

Poznávejme spolu Česko!

Let's get to know... **Czech History together!**

MUNI Language
Centre
CJV

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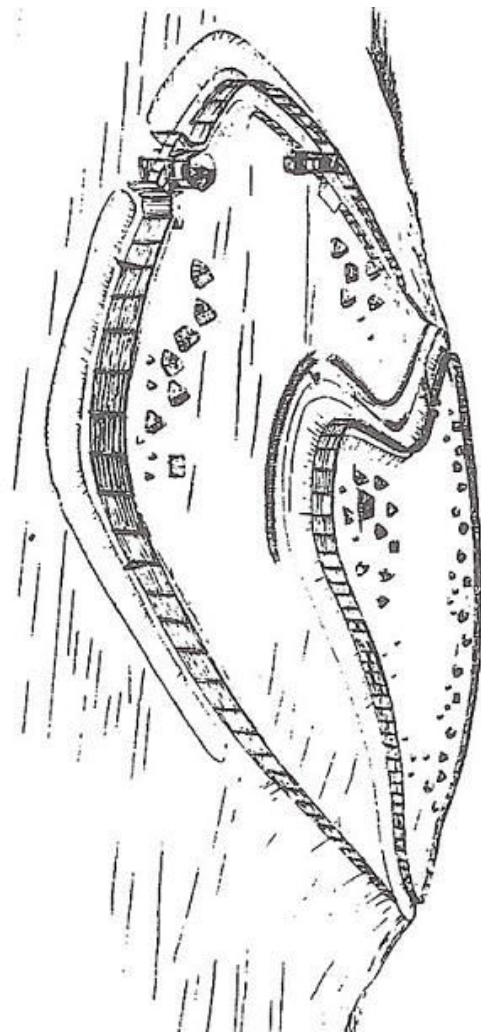
7th century

SAMO'S KINGDOM

It was the first attempt to unite the Slavic tribes that started to settle in the territory of Bohemia and Moravia only 2 centuries before. The kingdom stretched from Silesia to present day Slovakia. The union of the tribes successfully defended against the neighboring Avars.

SAMO

According to the chronicle of Fredegar, he was a Frankish merchant who showed such bravery and command skills in battle that he was elected as the "Slavic king". He successfully defended his realm against the Frankish Kingdom in the Battle of Wogastisburg.



9th-10th
century

GREAT MORAVIAN EMPIRE

The empire was created by bringing together the Principality of Nitra and the Principality of Moravia. The center of the empire lay along the Morava River, in the present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia, but is extended to include what is now Hungary, as well as parts of Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, Austria, Germany, Croatia, and Slovenia. The capital of the empire was called Veligrad. During Rastislav's reign Great Moravia reached sufficient economic and military power to be equal to East Francia.

CYRIL AND METHODIUS

Brothers Cyril (born Constantine) and Methodius were Byzantine Christian theologians and missionaries. Upon the request of the ruler of Great Moravia Rastislav they were sent to bring Christianity to his empire. For the purpose of their mission they devised the Glagolitic alphabet, the first alphabet to be used for Slavonic manuscripts. Its descendant script, the Cyrillic, is still used by many languages today.

9th-14th
century

THE RULE OF THE PŘEMYSLID DYNASTY

During their rule the Czech state gradually grew in strength and succeeded in preserving its sovereignty despite formal vassal ties to the the Holy Roman Empire. Vratislav was the first Bohemian prince to be granted the right to use the royal title, although this wasn't yet hereditary. Less than two centuries later, Přemysl Otakar I received the Golden Bull of Sicily, a decree proclaiming Bohemia a kingdom and Bohemian princes hereditary kings.

SAINT WENCESLAS

The Duke of Bohemia, who was, according to the legend, assassinated by his younger brother, Boleslaus the Cruel, or his suitors as he was on his way to the church. His martyrdom and the popularity of several biographies gave rise to a reputation for heroic virtue that resulted in his sainthood. He was posthumously declared to be a king and patron saint of the Czech state. He is also the subject of the well-known Christmas carol "Good King Wenceslas".



1306-1437

THE LUXEMBOURG DYNASTY

After the death of the last male member of the Přemyslid dynasty and 4 years of internal struggle the Czech throne passed onto the dynasty of Luxembourg Counts. The first in the line was John the Blind, who married the Přemyslid princess Elisabeth of Bohemia. The kingdom of Bohemia then reached its peak of power and prestige especially during the reign of John's son. After his death the decline of the family began, until the Czech throne was inherited by Albert V of Austria from the Habsburg dynasty. With several interruptions, the Habsburgs managed to keep the Czech throne until the end of 1st World War.

CHARLES IV

The first King of Bohemia to become Holy Roman Emperor. He was a member of the House of Luxembourg from his father's side and the Bohemian House of Přemyslid from his mother's side; he emphasized the latter due to his lifelong affinity for the Bohemian side of his inheritance. During his rule, Prague became the capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Many monuments and institutions bear his name to commemorate his patronage, for example Charles University, Charles Bridge, Charles Square, castle Karlštejn. High Gothic Prague Castle and part of the cathedral of Saint Vitus by Peter Parler were also built during his reign. In the present Czech Republic, he is still regarded as *Pater Patriae* (father of the country or *otec vlasti*).



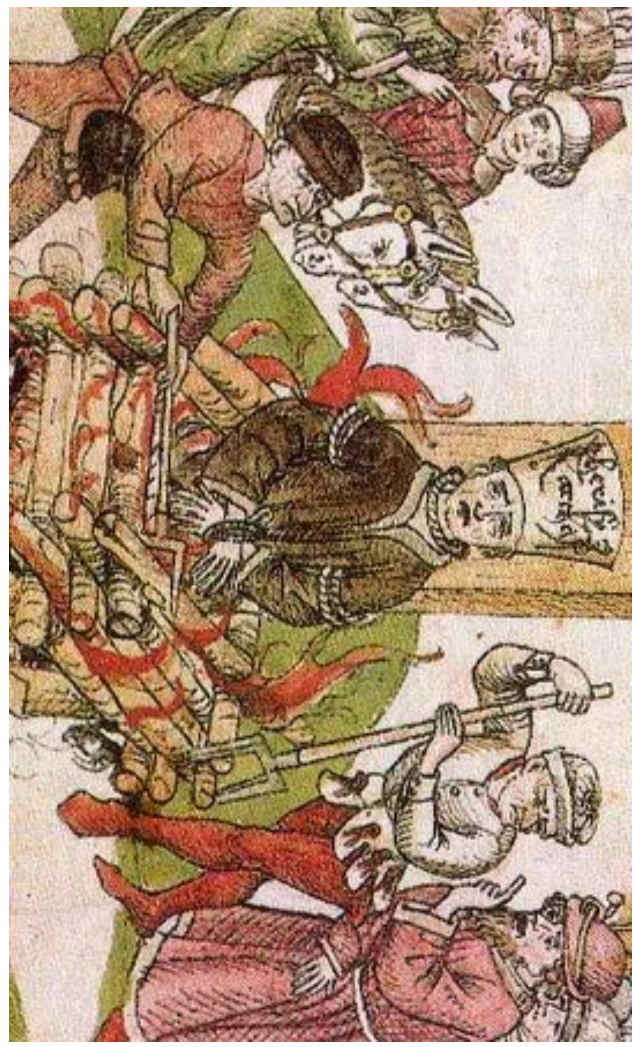
1419-1436

THE HUSSITE WARS

A reform movement „Hussite Revolution” was, among others, caused by the economic and political crisis during the reign of Wenceslas IV. The crisis was exacerbated by the problems in the then-Europe (the Great Schism and the criticism of the Church). The Roman Emperor Sigismund, tried to defeat the growing revolution with force, but the Hussites resisted his five consecutive crusades. Only their victory opened the way for a temporary agreement between the Hussite Bohemia and the Catholic Europe. This agreement, The Compacts of Basle confirmed the Hussite denomination, and would later be paralleled by the Reformation.

JAN HUS

A Czech theologian, preacher and philosopher who became a Church reformer and the inspiration of Hussitism, a key predecessor to Protestantism, and a seminal figure in the Bohemian Reformation. His teachings had a strong influence over a century later on Martin Luther. The pope Alexander V excommunicated him; however, Hus continued to preach. Then he spoke out against Antipope John XXIII, for his selling of indulgences. At the Council of Constance he was asked to present his views on the dissension within the Church. When he arrived he was immediately arrested and put in prison. He was eventually taken in front of the council and asked to recant his views. When he refused, he was burned at the stake for heresy. His works incorporate also reforms to medieval Czech orthography, including the "hook", the "dot" above letters for strong accent, as well as the acute accent to mark long vowels.



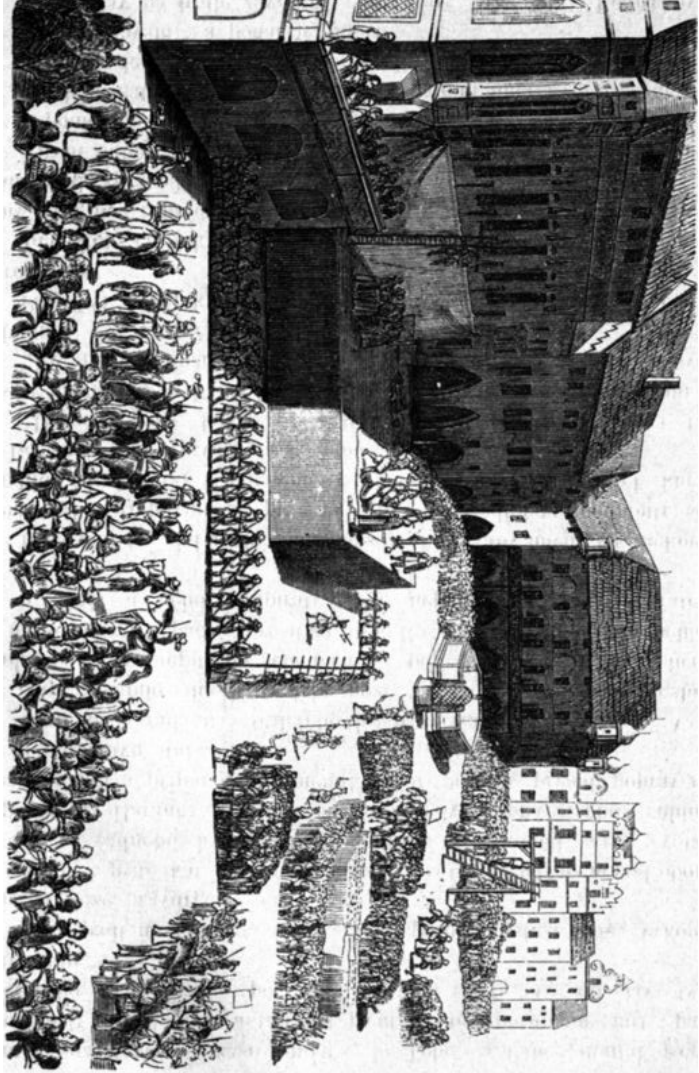
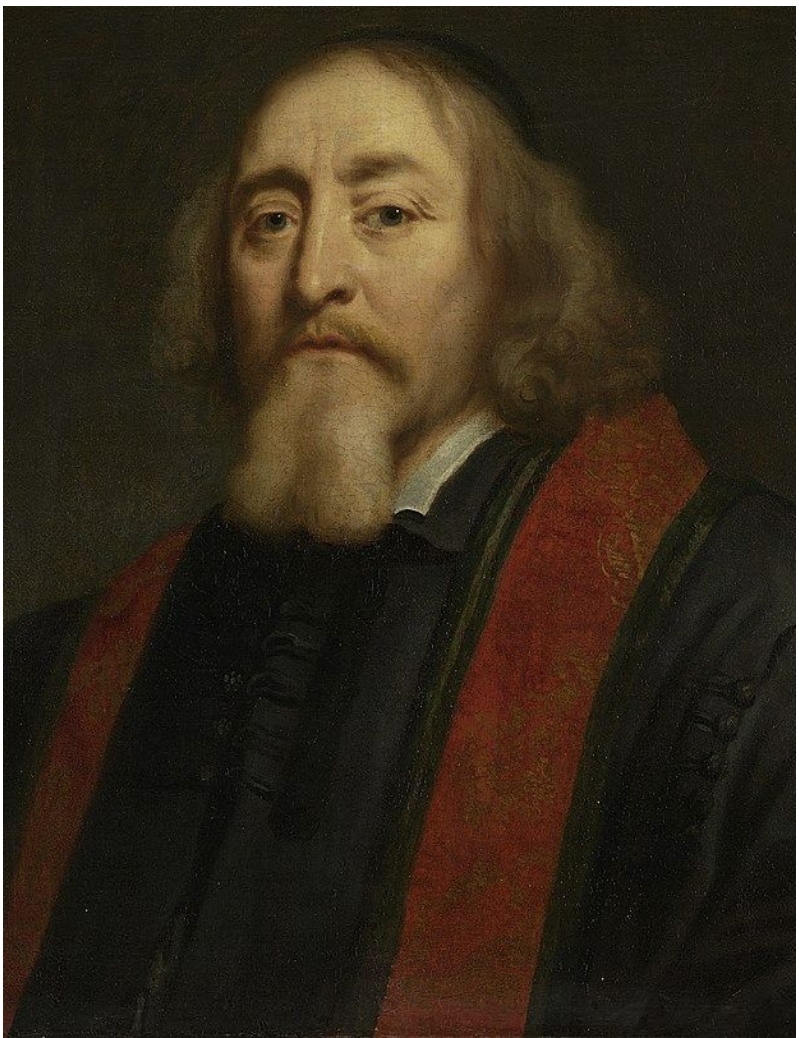
1618-1620

BOHEMIAN REVOLT

Was an uprising of the Bohemian estates against the rule of the Habsburg dynasty that began the Thirty Years' War. It was caused by both religious and power disputes. The estates were almost entirely Protestant, mostly Utraquist Hussite. The dispute culminated after several battles in the final Battle of White Mountain, where the estates suffered a decisive defeat. This started re-Catholisation of the Czech lands and Bohemia world end in Habsburg hands for the next three hundred years, A year after the defeat of the estates at White Mountain, 27 Bohemian leaders of the Revolt were executed at the Old Town Square in Prague.

JOHN AMOS COMENIUS

A Czech philosopher, pedagogue and theologian who is considered the father of modern education. He served as the last bishop of the Unity of the Brethren before becoming a religious refugee. In consequence of the religious wars and the defeat of the protestant Bohemian Revolt, he lost all his property and his writings. Next he led the Brethren into exile when the Habsburg Counter-Reformation persecuted the Protestants in Bohemia. He was one of the earliest champions of universal education, a concept eventually set forth in his book *Didactica Magna*.



1918

FOUNDATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Czech national revival movement in the previous century originally aspired to revive just the Czech culture and language, but soon it began to strive for political emancipation from the Habsburg monarchy. During the 1st World War Czech politics took a turn towards radicalism, and the defeat of the Austria-Hungary in the conflict cleared the way for the foundation of an independent state of Czechs and Slovaks. The young republic became one of the ten most developed countries of the world.

TOMÁŠ GARRIGUE MASARYK

Despite his humble origin, he became a professor, politician and the first Czechoslovak president (he was re-elected three times). Until the start of the 1st World War he advocated restructuring the Austro-Hungarian Empire into a federal state, but when the war started, he concluded that the best course was to seek independence for Czechs and Slovaks from Austria-Hungary. With the help of the Allied Powers, Masaryk gained independence for the Czechoslovak Republic as WWI ended. He co-founded Czechoslovakia together with Milan Rastislav Štefánik and Edvard Beneš, the second Czechoslovak president.



1938-1945

GERMAN OCCUPATION

Following the Munich Agreement, the Nazis annexed the Czech Sudetentland, which then continued with the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. When the war broke out, Beneš (the leader of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile) and František Moravec (head of Czechoslovak military intelligence) organized and coordinated a resistance network. The most important event of the resistance was Operation Anthropoid. In the last moments of the war in Europe, the Prague uprising began. It was an attempt by the Czech resistance to liberate the city of Prague from German occupation during WWII.

KUBIŠ A GABČÍK

Jan Kubiš and Jozef Gabčík were members of the Czechoslovak army-in-exile, who were involved in the Operation Anthropoid, a plan to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, SS leader and the Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. The assassination was a success, however, as a reprisal, Hitler ordered the arrest and execution of several randomly selected Czechs and the villages of Lidice and Ležáky were destroyed. The Nazi officials in the Protectorate carried out an extensive search for the two men. Eventually, they found them, along with other paratroopers, hiding in Cyril and Methodius Cathedral in Prague. After a six-hour gun battle, the soldiers committed suicide before the Nazis could take them alive in the church catacombs.



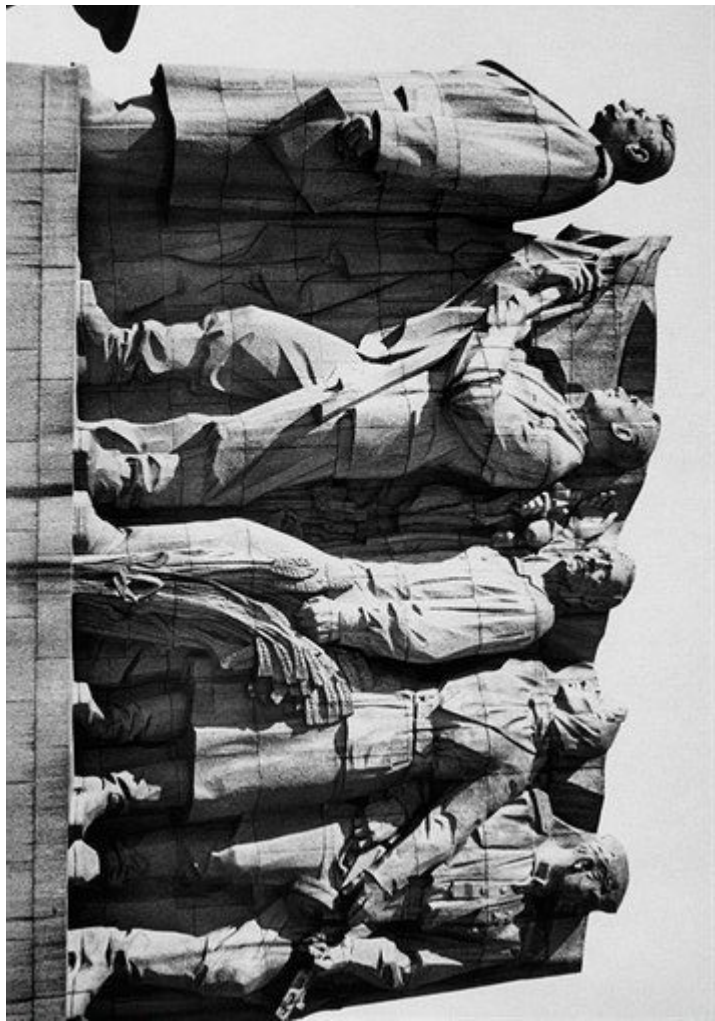
1948

VICTORIOUS FEBRUARY

After the WWII the restored republic became part of the Soviet sphere of power. The communists found their way to the top places of the politics and also took initiative among the common folk trying to persuade them about the rightness of the communist ideology. A period of "limited" democracy was ended by a Communist takeover. All private property was expropriated and political and human rights were suppressed.

KLEMENT GOTTWALD

He was a Czech communist politician, the leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the so-called the general secretary. He was also the 14th prime minister of Czechoslovakia and the first Communist to hold the post. He was elected as Czechoslovakia's first Communist president, four months after the coup d'état in which his party seized power with the backing of the Soviet Union. He held the post until his death.



1968

PRAGUE SPRING AND SOVIET INVASION

The year started with the "Prague Spring", an attempt to change and humanize the Communist totality and to weaken the ties to the Soviet Union. The reforms were a strong attempt to grant additional rights to the citizens of Czechoslovakia in an act of partial decentralization of the economy and democratization. The freedoms granted included a loosening of restrictions on the media, speech and travel. The attempt failed in August of the same year, when the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact armies invaded the country.

ALEXANDER DUBČEK

As the First Secretary of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party he attempted to reform the communist government (under the slogan "Socialism with a human face") during the Prague Spring, however, he was put under pressure by Stalinists inside the party, as well as the Soviet leadership, who opposed the direction the country was taking and feared that Czechoslovakia could loosen ties with the Soviet Union and become more westernized. He was forced to resign following the Warsaw Pact invasion. During the Velvet Revolution he served as the Chairman of the federal Czechoslovak parliament and was considered as a candidate for the presidency along with Václav Havel.



1989

VELVET REVOLUTION

The gradual decay of the Communist regime and the Soviet empire, and the mass protests and demonstrations of the Czechoslovak people culminated in the overthrow of the Communist regime. It started with a violent suppression of the student celebration of the International Students' Day on the 17th November, and soon dissidents and ordinary people joined their protest. The communists gave over the reign of the country to the new government and the change of regime was confirmed by the election of Vaclav Havel as President of the Republic.

KAREL KRYL

He was an iconic Czechoslovak poet, singer and songwriter and author of many hit protest songs in which he identified and attacked the hypocrisy, stupidity and inhumanity of the Communist (and later also the post-communist) regime in his home country. The lyrics of his songs are highly poetic and sophisticated, with perfect rhyming and a frequent use of metaphors and historical allusions. Kryl has been compared with the young Bob Dylan, because of the complexity of his lyrics, his accompaniment by a single acoustic guitar, and his great popularity. Having lived for twenty years in forced exile, he was initially keen on the collapse of communism in his country, but very quickly he became bitterly and critical of the new regime and its protagonists as well, including Václav Havel.



1993

THE SPLIT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

At the beginning of this year, the Czechoslovak state (at that time it bore a complicated title Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, mirroring the equally complicated relationship of both nations) was peacefully divided and the independent Czech and Slovak Republics were founded. In the following years the Czech Republic joined OECD, NATO and the EU.

VÁCLAV HAVEL

A Czech statesman, author, playwright, and former dissident. He was the last president of democratic Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech Republic. In his works he used an absurdist style to criticize the Communist system. After participating in the Prague Spring, he became more politically active and helped found several dissident initiatives, including Charter 77 and the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted. His political activities brought him under the surveillance of the StB secret police, and he spent multiple periods as a political prisoner. His Civic Forum party played a major role in the Velvet Revolution.



- Have you ever learned at school / read in a book about Czech history? Do you know anything else about it apart from what we've learned today?
- What happened in your country in these years?
- Who were the leading personalities in your country at that time?
- What cultural milestone in your country is related to the period? (Architecture, fine arts, literature...)
- Do you know of any period/moment in your country's history that is linked to the history of Czech lands or the Czech(oslovak) Republic?