

the Bohemian

state of mind



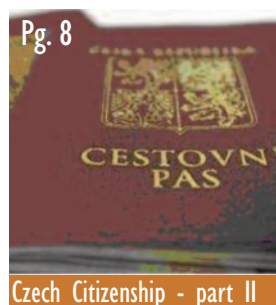
CONSULATE GENERAL
of the Czech Republic

monthly newsletter for Bohemians by birth and bohemians at heart



June 2011

- About Life
- Dear Bohemians
- Meet MUDr. Josef Skala
- Info Goulash



Events Calendar

June 1@7 pm
About Life with
George Heller
Prague Restaurant
Info: 416-972-1476

June 2@8 pm
June 3@8 pm
June 5@4 pm
Nebyla to páta,
byla to deváta
Mysteriously Yours
Dinner Theatre
2026 Yonge Street
Info: 416-486-7469

June 3@8 pm
NOTA BENE –
G. Grosman &
E. Emingerova
Prague Restaurant
Info: 416- 289-0283

June 4@8:15 am
PIVO 2011 – 28th
annual volleyball
tournament
UofT, Scarborough Campus
www.pivocanada.ca

continued on next pg.

Don't Shoot Me – I'm only a Piano Player

– by *George Grosman*



Sadly, the words “unique” and “incredible” are so overused in our daily parlance that I hesitate to use them while describing the Czech composer, arranger, writer, painter, raconteur and man-for-all-seasons, George (Jiri) Traxler. Yet, George is indeed as unique as they come.

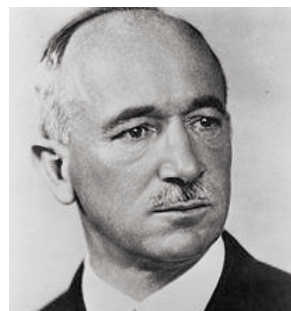
Born in 1912 - yes, that's correct, two years prior to the outbreak of WW1 - he is still going strong in Edmonton, Alberta, having survived the Kaiser, Hitler and Stalin. Additionally, he then survived 60 years in a Canada that didn't quite dig the jazz in which he was an undisputed master. George had said good-bye to his incredibly successful career as pianist, composer and arranger in Czechoslovakia and became an incredibly successful technical drawer, writer and

continued on pg. 2

President Benes in the Eyes of History

– by *Josef Cermak*

Many thought very highly of Benes. For example T.G Masaryk: “Without Benes, there would be no Republic.” Or Winston Churchill, who had this to say about Benes: “In all his thoughts and aims he consistently



Edvard Benes

maintained the main principles on which the Western civilization was founded, and was ever true to the cause of his native land, over which he presided for twenty years.

continued on pg. 3

Consulate General of the Czech Republic, 2 Bloor Street West, #1500, Toronto, ON M4W 3E2
phone: 416-972-1476, fax: 416-972-6991, e-mail: toronto@embassy.mzv.cz, web: www.mzv.cz/toronto

Events Calendar cont'd

June 8@7 pm
About Life with
Sonja Bata

Prague Restaurant
Info: 416-972-1476

June 22@7:30 pm
June 24@7:30 pm
June 25@1:30 pm
June 26@7:30 pm
Mainstage Operas –
Rusalka

Timms Centre for the Arts,
Edmonton
www.vocalartsfestival.com

June 25@10 am
Czech & Slovak Day
Canada

Masaryktown Park
Info: 416- 439-4354



Eva Emingerova



Dear Bohemians

– by Consul General Richard Krpac

This is what I wrote for our www.mzv.cz/toronto website on February 9, 2007, several months after our Consulate General was established and a couple of weeks after my arrival to Canada:

“...Right upon my arrival to Toronto I have noticed a police car with a sign “To serve and protect” on its door. On behalf of our team at the Consulate General, I promise to keep similar words “to serve and help” on our mind anytime we do anything for you...”

I was blessed with number of hard working and way-beyond-the-duty-helpful colleagues at the Consulate, without whom I would not be able to honour my promise. I

was equally blessed by having a chance to work with many brothers in arms at other Consulates and at the Ontario Government and Legislature, especially during the EU Presidency of the Czech Republic in 2009.

The highest blessing of all, however, was to meet and to get to know and to learn from so many of you, my dear Bohemians. In a couple of years down the road, when I take a look back to those years spent in Toronto, I know already now what I will see – the faces of all those friends that I had the honour of making here.

Thanks to every single one of you

Yours
Richard Krpac

For full speech from February 9, 2007 visit

http://www.mzv.cz/toronto/cz/generalni_konzulat/generalni_konzul/projevy_generalniho_konzula/slovo_uvodem.html

Don't Shoot Me *(continued from pg. 1)*

bon-vivant in Canada, namely in Montreal.

I have profound respect for people such as George. Folks who, even in the face of personal trials and tough odds never look back but always forward. He could have spent his life sucking his thumb and regretting all that was, his meteoric career in the 1920s and 1930s when he was literally one of the mid-wives of Czech jazz (along with Kamil Behounek and R.A. Dvorsky). He also worked with the Czech Gershwin, Jaroslav Jezek – a genius composer who died very young. George is today his only remaining surviving collaborator. Instead, he embraced his new career, continued to play music and wrote a fantastic memoir called *Ja nic, ja*

muzikant (the Czech equivalent of the English idiom: “don't shoot me, I'm only the piano player”)

No one tells a joke like George, no one plays the piano with quite such ease, grace and joy, no one recounts stories from 70, 80, 90 years ago with such passion, precision and humor. No bitterness, no regret, just fun times and laughter and music for a man who will turn 100 in March, 2012. I had the honor of playing for his 90th birthday and told him I looked forward to playing at his 100th. I say that again right here and now and I add: I'm also looking forward to playing at your 110th, Maestro Traxler.

RA Dvorsky Orchestra: A mixture of songs by Jiri Traxler 1940

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHOc7vXnMIA&playnext=1&list=PL3AB225B769C0284C>

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President Benes *(continued from pg. 1)*

He was a master of administration and diplomacy. He knew how to endure with patience and fortitude long periods of adverse fortune. Where he failed – and it cost him and his country much – was in not taking violent action at the supreme moment. He was too experienced a diplomatist, too astute a year – to year politician to realize the moment and stake all on victory or defeat.”

Also Ladislav K. Feierabend, in my view one of the most honest and courageous Czechoslovak politicians of that time, gave Benes high marks: “Benes was – next to T.G. Masaryk, the best known personality in the world..., he deserves much credit for his work for our state and his policies are not responsible for the Munich misfortune. In her book *Paris 1919*, the Canadian historian, Margaret Macmillan wrote that Benes may not have had the most attractive appearance or personal charm, but by his diligence, hard work and knowledge rendered great service to Czechoslovakia at the Paris Conference.

Benes’ critics may be divided into two camps: analytic thinkers, aware of the mammoth problems of the era- large German minority and discontent of significant number of Slovak citizens, and then those (most leaders of the German minority and some Slovak politicians), whose main argument was hatred directed not only at Benes, but at the Czechoslovak state as well. The first group (it is silly to argue with hatred) was represented by a Slovak politician of European importance, Milan Hodza, prime minister of the Czechoslovak government in the most difficult times just before the WW II. But the most competent critic of Benes’ presidential performance and his personality in the bitter years 1945 to 1948 was most likely professor Vaclav Cerny.

Cerny did not share Benes’s approach to the Slovak issue (Benes was a hard proponent of a common national identity), he didn’t agree with him on the universal displacement of the Sudeten Germans, those guilty and those who were guilty of nothing. He didn’t share his faith (in Cerny’s eyes incredibly naive) in Stalin’s word that the Russian leadership would not interfere in our affairs after liberation by the Red Army.

If Cerny is harshly critical of many of Benes’ decisions and his character, it is not because he wants to deprive Benes of credit where credit is due: “The period between the two wars, was Benes’s time of greatness. The first League of Nations was a stage of his greatest political successes, then and there we rang the bells of the world and Czechoslovakia was almost a world political power.” What Cerny does deny him, however, is character and moral substance: “In Benes’s case, the guarantee of democracy was not a powerful personality, but only an acquired conviction and professional adroitness. In Masaryk, democracy was ethos and pathos. In Benes it was honest political party work. He did not possess Masaryk’s magnificent kingly sovereignty and calmly just balance; by nature he was much weaker than TGM... In the critical years 1945 – 1948, he was doubly weak. First, he was weak because he was born as a timid person. President Benes was indeed a timid man, and because of that, he was indirect, tactical, underhand, outright physically evasive, wary and shy. He was also weak because of his illness, which he brought home and the illness quietly continued, until it knocked him down in the 1948 crisis.



See the full article at

<http://czechfolks.com/plus/2011/05/07/josef-cermak-prezident-benes-ocima-mlade-basnirky-pred-sedesati-lety/>

Event Highlight: *About Life...*

This month the Consulate General will conclude its successful interview series *About Life* with two exceptional people who will share with us their personal stories of rise and fall; stories of perseverance, courage, love and strong beliefs.

The interviews, held on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm at Prague Restaurant in Masaryktown, will be conducted in English.

Photos: Zuzana Hahn



SONJA BATA — founder of the Bata Shoe Museum, philanthropist, member of many organizations in the field of education, health and the environment. Long-time partner in life and business of Tomas Bata jr.



GEORGE HELLER — in the 70s he worked in the Canadian north for the Hudson Bay Company - 30 years later he became president and CEO of Hudson Bay. He was also President and CEO of the Victoria, BC Commonwealth Games Committee, which, in 1994, organized the XV Commonwealth Games. From 7 pm the interview will be enhanced by the performance of the famous Czech jazz pianist and composer **EMIL VIKLICKY**.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our partners.

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the Bohemian

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 Hill Roadway Centre
 Yonge-Eglinton Centre
 Shops at Don Mills
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 Eaton Centre
 College Park Shops
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 Eglinton & Ossington
 Jane & Sheppard Mall
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Interview with Prof. MUDr. Josef Skala



Photos: Zuzana Hahn

One of the interesting personalities of our series “About life” was an exceptional scientist and clinician and truly a “renaissance” personality, Professor Josef Skala. To those who could not see him live in Masaryktown’s Prague restaurant, here is a little taste of the evening:

Q Dr. Skala, tell us something about your beginnings.

A It’s been almost 70 years since I was born in a merchant family of the Little Quarter (Mala Strana) in Prague. The Josef Skala “colonial” store and

later the coffee wholesale business was established by my grandfather at the turn of the last century on the corner of Mostecka and Lazenska streets. In those days it was an enclave of a village-like old town community, where everybody knew everybody for generations, and where my childhood felt almost like Neruda’s nostalgic “Mala Strana Stories”.

During the war I have also lived for a considerable length of time on a small secluded farm in southern Bohemia. The romantic isolation of that place is apparent even from its postal address: Klokocna near Vranovska Lhota, near Vranov, last postal outlet Prestavky near Cercany. My only friend there was Pěťa – a St. Bernard dog. Purportedly my principal residence was in his dog-house, because my grandma, suffering from arthritis, soon gave up the struggle of pulling me out. She simply covered Pěťa’s dog-house with a blanket, and since I refused to eat anything which he did not, she started to supply Pěťas dish with food intended for me. One may say that I spent a significant part of my formative early development in the dog-house, an experience which became extremely useful in my later life.

After the communist takeover in 1948 my family was, of course, brutally persecuted, and the slogan of the proletariat promising “bright tomorrows” translated into years of imprisonment and forced labour for my father, as well as and many of my relatives. In those dark ages of the totalitarian regime, the only bright light was my studies at the famous Jan Neruda high school, where I have discovered the love of my life – the arts, and specifically, theatre.

After graduation at the medical school I was shipped to a small regional hospital in As on the western border. The following 2 years of survival in the truly appalling environment of this devastated city, located on the wrong (eastern) side of the Iron Curtain, could be described in a Hrabal-like absurd novel. Let’s just say that I learned a lot, and after immense difficulties I finally started my research training. After a few years of medical research in Prague I escaped during the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the “friendly” tanks of the Warsaw Pact on August 21st, 1968, by illegally crossing the Iron Curtain in the right direction.



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Skala (continued from pg. 6)

Q How did you experience your exile?

A It almost feels like I have been privileged to live several separate and mutually exclusive lives. Exile had kicked me into a completely unknown, immense space. It felt like an escape from a cramped, smelly cage, into a vast universe with no supporting walls in view. Yes, it was very scary, but at the same time it offered an infinite number of choices.

After a year in Stockholm I moved to Vancouver, passed exams for my medical degree, completed my formal research education by defending a Ph.D. in physiology, spent a year at the Hammersmith Hospital in London, and eventually, in 1984, advanced to the position of full professor of pediatrics, Ob&Gyn and of physiology at the University of British Columbia in the spectacular city of Vancouver.



Photo: Josef Skala

Q You have also devoted your life to both professional and amateur theatre. What have you derived from it, and do you see any parallel between theatre and medicine?

For the full interview please go to

http://www.mzv.cz/toronto/en/culture_and_promotion/interview_with_prof_mudr_josef_skala_m_d.html



A I deeply believe that a physician should never be only a craftsman, even if an excellent one. His or her task is not only to understand the human body and its functions, but to be a facilitator of human life in all its facets: physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual. We should re-discover that a patient seeks from his doctor human understanding and touch first. Only after a spark of human touch is elicited, a physician may reach into his bag of medical knowledge.

After returning to Vancouver, I started to work frequently in radio drama for the national CBC network. It started with a dramatic reading of Hasek's *Good Soldier Schweik*, followed by about 40 radio productions. My longing for theatre in my mother tongue was satisfied in 1975, when I co-founded the *Czech Theatre Around the Corner* (www.theatrearoundthecorner.ca), where I have directed, produced, created stage design and sometimes also acted in about thirty productions over three decades. We even produced some world premieres of plays by Czech dissident authors.



Consular Window

Frequently Asked Questions – Citizenship Part II

I am a Czech citizen who was naturalized in Canada in 1996. Recently, I tried to renew my Czech passport but was told by one of the consular officers that I am no longer a Czech citizen. However, my daughter (born in Canada in 1990) applied just a couple of months later and her passport was issued. Is it possible that the officer made a mistake in my case?

The scenario you are describing is possible and, given the circumstances, likely. In accordance with our citizenship law, you lost your Czech citizenship in 1996 when you acquired the citizenship of Canada (unless, of course, you were at that time married to a Canadian citizen). Your daughter was born in 1990, at a time when you still were a Czech (Czechoslovak) citizen. Therefore, she became a Czech citizen by birth to a Czech parent and a Canadian citizen by birth on the Canadian soil.

We are a Czech family of four living in Canada. We recently acquired Canadian citizenship and hoped to be dual citizens. However, when we applied for Czech passports, our two minor children were told that they are not Czechs. Can you advise?

As of 1993, Czechs lose their citizenship at the moment when, at their own request, they acquire a citizenship of another country, except if they acquire it in connection with marriage. Under this rule, if you and your spouse acquired citizenship of Canada at the same time, you both can keep your Czech citizenship (this principle was explained in the previous issue of the Newsletter). The exception could not be applied to your children, who therefore lost their Czech citizenship on the very day they became Canadians.

How can I prove that I am a Czech citizen?

By law Czech citizenship can be proven only by

presenting a national identification card called *obcanský průkaz*, a valid travel document, a Certificate of Czech Citizenship, or a certificate of non-impediment provided that it contains citizenship details. If you do not have any of these and you need to prove your Czech citizenship, you can apply for a Certificate of Czech Citizenship and subsequently for any other proof of citizenship, such as a passport. Our consulate accepts applications for all these documents.

I was born in Canada. My grandfather, who passed away, was a Czechoslovak citizen. Am I entitled to Czech citizenship?

You could be. However, because Czech citizenship derives from parents (not grandparents), we would first need to determine the citizenship status of your parents. You should approach our Consulate and request more information.

I am a Czech citizen living in Canada and I never lost my Czech citizenship. Why do I have to apply for a certificate of citizenship before I can renew my Czech passport?

Before you may be issued a Czech travel document, the passport authority must first verify that you are indeed a Czech citizen. An expired proof of Czech citizenship is not a valid document and therefore does not prove your citizenship status. The fact that you once were a Czech citizen does not mean that you are one today (you may have given up your Czech citizenship, or you may have lost it by becoming a citizen of another country). Therefore, your current citizenship status must be verified by citizenship authorities located in the Czech Republic. Your application for the Certificate of Czech Citizenship will be forwarded to them and once the certificate is issued, you may apply for a new passport.

For customized information, post your own question on our Facebook page and we will do our best to answer it.

Info Goulash

DIRECT FLIGHTS HAMILTON – PRAGUE CANCELLED

Hamilton International Airport has released information about the cancellation of flights from Hamilton International to Prague, Budapest, Krakow. FlyCentralEurope.com operations have been suspended as of May 17th.

<http://www.flyhi.ca/destinations-and-airlines/fly-central-europe/>



CZECH LANGUAGE CONQUERS THE WORLD

If closely monitoring the commercial breaks on television in Canada, people may be taken aback at the spot for the new flavors of Doritos chips. See how the Canadian branch of advertising agency Mark / BBDO took advantage of the exotic sound of Czech language.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAGdGF-AIkM>

CZECH REPUBLIC THE 5TH MOST PEACEFUL COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

According to the Global Peace Index, the Czech Republic is the 5th most peaceful country in the world. Iceland, New Zealand and Japan topped the list while Canada jumped six spots from its last year's rank to No. 8. The Institute for Economics and Peace is an international research institute that aims to develop a better understanding of the rela-

tionships between business, peace and economics.
<http://www.lfpress.com/news/canada/2011/05/25/18191341.html>

6.8 MILLION TOURISTS IN 2010

According to data released by the Czech Statistics Office, a total of 6.3 mil foreign tourists arrived to the Czech Republic in 2010. It was an increase of 5% in comparison to 2009. Most tourists came from Germany, followed by Russians and Britons.

<http://www.czech.cz/en/103922-6-3-million-foreign-tourists-to-visit-the-czech-republic-in-2010>

REPTILE LOVER DIES LEAVING ANIMALS BEHIND

The Welland man, who delighted reptile enthusiasts for nearly three decades with one of the country's largest private collections, has passed away. Karel Fortyn arrived in 1982 from what was then known as Czechoslovakia with two crates of venomous snakes, and created the Seaway Serpentarium. It was run out of his home, with animals in organized enclosures. His greatest obstacles, according to his website, were "finances, governments, civil wars, natural disasters, diseases, general stupidity and more lawsuits than Pinochet."

<http://www.metronews.ca/toronto/local/article/862457--reptile-lover-dies-leaving-animals-behind>



Czech Republic Travel Tips for June 2011

SMETANA'S LITOMYSL 10/06/2011-04/07/2011

The international opera festival Smetana's Litomyšl is the second oldest music festival in the Czech Republic, after Prague Spring, and the largest outdoor classical music festival in the country. The main programme features opera performances, concert renditions of opera, gala concerts, oratoria, cantatas, and evenings of song.

www.smetanovalitomysl.cz



ARTS & FILM 16/06/2011-18/06/2011

Film festival featuring documentary films on art, which takes place in Telč. The festival is regularly attended by 36 nations from all over Europe and includes a wide array of interesting workshops, individual projects, and exhibitions.

www.arts-film.com

FIVE-PETAL ROSE FESTIVAL 17/06/2011-19/06/2011

This is a Renaissance festival during which the city of Český Krumlov returns to the age of knights, noble ladies, jesters, and beggars. Excellent medieval food, jugglers, and an unrepeatable atmosphere are all part of the show.

www.ckrumlov.cz



STRAZNICE INTERNATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL 23/06/2011-26/06/2011

The town of Strážnice comes alive with a folklore festival with traditional international participation. Visitors, as well as dozens of folklore ensembles and groups, come here to enjoy the beauty of folk songs and dances and to admire the variety of folk dress and customs.

www.nulk.cz

UNITED ISLANDS 23/06/2011-25/06/2011

Prague's International Music Festival, featuring the best Ethno and World Music bands, will be held in the historic centre of Prague, on the Vltava islands and the adjacent river banks.

www.unitedislands.cz



Bohemian Journey: *Prague Cafés*

– the Aroma of Fresh Coffee at Every Step

The first cafés of the world saw the light of day in Mecca, serving solely for religious purposes, only later to become popular centres of entertainment and social affairs. It is no wonder this invention soon came to Europe - and to Prague itself. In 1714 Georgius Deodatus Damascenus opened his first Prague coffeehouse, his “kafirna”, as it was called at that time (as

opposed to “kavar-na”, the term used nowadays). In the beginning Georgius Deodatus used to walk the streets of Prague wearing a caftan, wide trousers and Aladdin-style shoes, offering coffee right in the street. That is why people in Prague

would always call him “Arab”. He used to put a special tray with a jug of coffee on his turban and heat it up on a pan covered with charcoal. With the money he earned selling coffee in the streets he bought the first Prague café in the Golden Snake house (“U Zlatého hada”) in Old Town. He prepared and sold coffee near Charles Bridge until his death in 1730, when he was carried out in a coffin straight from his café.

In the first half of the 20th century, Prague was a coffee heaven on earth. A get-together in a café was part and parcel of city life. The golden age of Prague cafés was the period of the end of the Austrian monarchy and the interwar period. Nezval, Seifert, the Capek Brothers, Polacek, Hasek, Kafka and many other writers, journalists, architects, artists

and entrepreneurs had their favoured cafés. Politics, art, as well as interpersonal relationships were discussed at coffee tables shrouded by cigarette smoke.

Here are some of the most famous options:

Café Slavia, directly opposite the National Theatre, is one of the oldest and most visited cafés in Prague. It was first opened in 1863 and became a



traditional meeting place of artists and intellectuals, such as Franz Kafka, Rainer Maria Rilke, Jaroslav Seifert and the composers Bedrich Smetana and Antonin Dvorak. The café's interior is

decorated in Art Deco style and looking through its large windows you can admire the wonderful view of Prague Castle's Hradcany, the National Theatre or Charles Bridge. In Café Slavia you can savour, apart from coffee, sweet and savoury pancakes, hot chocolate or a cup of delicious rum toddy.

Café Louvre is part of the famous heritage of the interwar era that, nevertheless, keeps up with the times. The Art Nouveau café was first opened in 1902 and it became a favourite café for many outstanding figures, such as Franz Kafka and Albert Einstein. Today the café will take you back to the old times: newspapers are available to read for free, as well as board games, or you can enjoy a game of billiards in the billiard room.

Café Savoy is situated on the ground floor of an

continued on pg. 12

the Bohemian

Art Nouveau building located on the western banks of the River Vltava, near the island of Kampa. The café's interior prides itself with a seven-metre-high ceiling and a monumental chandelier, rendering it a true Neo-Renaissance jewel. The original Café Savoy was opened as early as 1893 and it was a decadent café at that time. After the Velvet Revolution, on the other hand, it was a popular smoke-filled boozer.



Grand Café Orient, the only cubist café in the world, is situated (since 1912) in the elegant “Black Madonna House”. However, it is not only the facade that makes this place so unique: it is

also its cubist interior, particularly of the first floor where the café is located. Gocar designed the cubist buffet-bar as well as all the furniture, including chandeliers and lanterns.

More at:

<http://www.czechtourism.com/News/Prague-Cafes--the-Smell-of-Fresh-Coffee-on-Every-S.aspx>

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