

CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION OF THE CZECH ACADEMY IN PRAGUE

The 100th anniversary of the founding of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Literature and Arts in 1891 (renamed the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts after 1918 [Česká akademie věd a umění, ČAVU]) was celebrated in Prague from 17–30 May 1991 by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (ČSAV), Charles University, the National Museum, and other cultural institutions. Hundreds of persons attended lectures, exhibits, concerts, and receptions in a varied program widely reported by the press and television. For several bustling May weeks Prague was the cultural capital of Central Europe, perhaps even of the entire Continent. Along with the ČAVU commemoration the city hosted its Spring music festival, the centennial of the opening of the present National Museum building, an International Book Fair, a Universal Czechoslovak Exhibition (echoing the industrial fairs of 1791 and 1891), and a myriad offerings in theaters, galleries, and cabarets. Visitors had to exercise restraint in their itineraries or risk exhaustion.

Academician Otto Wichterle, president of ČSAV, and Dr. František Šmahel, head

of the Historical Institute (Historický ústav) of ČSAV, played prominent roles throughout the ČAVU commemoration. Wichterle was a genial and articulate host at several receptions, and Šmahel chaired the committee that planned the program, enlisted the cooperating institutions, and helped secure the sponsorship of the Czech National Council and President Václav Havel. In addition, Dr. Šmahel and his assistant Dr. Pokorná attended every function on the program so as to assure the comfort of their guests.

To whet the public's appetite, a series of popular lectures entitled "100th Anniversary of the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts" was held from March through May at Charles University. Academia published an attractive illustrated booklet on the origins of ČAVU in multilingual editions. The National Technical Museum and ČSAV on 13 May organized a program on "Natural Scientists and Technologists in the Origin and Development of ČAVU," including lectures on the Academy's relations with other scientific bodies (J. Foltá), its foreign contacts (M. Pokorná), and the status of mathematics and physics when it was founded (I. Seidlerová), among two dozen presented.

The program began on 16 May, when guests of the Historical Institute were bussed to Přeštice near Plzeň to place a wreath on the tomb of Josef Hlávka (1831–1908), noted architect and builder, patron of the arts and sciences, and founder and first president of the Czech Academy. They toured Hlávka's château at Lužany under the guidance of Prof. Ing. Lubomír Kalivoda of the Hlávka Foundation (Nadání Josefa, Marie a Zdeňky Hlávkových), where they saw ample evidence of Hlávka's creative work and of his benevolence to notables such as Dvořák, Josef Suk, J. V. Myslbek, Julius Zeyer, and J. V. Sládek. In Hlávka's private chapel they were treated to a lilting recital of Baroque music by the youthful Hlávkovo Trio (Zdeněk Rys, oboe, leader). (On recent Czech interest in Hlávka's career see Robert Luft, "Hlávka-Symposium in Prag," *BohZ* 31 [1990] 159, and *Acta Polytechnica*, VI, 3–4 [Prague, 1990], two volumes devoted to the Hlávka Symposium of September 1989.)

The commemoration was formally opened on 17 May at the National Museum before an audience of about 250 persons with greetings from Dr. Milan Stloukal, Museum director, Academician Wichterle, and Alexander Dubček, chairman of the Federal Assembly. They were followed by an entrancing rendition of Dvořák's *Serenade in E Major*, op. 22, by the Suk Chamber Orchestra under Josef Suk, the composer's grandson. Guests then browsed four exhibits celebrating the Museum's one-hundredth year in its present imposing building. The exhibits, arranged by Dr. Aleš Chalupa, Dr. Eva Ryšavá, and others on the Museum's staff, featured the *Malice česká*, poet Václav Hanka, precious stones, and the evolution of forests. A fifth exhibit, prepared by Dr. Jiří Beran and others at the Central Archives of ČSAV, portrayed the founding and growth of ČAVU.

At Vila Lanna in the Bubeneč section of Prague, the elegant former residence of a Prague industrialist, the guests next enjoyed a buffet luncheon hosted by Wichterle and ČSAV. The program then shifted to Emauzy (ul. Vyšehradská 49), the offices of the Historical Institute, for late afternoon lectures on "Science-Art-Money, or Czech Patrons of Science and Art since the End of the 19th Century" (*Věda-umění-peníze, aneb čeští mecenáši od konce 19. století*), with Dr. Šmahel presiding. Some of the

topics covered were Hlávka and other benefactors of ČAVU (J. Pokorný), Ignac Born (M. Teich), ČAVU patronage and finances (J. Beran), and Bohumil Němec (S. Winters). Other lecturers were J. Pernes, M. Rechcigl, J. Janáčková, H. Krejčová, P. Svobodný, and J. Rak. A musical evening with Lyra Pragensis at the ČSAV headquarters (Národní tř. 3) ended an exhilarating day.

On 18 May, a musical matinée with President Havel in attendance was held at the National Theater. Exactly one-hundred years previously the National Theater had celebrated the launching of the Czech Academy with a performance of Zdeněk Fibich's opera *Námluvy Pelopovy* (The Wooing of Pelops) to lyrics by Jaroslav Vrchlický. After opening remarks by Wichterle, he and Ing. Vladislav Hančíl, vice president of ČSAV, presented the Academy's Josef Hlávka Memorial Medal to thirteen persons for contributions to education, scholarship, and culture. The medalists were the rectors of four universities in Prague, Brno, and Bratislava (R. Palouš, S. Hanzl, M. Jelínek, J. Švec); the directors of the National Museum, the National Theater, and the Czech Philharmonic (M. Stloukal, J. Černý, J. Tvrzký); Academician Ladislav Macho of the Slovak Academy of Sciences; Professor Josef Macůrek, of Masaryk University (accepted in absentia; he had recently turned 90!); Professor František Janouch of Sweden, head of Charta 77 Foundation; Dr. Miloslav Rechcigl, former president of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America, Inc. (the SVU); the Polish Academy of Sciences (represented by Poland's Ambassador to ČSFR); and this writer. The Kocián Quartet played the finale from Dvořák's *American Quartet* and Janáček's *Violin Quartet No. 1*, and opera soloists Jiřina Marková, Lenka Šmídová, and Miroslav Kopp sang selections by Dvořák, Martinů, and Slávník, with Jiří Pokorný at the piano. During the intermission, the medalists were received by President Havel in his suite and toasted with champagne.

In the week following, the Czech Philharmonic, under Jiří Bělohlávek, dedicated a concert at the Obecní dům to the ČAVU celebration, and the National Theater offered Dvořák's opera *Rusalka*, which had won the ČAVU's annual prize in 1901. The commemoration concluded on 30 May with a "literární večer" of works by members of Class IV (the creative arts) of ČAVU presented in the Božena Němcová Hall of the Památník národního písemnictví at the Strahov monastery. While these events were occurring, individual lectures on historical subjects were delivered at Charles University and elsewhere in Prague by members of the faculty and of ČSAV and foreign guests, thereby enhancing the high level of interest in the scholarly aspects of the program. Publication of some of these lectures may be anticipated.

The ČAVU centennial, in which the Historical Institute played an instrumental role, was an eloquent and impressive manifestation of collegiality by the Republic's major educational, cultural, and scientific institutions. Their successful cooperation, and the public attention given the observances, offers hope that these institutions and the historical profession will continue to be valued components in the societal changes under way in Czechoslovakia.