THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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THE FLAG:
The Czech flag was first adopted in 1918 as the flag of the newly established Czechoslovakia. It consists of a horizontal white band above a red band (traditional colours of Bohemia and Moravia) and a blue triangle. The blue triangle originally represented Slovakia, but it was kept as a part of the Czech flag even after the **split** of Czechoslovakia.

Karlštejn, one of the most famous Czech castles, was founded in the 14th century by Charles IV as a place for keeping the coronation jewels and other treasures.

CZECH HISTORY

In the 4th century BC Celtic **tribes settled** in the area (the Boii tribe gave the land its name: Bohemia) and later Germanic tribes and Slavic people. In the 7th century, the Frankish **merchant** Samo became the **ruler** of the first known Slavic state in Central Europe, which was partly situated in present-day Moravia. The importance of Moravia grew **further**, and in 833 Great Moravia was created.

While Great Moravia **declined** towards the end of the 9th century, the Czech state was **unified** by the Přemyslids (who ruled the country until 1306) and prospered.

During the **Middle Ages**, it played an important role in Europe and was part of the Holy Roman Empire during its entire existence. The Czech King Charles IV of the Luxembourg dynasty even became the Holy Roman Emperor in 1355. In the 16th century the country came under the Habsburg **reign**.

Twice in its history, the country was devastated by major political-religious conflicts: After the religious leader Jan Hus (1371 - 1415) was burnt to death, the Hussite Wars started in the 15th century, and two centuries later the Thirty Years War (1618 - 1648) broke out. **The latter** had a devastating effect on the country and **resulted in the persecution** of non-Catholics and the strong Germanisation politics of the Habsburg emperors. The Czech language **was** slowly **driven away** from state administration, business, and schools, and was not spoken by the upper classes. This process was finally stopped by the Czech National **Revival**, a cultural movement taking place in the 18th and 19th centuries, which managed to revive the Czech language, culture and national identity.

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of WWI, Czechs and Slovaks joined together and formed the independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. During WWII, Slovakia **broke away** and the Czech state was occupied by the Germans (the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia).

Charles IV (1316 - 1378) was one of the most important rulers of the country. He made Prague the imperial capital, encouraged new construction in the city (Charles Bridge) and in 1348 established Charles University, one of the oldest universities in Europe.

A Czech statesman, **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk** (1850 - 1937), supported democratic policies and defended Czechoslovak independence during WWI. He became the first president of Czechoslovakia.

After the war, Czechoslovakia was **restored**, but soon it **fell under the rule** of the communist party **and the influence** of the Soviet Union. In 1989, it gained freedom through a peaceful revolution and in 1993 it **split into** two independent states. In 2004, both the Czech Republic and Slovakia joined the European Union.

CZECH PERSONALITIES

Sport

Football is probably the most popular sport in the Czech Republic. Several top Czech footballers play in the most prestigeous European clubs. Ice-hockey enjoys huge popularity too. Many excellent hockey players in NHL teams in the US and Canada are

The famous runner, **Emil Zátopek**, managed to win three gold medals at the 1952 summer Olympics in Helsinki.

from the Czech Republic. Among many, **Jaromír Jágr** (b. 1972) and goalkeeper **Dominik Hašek** (b. 1965) are the most famous at present. They helped the Czech team to get the Olympic Gold in Nagano in 1998.

The Czech tennis school has made many tennis players world-famous. **Martina Navrátilová** (b. 1956) has won Wimbledon nine times and in total she has won 164 titles in international tournaments.

In athletics, Czechs such as runners **Emil Zátopek** (1922 - 2000) and **Jarmila Kratochvílová** (b. 1951) and javelin-throwers **Dana Zátopková** (b. 1922) and **Jan Železný** (b. 1966) have made a great impression.

Václav Havel (b. 1936) was one of the first spokesmen for Charter 77 and a leading figure of the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Then he became president and stayed in the presidential office until 2003.

Decathlete Tomáš Dvořák (b. 1972) won the Olympics and world championships. **Roman Šebrle** (b. 1974) was the first decathlete ever to **break** the magical number of 9,000 points.

There is one sport **particular to** the Czech Republic - *nohejbal*. It is similar to volleyball, but players kick the ball over a low net with their feet.

Art

A brilliant novelist, journalist, and playwright, **Karel Čapek** (1890 - 1938), **coined** the word *robot* in his play *R.U.R.* **Milan Kundera** (b. 1929)**,** the contemporary author, reached international fame with

Karel Čapek is known for introducing the word "robot" in his play *R.U.R.* The word was suggested to him by his brother Josef and comes from the Slavic word *robota* (= forced labour).

Two Czechs in history have won the Nobel Prize. Professor **Jaroslav Heyrovský** (1890 - 1967), pictured, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1959 for the invention and development of the polarographic method, a new **branch of electrochemistry**. The poet **Jaroslav Seifert** (1901 - 1986) was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1984. In his poems Seifert celebrated Prague and the **cultural heritage** of the Czech Republic.

his novels *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1985) and *Immortality* (1990).

Many excellent composers were born in the Czech Republic. **Antonín Dvořák** (1841 - 1904), the author of *Slavonic Dances* and the symphony *From the New World,* **gained worldwide recognition** for his work, while **Bedřich Smetana** (1824 - 1884) is well known for his symphonic poem *Vltava (The Moldau)* from the cycle *My Country*.

A leader of the "new wave" of Czechoslovak cinema in the 1960s, **Miloš Forman** (b. 1932) is considered one

of the most important film directors in the world today. He received Oscars for his films *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Amadeus*. He also directed a film version of the musical *Hair*.

Milada Horáková (1901 - 1950) is regarded as a symbol of anti-communist resistance for her courageous attitude during her trial. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Nazi in 1939, she joined the underground resistance movement but was arrested by the Gestapo in 1940. She was sentenced to death and executed in 1950 in a communist trial.

→ Vocabulary

split [splɪt] - rozdělení, rozpad
tribe [traɪb] - kmen
to settle [ˈsɛt(ə)l] - usadit se
merchant [ˈmə:tʃ(ə)nt] - kupec
ruler [ˈruːlə] - vládce
further [ˈfə:ðə] - dále
to decline [dɪˈklaɪn] - upadat
to unify [ˈjuːnɪfaɪ] - sjednotit
Middle Ages - středověk
reign [reɪn] - vláda
the latter [ˈlætə] - ta druhá
resulted in the persecution [rɪˈzʌltɪd pəːsɪˈkjuːʃ(ə)n] - vyústila v pronásledování
to drive away - vypudit
revival [rɪˈvaɪv(ə)l] - obrození
to break away - odtrhnout se
to restore [rɪˈstɔ:] - obnovit
fell under the rule... and the influence [ruːl ˈɪnfluəns] - dostalo se pod vládu... a vliv
to split into - rozdělit se na

decathlete [dɪˈkæθliːt] - desetibojař
to break - překonat
particular to [pəˈtɪkjʊlə] - specifický pro
to coin [kɔɪn] - vytvořit
gained worldwide recognition [rɛkəɡˈnɪʃ(ə)n] - si získal celosvětový věhlas
branch of electrochemistry [brɑːn(t)ʃ ɪlektrəʊˈkɛmɪstri] - odvětví elektrochemie
cultural heritage [ˈkʌltʃ(ə)r(ə)l ˈhɛrɪtɪdʒ] - kulturní dědictví