

This year Czechoslovakia celebrates its 50th anniversary. The nations of Czechoslovakia have always played an important role in the history of Europe. As recently as the 3rd to 4th century Slav tribes were occupying the country forming present-day Czechoslovakia. At that time there was not yet any concept of a united State. This was formed at the beginning of the 9th century, when the first Slav State, the Great Moravian Empire, arose in Central Europe. Thus for the first time all the lands and peoples in what is now Czechoslovakia were united in a single State under a firm rule. It comprised more or less the whole of present-day Czechoslovakia with the addition of the Cracow district, Silesia and Lusatia in the North, and Pannonia in the South.

After the severance of Slovakia, the political centre of gravity moved westwards to Bohemia where, following the example of the Moravians, the Czech princes of the dynasty of Přemysl had gradually united the Slav tribes into a national unit and raised the prestige of the country to its zenith; the last Přemyslide, Wenceslav III was treacherously murdered in 1306 and with him the oldest Czech ruling dynasty died out. After some years of unrest, the crown of Bohemia was assumed by the Luxemburg dynasty and Charles IV son of John, became the greatest ruler to ascend the throne of Bohemia. In 1348 he founded the first university in Central Europe, the Charles University in Prague and shortly afterwards he carried out his magnificent plans for the rebuilding of the capital. Under him the Czech State was strong and flourishing. His death ended the period of greatest expansion of the Czech State. Another glorious period in Czech history was started with the Hussite movement and the following Hussite wars with the single purpose of winning liberty and equality for the Hussite faith. The only Hussite to occupy the Bohemian throne and the last ruler who was Czech by birth was George of Poděbrad and after his death the throne was held for half a century by the Polish dynasty Jagellon. Under the threatening menace of the Turks a defensive federation was formed between Bohemia, Hungary and Austria under the leadership of the Habsburgs and Ferdinand I was elected to the vacant throne of Bohemia and Hungary for this purpose. From the first all rights of the Czechs were suppressed by the Habsburgs and the Czech and Slovak nations fell into a long sleep of exhaustion.

The victory of the Allies of World War I brought victory to the Czech and Slovak nations and out of the ruins of the Monarchy of Austria and Hungary arose in 1918 the liberated, independent Czechoslovak Republic. On its territory new universities were founded and great development was started in many fields of science—mathematics, chemistry, geology and mineralogy and, of the biological sciences in entomology, plant physiology a.o. A new disastrous period started for the Czech and Slovak nations after the Munich Agreement in 1938 which, after a deliberate German campaign against the Czechoslovak Nation and State, resulted in the seizure of the frontier range of mountains, on which for the last thousand years the germanizing efforts had broken their teeth.