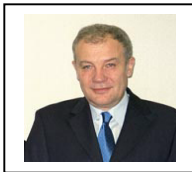
[www.unl.edu/komenskyclub](http://www.unl.edu/komenskyclub)

February/Únor 2004

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## The Czech Ambassador is coming to Lincoln!



RNDr. Martin Palouš, Czech Ambassador to the United States, will come to Lincoln on February 12, 2004. He will give a public lecture in which he will inform the university community about the

current situation in the Czech Republic. He will also meet members of the Czech community in Nebraska.

Ambassador Palouš is a former dissident and respected scientist. In this issue of *Náš Svět* is a flyer about this visit. Please share this information with everybody interested in Czech affairs and take part in all the activities with our esteemed guest, and all other events during the Czech Days at UNL in February.

## **FEBRUARY 12TH THRU 25TH, 2004 CZECH DAYS AT UNL GOVERNOR JOHANN'S PROCLAMATION**

Governor Mike Johanns issued a special Proclamation for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Czech Days. Signing of the Proclamation took place at 10:30 A.M. Jan. 20th in the Warner Chamber on the second floor of the State Capital Building. This proclamation signifies the importance of Czech-Slovak Heritage in Nebraska and the United States as well as the importance of culture, traditions and Czech-Slovak language. The Czech Language Foundation, Nebraska Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences Chapter, Nebraska Czechs, Inc., the Czech Komensky Club at UNL, and the Department of Modern Languages & Literature at UNL are contributors towards the growth and development of the Czech culture in America.

## Schedule for Spring 2004

- February 12-25** Czech Days in Nebraska
- February 12** Czech Ambassador Martin Palouš, Lecture: "*Integration of the Czech Republic into the European Union,*" University of Nebraska Student Union, 14th & R Streets, 7-9 pm
- February 17** Amy Swoboda (UNL student): "*Czech Music in Nebraska,*" Univ. of Nebraska Student Union, 14<sup>th</sup> & R Streets, 7-8 pm
- February 20** Matyáš Zrno (Robitschek Scholar), "*The Role of Beer in Czech History, Politics,*" Brown Bag Lecture, University of Nebraska Student Union, 14<sup>th</sup> & R Streets, 12:30-1:20 pm
- February 25** **Komensky Club 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,** Czech evening, University of Nebraska Culture Center, 333 N. 14<sup>th</sup>. Dinner Served 6:00-8:00pm; Program 7-9 pm
- March 2** Matyáš Zrno (Robitschek Scholar), "*Czech Politics after Václav Havel,*" Lecture & Documentary, University of Nebraska Student Union, 14<sup>th</sup> & R, 7-9 pm
- March 21** Czech Festival Concerts, Doane College, Crete, NE, SVU Booth, 12-6 pm
- March 23** Dr. Joseph Swoboda, "Mental Health and Czech Culture: T.G. Masaryk Perspective," University of Nebraska Student Union, 14<sup>th</sup> & R Streets, 7-9 pm
- April 6** Easter Traditions in the Czech Republic shared by our Robitschek Scholars, University of Nebraska Student Union, 14th & R Streets, 7-9 pm
- April 20** Mary Swoboda, *Trafficking in Women,* University of Nebraska Student Union, 14<sup>th</sup> & R Streets, 7-9 pm
- May 2** Nebraska Czechs of Lincoln Festival, Moose Lodge, 56<sup>th</sup> and Cornhusker, Lincoln, NE, SVU Booth

## **The Komenský (Comenius) Club at UNL is one-hundred-years old.**

As mentioned in the previous *Náš Svět*, number 56, the Czech Komenský Club is celebrating 100 years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Throughout the past hundred years, the Czech Komenský Club has brought to Lincoln a number of notable speakers, composers, writers and performers. Composer Joel Blahnik, violinist and pianist Professor and Mrs. Ženatý, writers Miroslav Holub, Bohumil Hrabal, and Jan Drábek are just a few of

the many guests that Komenský Club has brought to Lincoln. In addition to the many guests, there have been many films viewed as well as student lectures and performances that have been part of the Komenský Club programs. As previously mentioned, Governor Johanns has proclaimed February 12-25, 2004 as Czech Days at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. There will be many events occurring during this time. We hope that everyone will join us as we celebrate our 100 years! MSP

***We are all citizens of one world. To dislike a man because he was born in another country, because he speaks a different language, or because he takes a different view on this or that, is a great folly. Let us have but one end in view, the welfare of humanity. Comenius***

**Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) (1592-1670)**

"Teacher of Nations"

Matyáš Zrno

Jan Amos Komenský was a protestant bishop, pioneer educator, and was asked to be the first President of Harvard College. Komenský was a Bishop of the *Unitas Fratrum*, commonly known as the Moravian Church in the Czech Kingdom. During the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) he had to flee from his homeland, which fell under the Austro-Hungarian Catholic rule. He wandered throughout Europe, worked in Poland, Sweden, England, Hungary and finally Holland, where he died.

Despite his wandering life and personal catastrophes (the loss of two wives and several children), Komenský was a very productive philosopher and writer. He is remembered mainly for his new methods of teaching and schooling. *Schola ludus* - or school through play - was the main credo of his project. He wrote many didactical books, such as *The Gate of Languages Unlocked* - which was a textbook for teaching Latin and making it more attractive to children, or *The School of Infancy* - a handbook for parents and educators which was the first systematic pedagogical work in the world dealing with pre-school education. His popular encyclopedia, *Orbis Pictus*, was still in use in the 19th century. The great German poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe wrote of it warmly many times; it was one of his favorite books when he was a child.

Komenský believed that education is not limited to the activities of school and family but is a part of the general social life; he believed that teachers should understand how a child's mind develops and learns. He was convinced that all children, without regard to gender or social class, should attend school and receive the same education in order to understand and accept the civilization in which they live. Komenský was among the first to teach classical languages by use of parallel passages of ancient and modern texts. His *Visible World*

*in Pictures* (1658) is believed to be the first illustrated textbook for children.

Furthermore, Komenský is considered to be the first educator to have put forward the concept of international education. His ideas that education should be available to everyone as well as his ideas on the international organization of public education made him a forerunner of many modern institutions and trends of thought. Komenský's efforts on behalf of universal education earned him the title of "Teacher of Nations."

As a politician, Komenský was the first person to call for an international Parliament that would deal with international conflicts through diplomatic means. He used all his international clout to organize such a political body, but in vain. This project earned him a reputation of a utopian intellectual.

The Komenský (Comenius) Club claims the ideals Komenský promoted tragically a long time before governments were ready to adopt them: universal education within the social setting, equality with respect for different cultures, and peace.

**PROFESSOR ZDEN•K HEDBÁVNÝ DIED (1936-2003)**

Míla Šašková-Pierce

It is with great sadness that I am writing this note. In September 2003, UNL students and other members of the Komenský Club had a chance to meet Professor Zden•k Hedbávný from the Prague Academy of Theater Arts. He accepted our invitation to give a lecture about another giant of European culture, his friend and colleague, Alfréd Radok. (Note, it was not about himself and his own achievements, the lecture was about his colleague, whose work, he felt, should be acknowledged.) Before 1968, Professor Hedbávný and Alfréd Radok worked on modern theatrical forms that lead to the creation of the Magical Lantern Theater in Prague. The theater incorporated film, music, pantomime, ballet, and light shows on the scene. This bold step influenced the development of all expressive arts in Europe. Out of this experiment came the most innovative forms of contemporary theater. On December 16, 2003, three months after his visit to Nebraska, Professor Zden•k Hedbávný lost his battle with cancer. Europe lost this thinker, philosopher, writer, filmmaker, T.V. personality and above all, students lost their beloved teacher. We have lost our friend and colleague.

Zden•k Hedbávný was born May 8, 1936 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. After graduating from the Theater Department AMU in Prague (DAMU), he first worked as a theater artistic director (dramatist) in the *Peter Bezru• Theater* in Ostrava (the company had a strong general program and its members became the founders of the *• inoherní Klub* in Prague), and from 1965 until the end of 1970 in the drama section of the National Theatre in Prague.

After the Warsaw Pact Occupation of Czechoslovakia he had to work in the outdoor theater in Kladno, Šumperk and Cheb, and he also had other jobs. At the end of the 1980's, after the Velvet Revolution, he returned as a professional employee to Prague in the Theater Institute.

After November 1989 (the Velvet Revolution) he wrote a monograph about Alfréd Radok sponsored by the Czech Literary Foundation and received a stipend from the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the study of the archives of the Theater Institute in Amsterdam. From 1991-1994, he was appointed artistic director at the *Audiostudio* of Czech Radio. At the same time he became professor at the Prague DAMU – the Dramatic and Music Arts – and during 1994-1995 he served as its Vice-Dean. In 1995 he became the artistic director at the famous experimental *Vinohrady Theater* in Prague.

The loss of Professor Hedbávný to European culture is best expressed by the fact that the European Union offered a stipend for an English translation of his monograph on Alfréd Radok. This alone demonstrates the importance Europe attaches to the work of this philosopher.

#### **News from the Czech Republic Students commemorate Jan Palach's death**

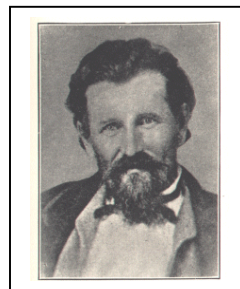
On Thursday, January 15, 2004, students from Prague's Charles University, where Palach had been a student, held a candlelight procession through the city to commemorate his sacrifice 35 years ago. In January 1969, Jan Palach immolated himself in protest against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. The incident was one of the most famous acts of resistance against the years of communist oppression in the former Czechoslovakia. Palach, who by all accounts had been a quiet, hard-working history student, set himself on fire in protest. His decision went along with the way Czech society seemed to be accepting the communist's return to power following the Soviet invasion which brought the Prague Spring to a brutal end. On Thursday, after a short speech from the Dean of the Philosophy Faculty of Charles University, which was the area Palach was studying in before his tragic death, the students laid flowers on the place where Palach made his sacrifice and held a minute's silence by candlelight in his honor. Matyáš Zrno

#### **The Mission of the Czech Language Foundation Layne Pierce, CLF president**

The CLF was founded in 1993 as a response by members of the Czech Community to the attempt of the University to discontinue the Czech classes which had existed at UNL since 1907.

Because of the number and the passion of the many Nebraska Czechs who came to that Regents meeting, the Regents finally decided not to discontinue the Czech program, but rather to move the classes into the Division of Continuing Education. Like all of the classes in that Division, the Czech classes had to be self-supporting. This meant that the tuition collected from the students had to equal the total cost of the class (the salary and the overhead). In order to meet this cost, a minimum of fifteen students was needed in each class. As part of its program to preserve and promote Czech language and culture, the Board of the Czech Language Foundation decided to provide this financial support if necessary, and continues to do so to this day. In addition the Czech Language Foundation has provided money for teaching materials for first year students.

#### **Who was the first Czech in Nebraska?**



As far as we know, the first Czech to enter Nebraska was **Joseph Francl** (born in Svojšice near • áslav in Central Bohemia in 1824), who traveled overland in 1854 on his way to the California gold fields. The city of Omaha was founded the same year. Francl traveled with three German brothers and they took

with them 250 pounds of hardtack, 150 pounds of ham, 50 pounds of butter, 50 pounds of sugar, 30 pounds of coffee, 10 quarts of vinegar, 20 pounds of beans, 10 pounds of peas, spices, axes, chains, rope, augers, saws, 20 pounds of gunpowder, 40 pounds of lead and shot. In St. Mary he joined a wagon train leaving for Salt Lake City, Utah. The wagon train belonged to John F. Kinney who later became a prominent Nebraska citizen. Their route lay along the real western plains, where Indians and wild animals threatened. The buffalo fascinated Francl. "If anyone had told me before I had seen buffalo that so many are in existence, I would not have believed it", he wrote in his diary. "As far as the eye could reach, nothing but buffalo."

Francl tried without success to find gold in California and later moved to Wisconsin and back to Nebraska in 1870, where he opened a store in the city of Crete. However, he wasn't successful, so in 1874 he again set out for California to try his luck. In 1875 he vanished while traveling from Walla Walla, Washington to California where his son lived. Francl was discovered dead, his horse tied to a nearby tree. Hunger and the arduous journey through deep snow had been his demise. Matyáš Zrno

### **Film about Slovakia: *Pictures From the Old Country***

This video chronicles the filmmaker's quest to uncover the mystery of her Slovak identity and heritage. As a young girl growing up during the Cold War, she was curious about the 'strange' language spoken by her grandmother and the enigma that shrouds her past. Fantasizing that her grandmother is a communist spy, she begins to ask her questions that are never fully answered. Years later as an adult, seeking answers to many of those same questions, she embarks on a journey to learn about Slovakia, why her grandmother came to America, and who she left behind. With few clues to go on, she begins a journey of discovery. With the help of a genealogist, archivists, historians, and a film crew, she gradually fits together the pieces of the puzzle, telling the story of her grandmother and the history of her homeland. The filmmaker's sleuthing leads her to family members she had never known about before in a country that was facing its own identity crisis during the split of Czechoslovakia into two separate countries--Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Along the way, not only does she gain a deeper understanding of her family roots, but also discovers a beautiful land, a rich culture, and a profound sense of her own Slovak American identity. Directed by Susan Marcinkus 2003, color, 27 mins., VHS  
Movie Price: Purchase: \$195 Rental: \$55 (sorry, it is an independent film)

The Cinema Guild, INC.-130 Madison Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, NY, NY 10016-7038,

Website: [www.cinemaguild.com](http://www.cinemaguild.com)

Amy Swoboda

### **CZECH LANGUAGE CLASSES NEED YOUR HELP!**

The Czech Language program was started in 1907, and has a great history. Many famous people started their

creative and political lives in this program. They include Senator Roman Hruška, Rudy Vrtilška, Olga Štastný, among others. Please support this 100-year-old program; its existence depends on your help. The support can have two forms. First of all, inform your children and your grandchildren about its availability so that they could enroll in Czech. You also can send a tax-deductible donation to Czech Language account #4931. And most of all, come to the Komenský club program.

Contributions may be sent to the UNL Foundation, 1 Landmark Centre Bldg., 1010 Lincoln Mall, Suite 300, Lincoln, NE 68588-0650. Please write **Czech Fund #4931** in the memo area.

### **Komenský Club at UNL**

The principal function of the Komenský Club is to sponsor events that focus on culture and history and bring together people of diverse backgrounds who want to share Czech heritage. Readers of *Náš Svět* are encouraged to attend club events and participate in other activities listed in the newsletter in order to enhance awareness of the Czech culture in Nebraska communities. There is a low annual membership fee of \$3.00 for students and \$8.00 for non-students. The membership fee helps finance the films, newsletters and other special activities. Checks should be made out to the Komenský Club and mailed to: Mila Saskova-Pierce, UNL, 1133 Oldfather Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0315. Membership is open to everyone!

Editors: Matyáš Zrno, Dr. Míla Šašková-Pierce  
Special Guest Editors for Volume 57: Amy Swoboda and Cathy Oslzly

*Náš Svět*/ Czech-Nebraska

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