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Joseph G. Svoboda

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Czech Voices: Stories from Texas in the Amerikán Národní Kalendář. Translated and edited by Clinton Machann and James W. Mendl, Jr. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1991. Illustrations, bibliography, index. xxxi + 147 pp. \$18.95.

Clinton Machann and James W. Mendl are already known to readers interested in Czech ethnicity in Texas by a volume entitled *Krásná Amerika* published in 1983 and recounting the history of the Czech community in Texas, its social structure, religion, folk culture, literature, language, journalism, and eventual assimilation and retention of ethnic identity. The present volume brings the history of Texas Czechs to life by way of reminiscences of immigrants who settled in the Lone Star State.

The ten reminiscences originally appeared in several issues of *Amerikán Národní Kalendář*, a Czech language almanac published annually since 1877 in Chicago by the publishing house of August Geringer, at that time the most prestigious Czech language publisher in the United States. Machann and Mendl have carefully selected and translated the reminiscences to illustrate the lives of Czech immigrants in Texas before, during, and after the Civil War.

The interpretive introduction provides a fitting background for the autobiographical narratives. The stories of immigrants tell the reader about the life in their homeland (Bohemia or Moravia, then a part of the Austrian Habsburg monarchy), the reasons for their leaving, and their subsequent experiences in Texas.

Five of the immigrants arrived before the Civil War (three of them with their parents). They were drafted and served, contrary to their own inclination, in the Confederate army.

One of them, Jan Horák, expressed it simply: "My sympathies were with the North. We hated slavery. We came to America so that we could be free, and we wanted everybody to have freedom." He later deserted and joined the Union army.

While two declared their loyalty to the Catholic faith, others followed their evangelical persuasion, and at least one, Josef Blažek, exhibited so called "freethought," even though his state-

ment on his family was somewhat contradictory: "In 1866 I married Josefína Marek and God has blessed us with three daughters and three sons, so that more atheists were brought into the world." The emphasis on religious attitudes seems to have permeated the narratives.

The epilogue consists of an account of L. W. Dongres, Czech-American journalist, who reveals little of himself but a great deal of Czech life in Texas. He sprinkles his story with anecdotes. One of them relates to the prevailing influence of "Moravian," a dialect of Czech among the immigrants. "In 1893, when I got off the train in Fayetteville a black man . . . grabbed my bags and said in fluent Moravian, 'I'll take your bags for you.' I looked at him with wide eyes and perhaps my mouth fell open, for the Negro flashed a white-toothed smile at me and said, 'I'm a black Moravian, a black son of a bitch.'" Dongres adds that there were several black families whose adult children spoke better "Moravian" than English.

The length of narratives is uneven, the shortest covering only four pages and the most extensive running to thirty-nine pages. The volume provides a name and subject index and a useful bibliography of imprints on Czech Texans available in English. All books were published during the 1980s and for the most part in Texas. This is an example of renewed interest in Czech ethnicity in Texas, indicating that this manifestation can persist even without the usage of Czech language. The publication of *Czech Voices* is significant to this continuing persistence. Undoubtedly the book will be read and appreciated by those Texans of Czech descent who never learned the language and yet retained affinity to the culture of their forefathers.

Shouldn't a similar venture be undertaken in other Great Plains states? *Amerikán Národní Kalendář* includes hundreds of autobiographies of Czech immigrants who settled in the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Their voices could be heard, too, if translated and published.

JOSEPH G. SVOBODA
University Archives
University of Nebraska-Lincoln