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## Review of *The Czechs in Oklahoma* By Karel D. Bicha

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history of Czechs in Europe and the United States, Karel Bicha of Marquette University devotes the first two of his nine chapters to a survey of that history. The third chapter, organized chronologically, tells how several thousand Czechs settled in Oklahoma from 1889 to 1910. Each of the next four chapters is organized topically and treats an important facet of Oklahoma Czech life, including religion, culture, agriculture, and family and social life. The eighth chapter presents short biographies of six representative Czech Oklahomans and briefly discusses recent Czech festivals and efforts to maintain ethnic identity. The last chapter briefly and critically surveys English-language publications that discuss the history and life of Oklahoma Czechs.

Bicha relates the experience of Czech Oklahomans to important developments in Oklahoma history and contrasts Czech-American customs to those of native-born Protestant Oklahomans. He notes two ways in which the history of Czechs in Oklahoma has differed most markedly from that of Czechs in other states. First, only in Oklahoma before 1914 did a vast majority of Czech settlers come from other parts of the United States as opposed to coming directly from Bohemia and Moravia. Second, in Oklahoma, and to a lesser degree in Kansas, Czechs primarily settled among Americans who were overwhelmingly native-born Protestants of Anglo-Saxon origin. Since a majority of Czech settlers in Oklahoma, as in other Great Plains states, became farmers, Bicha properly devotes an entire chapter to Czech agricultural practices and part of another chapter to rural Czech family life. He is the first scholar to summarize and thus publicize the findings of Russell Lynch's thorough but little known study of Czech farmers in Lincoln County, Oklahoma.

*The Czechs in Oklahoma.* By Karel D. Bicha. Newcomers in a New Land. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. Maps, illustrations, bibliographical essay, notes. 80 pp. \$2.95.

This booklet, one of ten in the Newcomers in a New Land series, not only addresses a popular audience but offers scholars some new information and a thoughtful examination of many aspects of the Czech-American experience in Oklahoma. Recognizing the typical American reader's unfamiliarity with the

To supplement his examination of pertinent English-language publications, Bicha has consulted some of the many publications in Czech and the several unpublished doctoral and masters theses on Czech-American society in Oklahoma and neighboring states. New evidence will be found in his interviews with

several representative Czech Oklahomans. He offers no new or controversial interpretations of the Czech-American past but does present an intelligent synthesis of existing scholarship on that subject. Among the more attractive features of Bicha's booklet is his perceptive identification of what is important or unusual in the family life and social relationships of Czech Oklahomans. He properly emphasizes fraternal associations and churches rather than the Czech-language press and the Sokol, neither of which thrived in Oklahoma compared to those states with larger Czech-American populations. Moreover, given the preponderance of Czech freethinkers over Czech Catholics in Oklahoma before 1920, Bicha appropriately devotes slightly more attention to the former. He fairly assesses the strengths and shortcomings of each camp and does not gloss over the serious ideological conflicts among Czech-Americans in the era of mass immigration. One might only ask for a more detailed and critical discussion of Czech-American problems and achievements since 1940 and at least some mention of what Oklahoma Czechs did in the political controversies of the McCarthy era. Bicha says surprisingly little about the political interests or affiliation of Czech Oklahomans, past or present, perhaps because their influence upon state and local politics has been inconsequential.

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