

A vintage, dark-colored microphone with a silver mesh grille. The top arch of the microphone is inscribed with the words "ON THE AIR" in red, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The base of the microphone is inscribed with "65 YEARS" in the same red, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The microphone is mounted on a dark stand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

ON THE AIR

RADIO PRAGUE

65 YEARS

RADIO PRAGUE

65 YEARS

History of Radio Prague

A word of introduction

Sixty-five years is a long time in the life of a radio station. Several generations have come and gone and the years have seen many changes, some of them dramatic. Much too has been forgotten. So Radio Prague's 65th anniversary provides a good opportunity to look back at our history. There are times of which we can be proud, and times we would rather forget. But that, of course, is history.

You might think that the archives would make it quite easy to recreate the history of Radio Prague. Far from it. The archives are incomplete and poorly classified, and a number of facts had to be confirmed by personal memories. Special thanks go to those who remember our pre-war shortwave broadcasts - Božena Danešová-Trojanová, who lives in Prague, Helena Kronska-Stepanová, who lives in Germany, and Ivan Jelínek, who lives in the United Kingdom, and who provided us with some rare memories. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank current and former colleagues both from Radio Prague and Czech Radio who contributed to recreating many lost moments in the station's history. People say that one has to understand the past in order to predict the future. Radio Prague's past suggests that the station is strong enough to overcome just about any obstacle history can throw at it and will continue to survive the test of time. Radio Prague does not aspire to become a global source of information about everything and for everybody. It will remain a small station, providing the world with the latest information about political, economic and cultural affairs in the Czech Republic. It will remain the "Voice of the Czech Republic" around the world, and that is important. It is useful to know that you can hear the latest news from Prague even in some of the most distant corners of the globe. And all you need is a radio! The technology of listening is certainly changing, but the radio as a medium will always find new listeners. I'm firmly convinced that Radio Prague will continue to find listeners in the future.

Prague, autumn 2001

Miroslav Krupička
Director, Radio Prague



The beginnings of radio broadcasting in Czechoslovakia

When Guglielmo Marconi carried out the first successful long-distance transmission and reception of radio signals in 1895, he must have had little idea of the importance of his invention. Twenty-five years later radio ruled the world.

The first attempts at radio broadcasting in Czechoslovakia began before the First World War, and continued after the war ended. The first radio programme, made up of words and music, was broadcast on October 28th, 1919 from the telegraph station at Prague's Petřín lookout tower. Regular radio broadcasts began on May 18th 1923, from the now legendary tent in Prague-Kbely, and at first lasted just one hour per day. All the programmes - news and musical productions - were broadcast live. The country's broadcasting pioneers were the journalist Miloš Čtrnáctý, the businessman Eduard Svoboda, and Ladislav Šourek, director of Radioslavia - the company that distributed radio receivers. These three men created a company called Radiojournal, which was majority owned by Radioslavia. Radiojournal became Czechoslovakia's first radio operator after receiving permission from the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Post and Telegraphs. In the beginning it was difficult to find licence payers, and capital essential for developing the broadcasts was also lacking. The situation gradually began to improve, but in 1925 the state gained a majority share in Radiojournal via the Ministry of Post and Telegraphs. 1924 saw the first appearance of the Czech equivalent of the word "broadcasting" ("rozhlas"), which began to replace such expressions as "radiophony", "wireless telegraphy and telephony" and even the English expression "broadcasting".

In 1924 Radiojournal moved into a building owned by the post office at 58 Foch



Czechoslovak Radio building, 1930s.

Street in the centre of Prague. The station has remained in the same street to this day, and in 1933 was given a permanent headquarters at 12 Foch Street (today's Vinohradská Street). The building, called the "Radio Palace," was built by the Post and Telegraphs Ministry, which shared the building with Radiojournal until 1945. From the beginning the facade bore the inscription "Czechoslovak Radio", even though the official name was "Radiojournal - Czechoslovak Radiotelephone News, Limited Liability Company."

The first attempts at cross-border broadcasting

Radio waves know no borders. From the very beginning Radiojournal's "domestic" broadcasts could also be received abroad, and foreign stations could be picked up in Czechoslovakia. And reception was also easier, because the spectrum of radio frequencies was not yet crowded with hundreds of stations as it is today. Special programmes - lectures in Esperanto - were soon created, tailored for a foreign audience. The first was broadcast in January 1924, and the lectures were informative: important events held in Prague, important anniversaries and so on.

At the end of 1925 a new broadcasting station in Prague-Strašnice was opened, built by General Electric. Its output of 5kW made it one of the most powerful radio transmitters in Europe at the time. Radiojournal used the transmitter for experimental long-distance broadcasts. Letters sent by listeners confirmed that concerts broadcast on medium wave from the Strašnice transmitter were picked up as far away as North America.

1926 saw the first broadcasts of foreign language lectures about Czechoslovakia. These were initially in English and French, later followed by German, and concerned more contemporary issues than the Esperanto programmes. The lectures followed Thursday evening's regular "domestic" broadcasts and were intended for listeners in Europe. The mid-1920s also saw the creation of a programme for Czechoslovak expatriates, broadcast on Wednesday evenings.

Shortwave broadcasting was still in its infancy. All radio traffic and broadcasting of that time was conducted on wavelengths that were longer than 200 metres, i.e on the medium and long-wave bands of today. The "200 metres and under" or "shortwave" band was allocated to amateur radio enthusiasts for experimental transmissions. Their experiments quickly bore fruit. 1923 saw the first successful transatlantic contact between the U.S. and France on frequencies in the 110m band. Experiments suggested that shorter wavelengths could be even more suitable for long-distance transmissions. Broadcasters soon picked up on this fact, and began using shortwave as well. It was the

Dutch firm Phillips which made history. In 1927 the company began broadcasting on shortwave from a transmitter in Eindhoven. In 1928 the station, which used the call-sign 'PCJ', began broadcasting a multi-lingual programme called "Happy Station".

The importance of international broadcasting grew significantly in the 1930s. Radio quickly became an effective propaganda tool, and both the fascist and anti-fascist European powers relied heavily on the medium. The United Kingdom and Italy began broadcasting to their colonies in 1932. Germany began broadcasting to Austria, the Sudetenland and Latin America in 1933, and in the mid-1930s Soviet radio launched its own international service. Czechoslovakia monitored these broadcasts closely. In 1929 the Radio Monitoring Service was established, working under the Ministry of Post and Telegraphs.

The birth of the international service

The Czechoslovak government realised it had no effective tool with which to counter the hostile propaganda riding the radio waves. Radiojournal's foreign-language lectures, broadcast on medium wave, were clearly insufficient for this task. There had, however, already been attempts to broadcast abroad on shortwave frequencies: between 1924 and 1927, the Prague firm Elektra developed valves (Am: "tubes") that it started to manufacture for radio equipment. The results were heard as far away as Great Britain.

So in the early 1930s Czechoslovakia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs came up with the idea of creating a shortwave service which could be heard clearly abroad. The attempts are well illustrated by a Foreign Ministry memorandum from late 1934 on the use of radio for promoting the country's interests, in which the ministry warns of "the

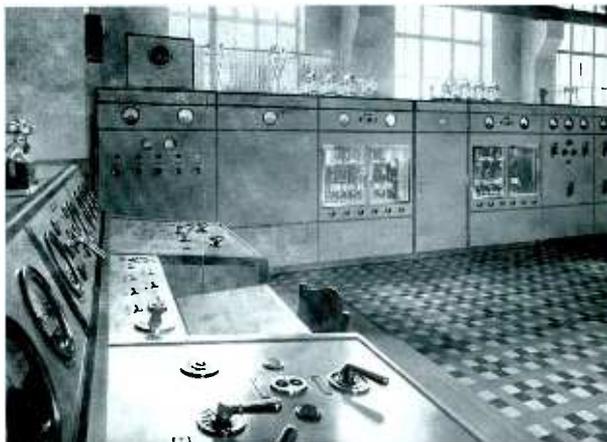


The telegraph building in Poděbrady, from where shortwave broadcasts began in 1936.

need to establish a shortwave service. This will allow us to broadcast propaganda to foreign countries, propaganda which states such as Germany, Hungary, Italy and the Soviet Union will be able to understand.” The Foreign Ministry pointed out that an international service would also allow constant contact with Czechoslovak expatriates living in the United States. The ministry proposed that the establishment of a shortwave station should be diverted from the Ministry of Post and Telegraphs, and that the task should be described as a special measure for the defence of the state. In 1934 the Minister for Post and Telegraphs announced in parliament that a shortwave radio transmitter for promoting the interests of Czechoslovakia abroad would be built in Poděbrady. According to reports in the press, the sum of 3.5 million crowns of public money was earmarked for the task.

In 1935 workmen began assembling shortwave transmitters and antennas at the telegraph building in Poděbrady, which belonged to the Ministry of Post and Telegraphs. The building, nicknamed the “Radiovka” by local people, was built in 1923. In 1936

Shortwave transmitter at the telegraph building in Poděbrady



engineers put the finishing touches to two Marconi transmitters and an SWB9/30 transmitter. The SWB9/30 had an output of 34 kW, and was capable of operating in the band from 13 to 100 metres. It was this transmitter that was first used for the new international service.

Trial broadcasts, lasting several hours, were launched on July 24. From August 13 - 14 the transmitter broadcast a total of 24 hours of programmes. The broadcasts consisted of gramophone music, interrupted at 20 minute intervals by recorded messages in different languages. The gramophone records were played in an improvised studio at the Poděbrady transmitter building itself. Regular broadcasts began on August 31 at 10 a.m. and were relayed from the Czechoslovak Radio building in Prague. The pro-

grammes were a combination of recorded music and announcements by presenters in various languages, which were broadcast live.

The broadcasts from Prague began on August 31, 1936, with a speech in English by the Technical Director of Czechoslovak Radio, Eduard Svoboda. This date is considered the birth of international broadcasting in Czechoslovakia.

The main aim of the international service was summed up in 1936 by the Minister



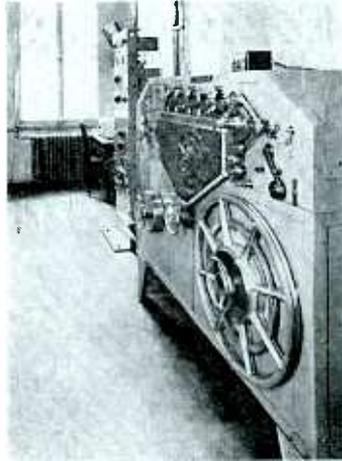
*Czechoslovak Radio
Technical Director
Eduard Svoboda, who
launched the first the
foreign broadcasts on
August 31, 1936.*

for Post and Telegraphs, Alois Tučný: “The Poděbrady radio transmitter will complement the existing radio network and the broadcasts will be the responsibility of the Radiojournal radio company. It goes without saying that the station will to a great degree - as is the case with foreign shortwave services - provide state propaganda and information in the world’s major languages, and also provide special programmes for those Czechs and Slovaks who have settled abroad and who cannot receive our own domestic radio programmes. The mission of this new shortwave service will also be important because our culture - and especially our music - will find new audiences around the world, allowing us to show other European states to what extent we have contributed to the development of mankind in an atmosphere of friendly competition.”

In the first few days the station broadcast a total of 6 hours per day on shortwave in three two-hour segments: from 10:00 to 12:00, 17:00 to 19:00 and 20:00 to 22:00. From September 13 transmissions were divided into European broadcasts (from 20:25 to 22:30) and American broadcasts (from 03:00 - 05:00 on Tuesdays and Fridays only), and the first news bulletins began.

In the beginning the programme consisted mostly of concerts, recorded on the so-called Blatnerphone, the predecessor of the reel-to-reel magnetic tape recorder. It was a bulky and heavy piece of equipment for the magnetic recording of sound onto narrow steel tape.

The spoken word appeared only in news bulletins and to introduce programmes, and the presentation was always live (in the European broadcast news bulletins were delivered in Czech/Slovak, German, French and English, while in the American broadcasts news was read in Czech/Slovak, English and occasionally Russian). Other written material consisted mainly of lectures, at first



Blatnerphone



Announcer Zdeňka Walló



Announcer Helena Kronska

just in Czech, occasionally in English.

The shortwave section of Czechoslovak Radio was located in two offices in a building situated near the rear entrance of the main Czechoslovak Radio building. About eight people worked in the two offices. One of them was Mrs Zdeňka Walló, a well-known Czechoslovak Radio announcer, whose language skills made her an ideal candidate for the shortwave section.

Also working in the shortwave section was Helena Kronska, later Helena



The response from listeners in 1936

Stepanová: “I joined the shortwave section of Czechoslovak Radio in 1936. I was responsible for listeners’ letters. Once - it was still in 1936 - they came to me and asked if I could step in for Zdeňka Walló, who had been taken ill. My broadcasting premiere went well, and from then until 1939 I worked as an announcer as well as doing the let-

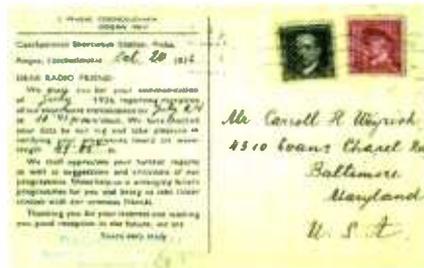
ters. I would appear live and tell listeners what was coming next, then came the news, and after that I would give the signal to the technician who would play music from the Blatnerphone. Then I did the same thing in other languages: German, English and French. We announcers had to be able to announce the programmes in all the languages.”

As well as the broadcasts to Europe and America, from 10:00 - 12:00 and 17:00 to 19:00 the shortwave service also relayed extracts from Radiojournal programmes.

The response to the first Radio Prague broadcasts was encouraging. Letters from listeners began arriving in early September and by the end of 1936 a total of 4,443 had arrived at the station. There were 267 letters from Czechoslovak expatriates, half of which were from North America. As Helena Kronska recalls, a meticulous record was kept of all letters. “Letters came from all over the world, mainly from England and America. I wrote answers and recorded the details of all correspondence. I took the reception reports to the Technical Director of Czechoslovak Radio, Eduard Svoboda, who was extremely interested in where the listeners picked up our signal - and how well they heard our broadcasts.”



QSL card from 1936



Full steam ahead

The beginning of 1937 saw the first appearance of the shortwave programme schedule in the Radiojournal weekly. The shortwave broadcasts were still described as experimental.

The schedule is divided into “European” and “American” bands, but the programmes were commonly referred to as “broadcasts for America” or “broadcasts for Europe.” The broadcasts for America were transmitted on Tuesday and Friday from 01:00 to 03:00 on the 25.34 metre wavelength, while the broadcasts for Europe were transmitted every day from 20:25 to 22:30 on 31.41m. The schedule shows that the transmissions included material from “domestic” Czechoslovak Radio programmes.

RADIOJOURNAL

Rozhlas na krátkých vlnách

Přijímači: Četlivě jen středovlnovské. Brusel OER 3941 m, dleň od 19.26—21.00 hod.,
Moskva GNY 46.90 v ned. od 12—19 a ve všed. dni 19—24 hod., Moskva RSE 23 m a RY 29
34 m, od 21.30—24.30 hod., Oslo LMT 1 21.40 m, od 11—14 a 17—24 hod., a Vídeň OER 2
a 4911 a 45.48 m a 15.42 m ve všední dny 15—33 hod. Gávaň Bencey z hlavních vysílání,

Z programů pokusného vysílání krátkovlnné stanice v Československu
(Týden od 8.—9. ledna 1937.)

Americké pásmo (1—8 hod. v noci):
Úterý: Pestrý pořad. Nár. písně, Veselá slovenská scéna tříkrálová, Kolédy
a dopr. uměleho díla, souboru, B. Smetana: Vyšehrad, Krajanický koutek.
Pátek: Lehká hudba. Nár. písně v podání Kühna na dětského sboru s doprovodem
klavíru, klarinetu, trumpety a žagotu. Pamětní roboty vypravují.
Klavírní koncert mexické klavírní virtuosky Angelicy Morales, Dvořákův slavný
a pozděv mencičím posluchašům proslovi chargé d'affaire Lauslé Segura.

Evropské pásmo (denně od 20.25—22.30 hod.):
Krátkovlnná stanice přijímá v době mezi 21.00—22.00 hod. pět pořadů
probíhajících stanicí hřibkou.

- Neděle:** Lehká hudba. Koncert z Maa. Ostravy. Taneční hudba.
 - Pondělí:** Pestrý pořad. Koncert z Prahy I. Mozart: Divertimento č. 14 pro
flétnu, hoboj, klarinet, žagot a lesní roh. Taneční hudba.
 - Úterý:** Slovenské písně, Baletní hudba. Koncert z Brna; České operní scény.
 - Středa:** Malý kabaret. Národní písně (O. Horáková, člen opary Nár. div.),
Anglická karavica, A. Dvořák: Violoncellový koncert. České kolédy, Taneční
hudba.
 - Čtvrtek:** Lehká hudba. Orchestrální koncert z Prahy I. B. Martinů: Duo pro
housle a violoncello. Taneční hudba.
 - Pátek:** Pestrý pořad. Písněový koncert Marie Veselé, členky opery Nár. div.
E. Gieig: Huslíková sonáta G-dur. Symfonické tance.
 - Subota:** Dechová hudba. Orchestrální koncert z Prahy I. Slovenské ľudové
písně. Taneční hudba.
- Pořady do 18. ledna budou pravidelně vysílány na vlnové délce 25.54 m
(11.849 kc), pořady večerní a pro americké pásmo určeny na 21.41 m (9.569 kc).

Interestingly, the schedule includes several other European radio stations broadcasting on shortwave: Brussels, Copenhagen, Moscow, Oslo and Vienna.

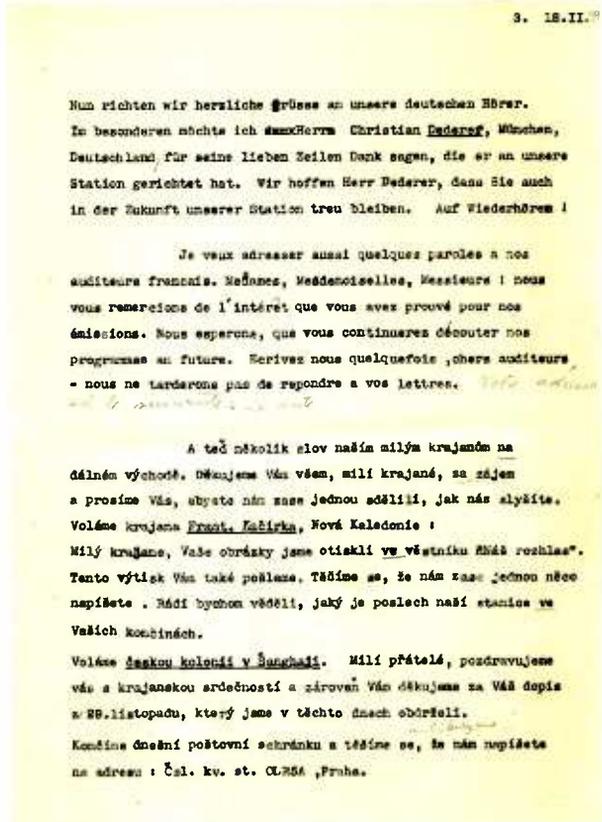
In May 1937 the shortwave transmitter in Poděbrady went from experimental to regular operation. Broadcasts to the Near and Middle East (every day from 13:55 to 16:00) were already underway.

News bulletins formed an important part of the international service. Leafing through the weekly publication Radiojournal, it seems the American programme featured a ten-minute news bulletin. News was read in Czech/Slovak and English. Once a week there was also a bulletin in Ruthenian, and from late 1937 Spanish-speaking listeners could hear the news as well. In the European broadcasts news bulletins lasted five minutes and were read in Czech/Slovak, English, German and French, and sometimes in other languages including Russian, Italian, Flemish and Romanian. The chief language of the spoken-word programmes was Czech, but lectures were also broadcast in English, German and French. Foreign citizens helped contribute to the production and presentation of both the lectures and news bulletins.

Božena Danešová, later Trojanová, began working in the shortwave section in 1937: "I went for an interview for the shortwave broadcasts. Back then it was a little department, just starting up. It had about eight people, three of whom were foreigners.

I was taken on to look after the listeners' letters, but I soon began working as an announcer as well. I introduced programmes in German, English, French, Czech, and later in Spanish. I was born in Vienna, so I could speak German, and I learnt the other languages. I broadcast mainly to Asia and the Far East. We asked listeners to write to us and tell us how well they could receive our programmes and what they would like

*Text of Božena
Danešova's letters pro-
gramme*

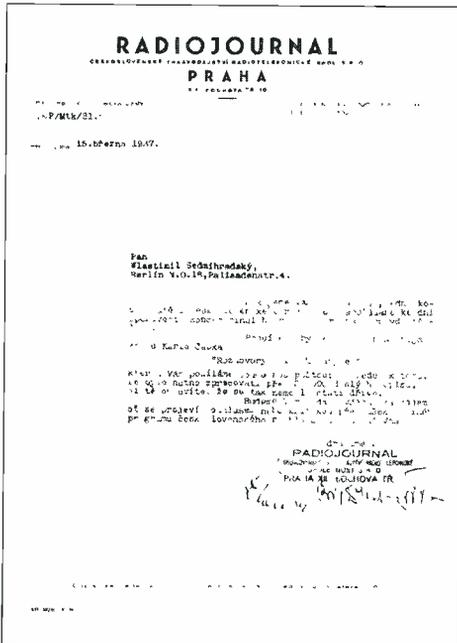


to hear. We received hundreds of letters with various requests. Some listeners would send us photographs of themselves. We answered letters both in writing and in the "Letterbox" programmes. Each announcer was responsible for a letters programme for his or her area of broadcasts. Mine was broadcast on Saturdays; it was called Mailbag."

A memorandum from the head of the shortwave broadcasts, Bohuslav Tvrđý, confirms that responding to letters was considered extremely important: "The aim of the letters programmes is to build a close relationship with our foreign listeners, to win

their affection for our country. Politics have no place in these programmes. Announce the letters programmes frequently, as soon as you have a moment's airtime. American announcers should also promote the English letters programmes. I want announcers to be creative - the more taste and subtlety, the greater the success!"

In 1937 Radio Prague received 14,000 letters. About two-thirds came from



Letter to Mr Vlastimil Sedmíhradský of Berlin, who took part in a radio competition in 1936.

English-speaking listeners. The remainder came from all over the world, but mostly from Czech expatriates living in North America. The “Expats Corner” - a feature devoted to Czech expatriates living in the U.S. - also helped. Listeners’ competitions were also popular; winners were rewarded with small prizes from Czechoslovak Radio.

The clouds of war

At the end of 1937 - when the danger of fascism in Central Europe had become a reality - Radiojournal witnessed an important watershed: on December 24, at 23:00, all of Czechoslovak Radio’s domestic stations broadcast a “Greeting to People of Good Will.” The broadcast contained messages of peace from the electrical pioneer František Křižík (1847-1941) - nicknamed the “Czech Edison”, and the writer Karel Čapek

(1890-1938). The 90-year-old Křižík appealed to Albert Einstein; Čapek addressed the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. In his message, Karel Čapek said: "Master Tagore, we send greetings to you from Czechoslovakia, where the snow is now falling; from Europe, where we are wistful; from the western world, where not even the most advanced nations are capable of shaking hands like brothers. At a moment when the westernmost and easternmost regions of our shared continent are rumbling with artillery fire, the weak voice of western democracy calls on you at this, the year's close: long live the world, but a world of equal and free peoples." Both men heard the messages over the radio waves, and both sent replies. Einstein wrote: "This Christmas greeting is truly addressed to everyone who, in this age of confusion, bears a heartfelt

Karel Čapek (first left) and František Křižík (seated) at the time of the peace message broadcasts



wish for spiritual values to be preserved. All of them know that Czechoslovakia is defending - in difficult conditions - the political freedoms and human rights without which spiritual life would wither away. The hopes and heartfelt greetings of all the friends of truth, humanity and freedom are therefore sent to the Czechoslovak Republic in the heart of Europe, which, under the leadership of wise and far-sighted men, has worked and will continue to work for a better future for Europe."

The pre-war development of the international service culminated in 1938. Broadcasts to Europe and America were extended by one hour per day, and broadcasts to the East by two hours. In the first half of 1938, broadcasts reached a total of 9 hours a day. Programmes to Europe consisted of news in Czech, 30 minutes of music, news in German, lectures in English, German or French, 30 minutes of music, news in French, 20 minutes of music, news in English, technical intermissions and 25 minutes of music. The music programmes took up approximately three quarters of the broad-

casts, news 15 %, lectures 5 % and literary programmes and press reviews 5 %. In May 1938 Radiojournal was included on a list of companies declared important for the defence of the state, and the authorities exerted even tighter control over the broadcasts.

In 1938 the Brno poet and writer Ivan Jelínek joined the shortwave section. He remembers the hectic days of the late 1930s: “Our Czech and Slovak broadcasts were intended for American expatriates, the English programmes were meant for England



Journalist Ivan Jelínek

and the English-speaking world in Africa and Asia; the same went for the programmes in French; the Spanish broadcasts went to South America. The Praha OLR station broadcast almost 20 hours per day, including music, which made up about a third of the programme. We had news in Czech, Slovak and all the languages I’ve just mentioned. News reports were wired to the transmitter from the Czechoslovak News Agency (ČTK) offices. All texts had to be submitted to the censor, Dr Fořt, who often gave excellent advice and salvaged a great deal.”

Ivan Jelínek mentions a number of important details about the early shortwave programmes. One was the wiring of news reports from the Czechoslovak News Agency - Czechoslovak Radio also received news directly from ČTK during the inter-war period. This practice changed, however, in the critical autumn days of 1938, when

a news department was created at the radio station itself. The news department wrote bulletins in different languages for the shortwave broadcasts. Also worth a mention is censorship and the name of the station. The existence of a censor has been confirmed by others who remember those days - although they all agreed that censorship was far from strict and some texts - especially foreign language texts - were never even read. As far as the call signs for identifying the shortwave transmissions, Czechoslovak Radio was given the international prefix OLR, followed by the different frequencies. For example the Poděbrady transmitter used the OLR5A call sign in the 19 metre-band, OLR4A in the 25 metre-band and OLR2A in the 49m band. A theme from Antonín Dvořák's New World Symphony was chosen as the signature tune for the shortwave broadcasts.

Autumn 1938. The period leading up to the Munich Agreement - which sanctioned the annexation of Czechoslovakia's German-speaking borderlands (Sudetenland) to Nazi Germany - produced another significant increase in broadcasts. News coverage increased, and during the September crisis the station began broadcasting 22 hours a day. Soon after the signing of the Munich Agreement, a new schedule was introduced on October 15, 1938. The existing broadcasts to Europe, America and the East were bolstered with two new broadcasts to Central and South America. The overall length of programmes increased to 19 hours a day, of which 14 were made up of music and more than 3 hours of news. The existing languages (Czech/Slovak, English, German, French, Ruthenian, Spanish) were boosted by programmes in Italian, Portuguese, Serbo-Croat and Romanian. To maximise the effect of the programmes, the shortwave broadcasts were combined with the domestic station Praha II. The international service and the Praha II station both benefited from reaching a wider audience on both short and medium wave. In December 1938, following the loss of transmitters in the Sudetenland and the partial independence of Slovak Radio, the Radiojournal broadcasting company changed its name to Czecho-Slovak Radio.

One of those working for Czechoslovak Radio at the time of the Munich crisis was the Canadian journalist and future historian Gordon Skilling. Skilling was in Prague to complete his doctoral thesis, and was also working as a freelancer for the international service: "I worked on the programmes to North America, and I produced news bulletins using Czech news reports and newspaper articles. I remember the huge sense of disappointment that followed Munich. One of my supervisors at the radio station - I think his name was Kraus - was so furious, that he threw his French *Légion d'Honneur* into the River Vltava."

At this point we should mention the Esperanto broadcasts, which played an important role in informing the world about pre-war events in Czechoslovakia. The Esperanto programmes were not part of the international service, but they were aimed

at the same audience. They were put together at the domestic stations in Brno and Ostrava, and were broadcast on medium-wave. They included lectures about



*Announcer Božena
Danešová*

Czechoslovakia and, in 1938, news about the political situation. Responses to the Esperanto broadcasts came from all over the world, in the last year before the war there were 2,000 letters. Two Esperanto programmes were also broadcast on short-wave in 1938.

On March 15, 1939, what remained of the Czech state was occupied by Nazi troops, and Hitler proclaimed the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Announcer Božena Danešová remembers that day well: “On March 15 I was sitting in the studio. It was before we went on air, and I was waiting as usual for the signal from the transmitter in Poděbrady. What happened next came as a complete surprise. There was a knock at the door and a German officer came in. He was, I have to say, very polite. He apologised and said he was very sorry, but the broadcasts from Poděbrady had been shut down. And that was the end of the pre-war shortwave transmitter called “OLR”. And the occupation also ended my career as an announcer.”

In his memoirs Ivan Jelínek had this to say about the momentous events of March 1939: “A new boss arrived at the radio building. He was referred to as the “Führers

Stellvertreter”, and his name was Marek. I asked to see him, and when he granted me a few minutes of his time I told him that I had carefully studied Hitler’s speech, in which he promised that he would fully respect the cultural independence of the Czech nation. I asked him whether “cultural independence” included the radio. Marek was taken aback, but told me yes, it did. So I asked him to give the order for the Praha OLR shortwave station to be put back on the air. Marek promised to see what he could do. And two days later he telephoned me, and announced that he was allowing the short-wave broadcasts to continue, but only in Czech.”

Plaque to the victims of fascism on the Czech Radio building. Zdeňka Walló is among the victims.



This recollection proves that the international service did not disappear entirely during the war. Only two hours of programming - broadcast to North America - were left, compared to almost 20 hours before March 1939. The programme consisted almost entirely of music, with an officially-approved 10-minute news bulletin, and was broadcast on the 25 metre-band under the call sign OLR4A, and in summer on 19m under the call sign OLR5A.

The months following the occupation saw the gradual emergence of a separate Czech Radio, from the heavily curtailed Czecho-Slovak Radio. Czech Radio became Rundfunk Böhmen und Mähren - part of Germany’s Reich Radio. All official media - including radio - became instruments of Nazi propaganda. In March 1939 journalists of Jewish origin were forced to leave the station, under a decree issued by the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Most of the newsreaders and announcers from the pre-war international service left. Several - including Ivan Jelínek - emigrated, others found new jobs. Announcer Zdeňka Walló, who was Jewish, died in a concentration camp. Today her name is included on a plaque at the entrance to Czech Radio, honouring all those employees who died at the hands of the Nazis.



Warning sticker on wartime radio set: "Remember: listening to foreign radio is illegal and punishable by disciplinary measures or death!"

The battle of the airwaves

Shortwave broadcasts from abroad assumed enormous importance during the war years. In September 1939, the BBC began broadcasting in Czech from London, headquarters of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. Shortwave broadcasts from



Czechoslovak Radio building, May 1945

Moscow - the centre of exile Communist activity - began in Czech in 1941, and a year later the Czech service of Voice of America took to the airwaves. Listening to foreign radio in the occupied Czech Lands was a crime punishable by death, and people were forced to have shortwave circuits removed from their radios so they would be unable to listen to foreign programmes. But people continued to listen to shortwave - some listeners even fitted illegal circuit replacements - nicknamed "Churchills" - to their doctored radios so they could continue to receive shortwave. Foreign radio served

as a crucial source of information and morale for the people living in the occupied lands.

Radio, the most powerful of media, was an active participant in the Prague Uprising, which marked an end to the Nazi occupation of the Czech Lands. The uprising, organised by the Czech resistance, began on May 5th 1945 with a call to arms, broadcast on the radio. The uprising soon became to a large extent a battle for control of the radio station itself. The shortwave transmitter joined the struggle, broadcasting a plea for help to the Allied armies on May 6th. Dozens laid down their lives to protect the building, and the broadcasts continued uninterrupted.

Krátké vlny z Prahy

Od letošního Nového roku uložilo si i zahraniční vysílání čs. rozhlasu novou organizaci a nový program, rozšířený co do času a bohatší co do náplně. Od půlhodinových relací jsme přešli k průběžnější soustavě relací čtvrt hodinových, ve kterých seznamujeme posluchače ve všech dílech světa s problémy a životem ČSR zprávo-dajstvím, reportážemi, referáty zdejších odborníků i zahraničních návštěvníků. Nechybí každý týden ani umělecké pásmo o čs. hudbě, literatuře a dějinách.

Zde je přehled každodenního programu krátkovlnného vysílání Čs. rozhlasu:

| Slovauské řeči | od | | dlouhá vlna, m: |
|--|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| | hodiny: | krát. vlna, m: | |
| Rusky | 17.00 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| | 19.00 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| | 21.00 | 49.92 | |
| Srbochorvatsky a slovincky | 18.15 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| | 20.15 | 49.92 | 1961 |
| Polsky | 17.45 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| | 19.45 | 49.92 | 1961 |
| Bulbarsky | 17.15 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| | 19.15 | 49.92 | 1961 |
| Lužickosrbsky | 16.45 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| | 18.30 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| Ostatní řeči | | | |
| Anglicky | 18.45 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| | 20.45 | 49.92 | |
| | 22.45 | 49.92 | |
| Francouzsky | 20.00 | 49.92 | 1961 |
| | 22.15 | 49.92 | |
| Španělsky | 20.30 | 49.92 | |
| | 22.30 | 49.92 | |
| Esperanto | 18.30 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| | 22.00 | 49.92 | |
| Rumunsky | 17.30 | 31.41 | 1961 |
| Německy (pro Rakousko) | 19.30 | 49.92 | 1961 |
| Švédsky, norský a dánsky | 21.15 | 49.92 | |
| Francouzsky, německy a italsky (pro Švýcarsko) půl hodiny od | 21.30 | 49.92 | |
| Relace pro krajanů v zámoří: | | | |
| Česky, slovensky a anglicky | | | |
| 1 hodina od | 24.00 | 19.70 | |

Všechny doby jsou udány dle Greenwichského času. Vystřídá se v 16 řečech. Mnoho dopisů ze zahraničí dokazuje, že naše vysílání se setkává s úspěchem a pomáhá odstraňovat předurky a uvádět na pravou míru skreslené zprávy o naší zemi. Žádáme posluchače v Československu, aby své známé v cizině při své korespondenci s nimi upozornili na naše vysílání.

V. T.

Schedule from Our Radio weekly publication, January 1947

A new start

Immediately after the end of the war the international service resumed in earnest. In the beginning there were programmes in English, Czech, German, French and Italian. 1946 saw a significant increase in programming. The schedule clearly shows the extent of the international service in early 1947.

The information in the schedule shows that in early 1947 programmes were broadcast in 18 languages (Bulgarian, French, Serbo-Croat, Slovene, Sorbian, German, Polish, Russian, Romanian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Spanish, Italian, English, Esperanto and Czech/Slovak). From the text we learn that the half-hour programmes were shortened to 15 minutes. For the next two years this remained unchanged, only the total transmission time was extended. In 1947 there was an average of 6.7 hours of programmes a day, compared to 7.9 in 1948. It is also clear from the schedule that programmes were broadcast on longwave as well as shortwave. Each language section had two journalists/translators. This was also the beginning of the "central editorial department". The department produced commentaries in Czech, which were then translated for the various language services.

The most important change was that approximately half of the broadcasts were now directed to countries in the Soviet sphere: Poland, (eastern) Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia; there were even broadcasts in Sorbian - the language of the ethnic Slavs living in eastern Germany. Great emphasis was placed on the country of destination. For example there were differences between the German broadcasts to Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Some countries received programmes in different languages. Esperanto became a Radio Prague language in its own right.

Czechoslovak Radio Director Bohuslav Laštovička provides an explanation of the post-war orientation of the international service and Czechoslovak Radio as a whole, in comments made in 1946: "Last year saw the growth of a new branch in programming activities - the international service. Czechoslovak Radio created this service by itself, and it remains exceptionally important for our country. Despite having just one far-from-perfect shortwave transmitter, today we can be proud to say that in a relatively short time we have received a substantial reaction from abroad for the quality of our broadcasts, something that can be seen in the ever increasing number of letters. I doubt even the state officials responsible for this area realise what a huge contribution the radio has made to the country and how effective it has been in fending off various wild rumours and campaigns circulating about our country abroad, and how it has provoked sympathy for our country. It will be necessary to increase these broadcasts even further, and also improve the facilities for making programmes."

The programmes themselves underwent significant change after the war. Unlike

the pre-war years, spoken word now formed the backbone of programming; 90 percent of broadcasts were made up of news or comment, the rest was music. The 15-minute programmes consisted of news, followed by reports, interviews and features. The features included programmes called “Women’s Voice”, “Voice of the Unions”, “Youth Voice” and “Political Commentary”. The surviving scripts are full of references to the Košice governmental programme, fulfilling the economic plan, promotion of the Czechoslovak people’s social achievements and so on. The political nature of the programmes suggests that Czechoslovak Radio fully embraced the post-war division of the world and the country’s orientation towards the Soviet Union.

A prisoner of ideology

Even in the years immediately after the war, before the Communist take-over, the Communists held a strong position in Czechoslovak Radio. During the February 1948 political crisis, which was instigated by the Communist Party, the station sided openly with the Communists and as a powerful communication tool undoubtedly helped the party to power. The then Minister of Information, Václav Kopecký, publicly thanked Czechoslovak Radio for its assistance.

In April 1948 Czechoslovak Radio was nationalised, and from that point on its organisation and output was dictated by the Communist Party. In the summer of 1948, the international service was merged with the political news section, to ensure political

Radio Prague broadcasts (in hours per language) 1954-1969

| | 1954 | 1955 | 1956 | 1957 | 1958 | 1959 | 1960 | 1961 | 1962 | 1963 | 1964 | 1965 | 1966 | 1967 | 1968 | 1969 |
|--------------------------|---------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| English | * 1,643 | 1,520 | 1,690 | 2,108 | 2,111 | 2,106 | 1,954 | 2,044 | 2,046 | 2,092 | 2,166 | 2,607 | 2,608 | 2,478 | 2,608 | |
| Arabic | - | - | - 294 | 517 | 550 | 674 | 712 | 854 | 849 | 733 | 694 | 730 | 730 | 694 | 730 | |
| Bulgarian | - | - | - 13 | 52 | 52 | 26 | 25 | 22 | 20 | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Czech and Slovak | * 728 | 755 | 1,102 | 1,152 | 1,143 | 1,063 | 1,109 | 1,096 | 794 | 689 | 570 | 391 | 391 | 428 | 574 | |
| French | * 912 | 981 | 775 | 730 | 757 | 876 | 838 | 903 | 1,020 | 1,092 | 1,160 | 1,460 | 1,460 | 1,388 | 1,460 | |
| Italian | * 730 | 732 | 676 | 523 | 526 | 516 | 511 | 526 | 596 | 714 | 782 | 888 | 1,084 | 1,070 | 1,102 | |
| German | * 611 | 639 | 891 | 1,332 | 1,385 | 1,637 | 1,762 | 1,762 | 1,854 | 1,794 | 1,807 | 1,933 | 1,741 | 1,735 | 1,825 | |
| German for Ger. Minority | - | - | - | - | - | - 132 | 132 | 132 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Portuguese | - | - | - | - 46 | 329 | 587 | 880 | 879 | 747 | 692 | 694 | 730 | 730 | 694 | 730 | |
| Greek | * 365 | 366 | 365 | 365 | 339 | 335 | 335 | 338 | 341 | 343 | 230 | - | - | - | - | |
| Serbo-Croat | * 183 | 184 | 320 | 365 | 364 | 328 | 473 | 392 | 392 | 392 | 258 | - | - | - | - | |
| Swahili | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - 38 | 182 | 183 | 117 | - | |
| Spanish | * 1,389 | 1,250 | 1,270 | 1,248 | 1,230 | 1,237 | 1,233 | 1,244 | 1,119 | 1,098 | 1,144 | 1,330 | 1,331 | 1,313 | 1,409 | |
| Swedish | * 333 | 442 | 547 | 548 | 658 | 574 | 528 | 529 | 602 | 622 | 493 | - | - | - | - | |
| Others | * 544 | 792 | 2,165 | 2,141 | 1,945 | 1,514 | 1,298 | 1,377 | 1,460 | 1,464 | 1,460 | 1,460 | 1,460 | 1,396 | 182 | |
| Annual total | 5,265 | 7,438 | 7,681 | 10,108 | 11,127 | 11,389 | 11,605 | 11,790 | 12,098 | 11,840 | 11,725 | 11,496 | 11,711 | 11,718 | 11,313 | 10,620 |
| Daily average | 14.5 | 20.5 | 21 | 27.5 | 30.5 | 31 | 32 | 32.5 | 33 | 32.5 | 32 | 31.5 | 32 | 32 | 31 | 29 |

consistency in domestic and foreign broadcasts. Radio Prague began preparing different programmes for “friendly” countries, i.e. countries which had also “embarked on the road to socialism”, and “hostile” or capitalist countries. The main aim of the broadcasts to capitalist countries was to “paralyse the slander about socialist Czechoslovakia and win over listeners to the idea of socialism.” The aim of broadcasts to the Soviet bloc was to “strengthen the friendly ties between socialist countries and consolidate the relationship with the Soviet Union.”

In 1952 Czechoslovak Radio was reorganised along Soviet lines. The international service became an independent whole within Czechoslovak Radio, with a director at its head. Radio Prague consisted of a Central Section, which produced the basic texts in Czech, the different language sections, and a “section for international co-operation”. This section produced programmes to be “exported” abroad. These export programmes, which were broadcast by foreign radio stations, gradually replaced the broadcasts to socialist countries.

The extent of Radio Prague broadcasts grew rapidly in the 1950s. New languages - Arabic and Portuguese - were introduced. In 1949 Radio Prague was broadcasting 10 hours a day; by 1954 the figure had increased to 14.5 hours, by 1960, 32 hours. In 1962 Radio Prague reached a peak, broadcasting a total of 33 hours a day. The schedule reproduce here best illustrates the breadth of languages and number of hours broadcast.

In the 1950s, acting on orders from the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Czechoslovak Radio created something called “B broadcasts” in French and Italian. The Party had received requests from the Communist parties of France and Italy, which wanted to influence public opinion in their countries. The broadcasts were conspiratorial in nature, and run by a group of Italian and French Communists stationed in Prague. The Italian programme was called “Oggi in Italia”, the French broadcast was entitled “Ce soir en France”. All trace of the French B broadcasts disappears in the 1960s. For reasons of secrecy the Italian B broadcasts were relocated away from the Czechoslovak Radio building, and they went off the air in 1970. Radio Prague broadcasts in French and Italian were transmitted alongside the “secret” broadcasts.

More broadcasts meant more letters. In 1953 Radio Prague received 3,259 letters, in 1956 the number had risen to 16,232, in 1960, 49,353, and by the second half of the 1960s Radio Prague was receiving around 100,000 letters per year.

The expansion of broadcasts was also accompanied by modernisation of the transmitters. In 1949 a shortwave transmitter had been built in Velké Kostolany in Western Slovakia. 1955 saw the opening of a new broadcasting centre at Litomyšl in Eastern Bohemia, equipped with two 100 kW shortwave transmitters and a 300 kW medium-wave transmitter. This transmitter, which worked on 1287 kHz, served the international service until 1990.

*Radio Prague studio in the
1960s*



In 1956 a shortwave broadcasting centre at Rimavská Sobota in Eastern Slovakia began transmitting programmes. It is worth mentioning that during the modernising of the Rimavská Sobota centre in 1979-1982, the Poděbrady shortwave transmitter - which witnessed the birth of Radio Prague - was once again put into service.

In 1960 Czechoslovak Radio was placed under the direct control of the Communist Party Central Committee, further strengthening the influence of Communist ideology. The international service's 1962 programmes bear witness to this: a feature to mark the 20th anniversary of the annihilation of Lidice, a poll entitled "What the world would have looked like if Hitler had won", another poll called "My experience of colonialism" and a programme called "the Cuban crisis and the Soviet Union's policy of peace." The leading role of the Communist Party was confirmed by a 1964 law on Czechoslovak Radio.

In the 1960s the section for international co-operation, which made the "for export" pre-recorded programmes, saw the biggest expansion. The programmes were aimed chiefly at developing countries, many of which saw struggles for national liberation during that decade. For example in 1967 the section produced more than 1,333 hours of "export" programme material in ten languages. Of those 1,333 hours, 997 were sent to developing countries (Africa, Asia and Latin America), 202 hours to socialist countries (the Soviet Union and Bulgaria) and 134 hours to capitalist countries (USA, Australia, Cyprus and Portugal).

There was a similar political subtext behind the foundation of the Radio Prague Listeners' Clubs. These were formed in the 1960s, primarily in African, Asian and Latin American countries (the first club was established in 1960 in Cuba). Radio Prague supported the formation of the clubs, by publicising them on the air and organising competitions. In the 1960s and 70s there were some 600 such clubs active around the world. Radio Prague sent out around 200,000 packages of promotional



RADIO PRAHA MONITOR KLUB

splnil podmínky členství v celosvětovém krátkovlnném klubu Radio Praha

This is to certify that the holder of this certificate has qualified for membership in the RADIO PRAGUE WORLD WIDE SHORT WAVE CLUB

za soutěžní výbor
For the Award Committee

Členské číslo
Membership No.

náměstek Genf. ředitele Čs. rozhlasu
Deputy Director, Czechoslovak Radio

Dne
Date



Radio Prague Monitors' Club certificate

material per year during this time.

1963 saw the foundation of the Radio Prague Monitors' Club. Its members were DX listeners who sent Radio Prague reception reports. Radio Prague had sent such listeners QSL cards since its inception, and from the late 1950s the station even broadcast special programmes for them. The purpose of the Monitors' Club was to verify the quality of reception in individual parts of the world and make the necessary technical adjustments to improve reception. To qualify for membership in the Monitors' Club, listeners had to write a certain number of reports on the quality of reception and send them to the station in Prague. Annual endorsement stickers were available to those club members who renewed their club membership each year. The Radio Prague Monitors' Club, which had several thousand members, was shut down in the early 1990s.

The growth of broadcasts in the late 50s and 60s, when most programmes were extended from 15 to 30 and sometimes even 60 minutes, was not merely a growth in quantity: programme quality also improved. The composition of programmes was enriched: there were more and more new documentary features, listeners' letters programmes, competitions, programmes for DXers and hobbyists, musical requests, editors began to use more interview and reportage material etc. Several features of the time, for example Mailbag (produced by the English section) and Courier des auditeurs (from the French broadcasts) survive to this day.

In 1965 Radio Prague was reorganised. The different sections were merged into three new departments: a department for broadcasts to capitalist countries, a department for broadcasts to developing countries and a central programme department. The central department absorbed the sections which had been responsible for the central production of raw news material (news and comment) in Czech. These texts were then translated into the different languages and formed the lion's share of the broadcasts. Alongside these "obligatory" programmes, the various language sections were given a limited amount of room to create their own programmes, especially features.

The Prague Spring

The second half of the 1960s was a period of political thaw, a time of gradual liberalisation. The outward signs of this thaw could be seen in the speeches of some Communist politicians, but mostly in the media. This new spirit of reform was also felt in Czechoslovak Radio.

"The atmosphere was definitely more relaxed", says political columnist Jiří Hanák, who worked as a commentator for Radio Prague in the 1960s. "The change mainly affected the central programme department, where we were allowed to portray



Journalist Olga Szántová

the situation in Czechoslovakia as it really was. This obviously had an affect on our foreign political comment.” Olga Szántová, who worked in the American Section in the 1960s, has similar memories: “There was a certain degree of freedom. This mainly affected the programmes about Czechoslovakia, the texts of which we were given by the central programme department to broadcast or send abroad. Russian Radio even refused to broadcast these programmes in 1968. We enjoyed our work. It was different, we started going out into the field more. But one thing I must emphasise is that the style of work didn’t really change that

much. All scripts had to be approved by the Head of Section, and then they were taken to the Chief Authority for Script Supervision (HSTD). They stamped them with the initials HSTD. It was ridiculous, actually, because some of the HSTD people couldn’t even speak a foreign language. But without a stamp and the Head of Section’s signature, the script couldn’t be broadcast. And even then there was a strong sense of self-censorship at work. We knew very well what we could write, and what was



Tanks burning outside the Czechoslovak Radio building, August 1968

unacceptable. During the Prague Spring the HSTD form of censorship was scrapped. But I didn’t experience much of that - soon after ‘68 they threw me out.”

The “Prague Spring” came to an end in the early hours of August 21, 1968, with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact. For former American Section journalist Cecile Křížová, it all began on the morning of the 21st:

“I was one of the lucky few who had managed to get into the radio building that day. There were barricades on the streets, even some of the bridges were barricaded. I went into the studio and read the news of the violent occupation of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops, who no-one had invited, and handed over the microphone to a colleague from the French Section. Suddenly the door to the studio flew open. In the doorway stood a soldier, his uniform covered in dust. He pointed a machine gun at me and said “Von!” - which means “Out!” in Russian. I said I was already on my way out, thank you. And there ended 19 years at Radio Prague. I’d just finished editing an interview with the American actress Shirley Temple. I’d recorded it the day before. It never went out. Soon afterwards I emigrated to the United States.”

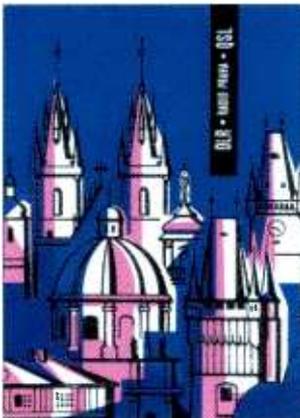
August 1968 was an almost identical repeat of May 1945. On the morning of August 21, the station broadcast a statement by the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Prague citizens began gathering in front of the radio building, and there were clashes which left several dead. The bullet-pocked facades of several surrounding buildings still serve as a reminder of those violent events. At 8am the building was occupied by Soviet soldiers. Normal studio broadcasts were suspended, but makeshift broadcasts continued from studios the Soviet soldiers hadn’t managed to find. The next day Czechoslovak Radio - including Radio Prague - began broadcasting from another location in Prague. The broadcasts were restricted to 10-minute news programmes in Czech/Slovak, English, German, French and Spanish. These secret broadcasts lasted until September 9th, when Soviet troops left the main radio building and broadcasts could begin again from the regular studios.

Normalisation

The presence of Soviet troops and the measures that were introduced afterwards in all areas of public life made it clear that supporters of the pro-Soviet line were in the ascendancy, and the battle for the character of the Czechoslovak state had been lost. There began two decades of oppressive rule described as “normalisation.” The Communists established a Department for Press and Information, whose first decree speaks for itself: “Do not broadcast anything that could be construed as being critical of the Soviet Union or the countries of the Warsaw Pact and their armies. Do not use the term “occupation” when applied to Czechoslovakia. Do not publicise the actions of the U.N. Security Council. Do not broadcast information about damage caused by the presence of Soviet troops, or any information about deaths or injuries.” Those who were active during the Prague Spring soon found themselves thrown out of their jobs.

By 1970 several hundred people had already left Czechoslovak Radio, most of them voluntarily. Radio Prague was one of the worst affected: of 350 employees, more than 150 people left. Others were sacked in the early 1970s. Almost all senior employees were replaced. So-called “Personnel Sections” were responsible for ensuring that only “politically reliable” members of staff found their way to senior positions.

Between 1968 and 1970 Radio Prague experienced numerous organisational changes, to “ensure that the international service becomes an effective tool for promoting the interests of the Communist Party and the socialist state in these new conditions.” The changes mainly concerned strengthening the centralisation of control over both management and programme output. Journalists lost the precious little artistic freedom they had enjoyed in the 1960s. Many programmes and songs were blacklisted. A monitoring department was added to Radio Prague, under the direct control of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The department monitored the Czech-language programmes of foreign stations which broadcast to Czechoslovakia, primarily Radio Free Europe, Voice of America and the BBC, and produced overviews of these broad-



QSL cards from the 70s (the abbreviation OLR is worth a mention here - it was used by the Pobebrady shortwave transmitter before the war)

casts for senior party and government officials.

1972 saw the creation of “Radio Prague Interprogram” - a specialised multi-language programme aimed at Western Europe. The programme consisted of five hours of music, interrupted every 15 minutes by news in Czech/Slovak, German, French and English. Later the programme was extended and news in Russian added. Interprogram broadcast on short and medium wave, and from 1976 also on FM, so it was also easy to pick up inside Czechoslovakia. Because of its heavy music content, many Czechoslovaks listened as well, even though Interprogram was intended mainly for foreigners.

The international service grew steadily in the 1970s. In 1970 Radio Prague was broadcasting 29 hours of programmes per day, by 1978 the figure had risen to 37 hours. The number of letters arriving at Radio Prague also grew steadily. In 1970 the station received around 88,000 letters. The number peaked in 1976, when listeners’ letters reached 137,000.

The international service continued in a similar form and intensity in the 1980s. In 1981 a Polish section was created, broadcasting one hour per day, and aimed at countering the pro-democracy Solidarity movement. Later the Polish programme became a

A gathering of Prague citizens and Czech Radio employees in front of the radio building in November 1989 to demand “real information.”



part of Interprogram. This sorry chapter in the station’s history ended in 1986. At the beginning of 1988 - 12 years after signing the Helsinki human rights agreement - Czechoslovakia finally switched off its jamming transmitters, which were used to block Western radio stations. It was a sign of the gradual thaw in the Communist bloc - Gorbachev’s “perestroika”.

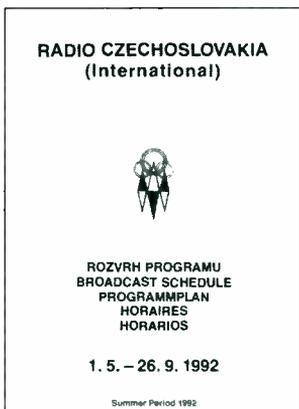
The return to democracy

At the end of 1989 the Communist regimes of central and eastern Europe collapsed like a house of cards - an end to four long decades of oppressive rule. Both Czechoslovak Radio and the people of Prague played an active role in these events. Democracy had finally arrived.

After the “Velvet Revolution” the most compromised employees and secret service agents left Czechoslovak Radio. Radio Prague gradually returned to its original mission - to provide the world with balanced and unbiased information about events in Czechoslovakia. Programmes once again began with a horn fanfare from Antonín Dvořák’s New World Symphony, as they had before the war. From the early 1950s to 1989, Radio Prague’s signature tune was the rousing Communist anthem “Forward Left”.

From April 1 to May 7 1990, Radio Prague fell silent. Only the Czech and Slovak language expatriate programmes and Interprogram stayed on the air. The reason for this pause was the uncertain position of the international service, combined with programme, personnel and technical cutbacks at Czechoslovak Radio. The Arabic, Italian and Portuguese for Latin America broadcasts had already been cut. Eight languages had been reduced to five: Czech/Slovak, English, German, French and Spanish. The “central departments” - that symbolised the “party line” - were reduced. Programmes were cut back sharply and many staff were laid off. In 1989, Radio Prague had some 360 employees: four years later that number had fallen to just over 50.

In the spring of 1990 a number of transmitters were taken out of service their output reduced. Until this time four 250 kW shortwave transmitters, seven 100 kW trans-



Radio Prague logo on a broadcasting schedule from first half of 1990s

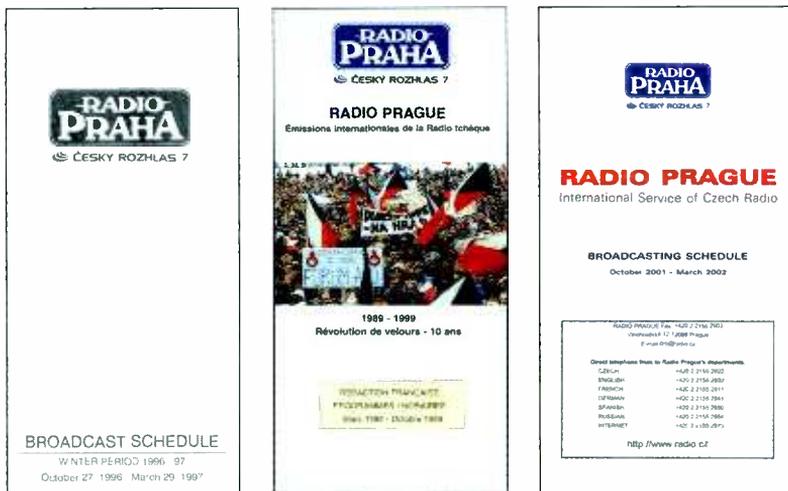
mitters and two medium-wave transmitters with a combined output of 500 kW were in use. Following the renewal of broadcasts in May 1990, Radio Prague was using just two 250 kW shortwave transmitters in Rimavská Sobota and two 100 kW shortwave transmitters in Litomyšl. Following the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the Rimavská Sobota transmitting station was given to Slovakia and Litomyšl to the Czech Republic. Radio Prague used the more powerful transmitter at Rimavská Sobota until 1995, when it had to cease using the Slovak facilities for financial reasons. Since then Radio Prague has used only the Litomyšl transmitter site. The 1287 kHz medium-wave frequency was withdrawn from Radio Prague in 1990. This channel is used to this day by the Czech service of Radio Free Europe.

Interprogram also faced reductions. In 1990 it cut programmes to just English German and French, and was finally shut down in 1992. In the same year, the central departments were also closed down once and for all. The international service ceased covering international news and began concentrating solely on events in the Czech Republic.

In 1992 a new law made Czechoslovak Radio a public body, and a Czechoslovak Radio Supervisory Board was created to guarantee the station's independence. The Board was appointed by parliament, not by the government or the party apparatus, as had been the case for the previous nearly 50 years. In 1993, following the division of Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovak Radio, the international service became an independent broadcasting body within Czech Radio.

Even the name Radio Prague - which is used to describe the international service in this publication - has an interesting past. It is necessary to distinguish between the internal administrative term used within Czechoslovak Radio and the term used in the programmes: i.e. the name used by the station to describe itself in its broadcasts. Before the war the station introduced itself as "the shortwave Czechoslovak station Praha" or by the transmitter's call sign OLR. After the war several monikers were used in various languages: "Station Prague", "This is Prague - Czechoslovakia", "Prague Calling" etc. The name "Radio Prague" first appeared in the 1950s. It was used in DX programmes, and several language sections began using "Radio Prague - Czechoslovakia" as a call sign. The name "Radio Prague" was used mainly in written correspondence with listeners, and can be seen on various broadcasting schedules, QSL cards and other printed material from the 1960s. It was not, however, used universally. It was not until the 1990s (in the early 90s the station was called "Radio Czechoslovakia International") the name Radio Prague stuck for good. As for internal administrative use within Czechoslovak Radio, before the war the station used the words "shortwave department", after the war "shortwave broadcasts", from the 1950s "the foreign language broadcasts", or ZV for short. In 1996, when Czech Radio stations were given

Radio Prague broadcast schedules, with new logo used since 1996



new names, “Radio Prague” became the name used both internally and externally. The station’s official name is “Czech Radio 7 - Radio Prague”. On air, presenters use the phrase - “Radio Prague - the international service of Czech Radio”.

Radio Prague also has its own methods of financing. While Czech Radio is funded by the licence fee, the international service is financed from the state budget. From 1993-1996 funding came from the Office of the Czech Government; since 1997 Radio Prague has been financed via the Foreign Ministry. In 1994 the government announced a tender for operating the international service. Not surprisingly, this was won by Czech Radio. Radio Prague’s “foundation charter” is an agreement between Czech Radio and the Foreign Ministry, in which the extent and form of broadcasts and financing is laid out in full. The budget for the international service fell from 90 million crowns in 1993 to 45 million in 1997. In 1997 there were further cuts planned. All shortwave broadcasts were originally to be closed down with the exception of the Czech and English services; other language services were to be available only via the Internet. Luckily this plan was never realised. In 2000 the budget was raised to 62 million crowns (1.5 million USD) and Radio Prague was able to launch a Russian service.

Radio Prague at the dawn of the new millennium

In 2001 Radio Prague was broadcasting in six languages: English, German, French, Spanish, Czech and Russian. The station was broadcasting a total of 24 hours’ worth

of programmes per day, 3 hours of which were new programmes (one new 30-minute programme in each of the six languages); the remaining 21 hours are rebroadcasts. Rebroadcast programmes have fresh news bulletins. All programmes last for 30 minutes and have a standard layout: news, current affairs magazine, Czech press review and a feature. The theme of the feature changes each day and each section tailors programmes to suit its audience. The weekend broadcasts have a slightly more relaxed structure, they contain less news and more features devoted to the arts, social affairs, music etc.

Even international co-operation has reached a new dimension. Radio Prague produces a number of programmes in co-operation with other radio stations, and also for them. Radio Prague's Czech section produces programmes for Czech expatriates through Radio SBS in Australia, Radio Daruvar in Croatia, Radio Timisoara in Romania and several radio stations in the United States. These programmes are sent by cassette, via the Internet or down telephone lines. The Russian section uses the Internet to send its features to two radio stations in Russia. The English section works with Radio Slovakia International, Radio Budapest and Radio Polonia to produce a programme called Central Europe Today, which examines contemporary issues facing Central Europe. The English Section also contributes features to Radio Polonia's Europe East programme. Both the English and German sections co-operate with a number of European radio stations on the Radio E project. The German section works together with Radio Slovakia to produce a Czech-Slovak magazine programme. The French section contributes towards the Accents d'Europe programme produced by Radio France Internationale. The Spanish section sends programmes to several stations in Latin America.

Despite all the technological advances of the last few years, shortwave remains the

Radio Prague's short-wave transmitters at Litomyšl in East Bohemia



main broadcast medium for Radio Prague. Radio Prague uses two transmitters in Litomyšl, each with an output of 100 kW, which can produce up to 200 kW.

The transmitters' relatively low output and the problems associated with long-distance shortwave propagation means that reception in some parts of the world is difficult and unstable. For this reason Radio Prague organises relay transmissions using foreign transmitter facilities, with the aim of improving the coverage of target areas. Since 1998 the English and Spanish broadcasts have been relayed on shortwave by Radio Miami International in Florida. In 2000 Radio Prague returned to Slovakia's Rimavská Sobota transmitter, which broadcasts the Russian programme, and, since 2001, the German programme.

Neither has Radio Prague ignored new technology. In 1994 Radio Prague was connected to the Internet. The station was one of the first among the Czech media to offer news in all of its languages on its website <http://www.radio.cz>

In 1996 Radio Prague started broadcasting via the Internet in Real Audio and in 1999 it also began offering programmes in MP3. The services offered by the Radio Prague website include a daily email news bulletin, and by 2000 more than 6,000 people were using the service. The Radio Prague website offers more than just webcasts or texts of programmes. Radio Prague sees the Internet as a medium of its own, with its own specific content.



*Radio Prague website
- www.radio.cz*

Radio Prague offers a whole range of interesting information about the Czech Republic, as well as competitions and also the “Roma pages”, which offer a glimpse of daily life for members of the Czech Republic’s Roma minority. The success of the Internet team can be seen in the rising numbers visiting the site. In 2001 the Radio

Prague website was recording an average of 50,000 individual sessions per month.

As far as satellite broadcasts are concerned, Radio Prague programmes in English and Spanish are available in North America via the Galaxy and Telstar satellites, pro-

**Radio Prague Roma
web pages**

Roma

in the Czech Republic

Česky Francouz Deutsch

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">General History of the RomaHistory of the Roma in the Czech LandsSituation of the Roma since 1989News about Roma LifeInternational Roma UnionTraditional Family LifeRoma PersonalitiesRomani LanguageRomani MediaOrganizations Concerned with the RomaPlanned Wall in Ústí nad LabemFlood of JarovnicePersonal Accounts by RomaPhotos by Romani ChildrenPhoto GalleryTolerance Project '97Useful LinksRadio Prague | <p>Latest News from Radio Prague</p> <p>Four found not guilty in Romany attack Radio Prague, October 18th - A regional court in the eastern town Olomouc has pronounced a verdict of not guilty for four Czech youths charged with a racist attack on a Romany man in Jesenice two years ago. Two others were found guilty but were given suspended sentences of 18 and 20 months, respectively.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Read more</p> <p>British immigration officers resume checks at Prague Airport</p> <p>Radio Prague, October 18th - British officials resumed controversial immigration controls at Prague's Ruzyně Airport on Tuesday. Britain suspended the controls, which it calls 'pre-clearance measures' in September, saying that they could be reintroduced at any time.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Read more</p> <p>The British government faces a lawsuit for immigration controls at Ruzyně airport</p> <p>Radio Prague, October 17th - July of this year</p> |
|---|--|

grammes in English and German can be picked up in Europe via the Astra and Eutelsat Hotbird satellites. The satellite broadcasts have been provided since 1995 by the British company World Radio Network. Satellite broadcasts increase the number of potential listeners and also serve as a way of distributing the programme material for relay broadcasts. Radio Prague's rebroadcast partners pick up the satellite signal in the United States and Slovakia and relay the programmes on shortwave. Another advantage is that WRN provides programmes to a number of cable and radio operators in Western Europe and North America. So people can hear Radio Prague in English by cable in cities such as Berlin, Brussels and London, and also on American stations belonging to the National Public Radio network.

In 1993 Radio Prague also began broadcasting again to listeners in the Czech Republic. The English programme is relayed on frequencies employed by Czech Radio's Regina Praha regional station. In 1996 an agreement was signed with the BBC, in which Radio Prague broadcasts two programmes per day on the BBC's FM

frequencies in the Czech Republic. The FM service, aimed at tourists and foreigners living in the country, has been a resounding success. Because the number of foreigners living in the Czech Republic is rising, Radio Prague is considering the introduction of FM broadcasts in other languages as well.

And while we are on the subject of new technology, we should mention the transition to digital production and broadcasting. Radio Prague went fully digital in the course of 2000, when Czech Radio's brand new studio building was opened.

The introduction of digital technology means that journalists no longer work with reel-to-reel magnetic tape; instead they use a combination of minidisk and computer editing to produce radio programmes. Radio Prague now broadcasts digitally using the Dalet system.

Listing the station's activities would not be complete without mentioning Radio Prague's involvement in international organisations. Radio Prague is an active member of a specialised group of international radio stations within the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). The group serves as a forum for strengthening co-ope-



Czech Radio studio building

ration between EBU members and supporting the development of new technology suitable for international radio, such as the DRM (Digital Radio Mondial) system.

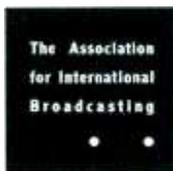
In 1999 Radio Prague became a member of the Association for International

Radio Prague studio



Broadcasting, based in Britain. Radio Prague is also a founding member of the High Frequency Co-ordination Conference (HFCC). This international group of specialists first met in 1990 following an initiative launched by Radio Prague's veteran DX programme presenter and frequency co-ordinator Oldřich Číp. The group later founded the HFCC, and Oldřich Číp has served as the organisation's chairman since its foundation. The HFCC is registered in the Czech Republic and is based in

International organisations, in which Radio Prague plays an active role



the Czech Radio building in Prague. The global character of co-ordination is emphasised by the support offered by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The 1997 World Radio Conference in Geneva approved the procedures developed by the HFCC and included them in International Radio Regulations. The

HFCC association brings together 60 radio organisations from 30 countries that manage and co-ordinate more than 80 percent of shortwave transmissions around the world.

But of course it is mainly the listeners themselves who keep radio alive. These days more and more people write to us by e-mail. Whether they use electronic or traditional mail, we still try to take the same care in addressing their criticisms and suggestions. The individual sections of Radio Prague run various listener competitions and organise meetings of listeners. Each year the station publishes a series of eight QSL cards, which are regarded as collector's items.

The number of letters sent by listeners rose from 12,000 in 1999 to 13,000 in 2000. In 2001 - to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the international service - Radio Prague launched a competition, in which listeners were asked to answer two



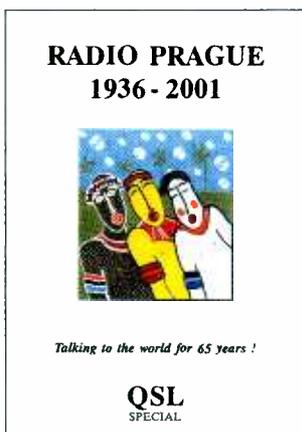
QSL cards from 2000-2001

questions: “How I came across Radio Prague” and “If Radio Prague was a person, what kind of person would he or she be?”

Juan Carlos Buscaglia, who listens to Radio Prague from Argentina, was selected from the 1,000 entries that we received. Mr Buscaglia wrote: “Radio Prague is a friend, who is there when I need her, who knows what my heart desires. She can hit the right strings in my heart to sound the old-forgotten melodies. And I know I would be ready to offer the same to her, if necessary. She’s a friend for life and for death, a friend who accompanies me through all the episodes of my life - happy and less happy. She’s a bride with whom I’ve been in love for 25 years.” The words of Juan Carlos Buscaglia are a sign that Radio Prague will still have something to say to listeners in the third millennium.



Radio Prague competition winner Juan Carlos Buscaglia from Argentina during his visit to Prague



QSL card celebrating Radio Prague’s 65th anniversary

**RADIO PRAGUE
65 YEARS**

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