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“AUGUST GERINGER

**The Publisher of “Svornost” [Solidarity] and “Amerikán” Reached on the 2nd of August
1922**

80 Years of His Fruitful Life”



Aug Geringer

The year 1922 was significant for the publishing house of “Svornost” daily, the bi-weekly “Amerikán”, and the weekly “Duch Času” [The Spirit of the Time], as well as for the calendar “Amerikán”, and for the great family of readers of Czech-American periodicals because, among other reasons, during that year Mr. August Geringer reached the 80th year of a life devoted to work. Mr. August Geringer is the founder and editor of the first Czech daily in America and the publisher of many other publications. Anyone who has experienced the lifestyle that the publisher of “Svornost”, and “Amerikán” has, will not be surprised that the celebrant spent the day of his 80th birthday at his work desk-- the same desk at which he has been found daily for the last several decades from dawn till dusk. Even at an advanced age, he remains devoted to his work, firmly holding the reins that guide the enterprise which he founded half a century before, and which he led from its insignificant beginnings to success and greatness with his tireless efforts, and his unbeatable perseverance.

From the first years of the “Amerikán” calendar, when the yearly essays appeared under the title “Memories of Czech Settlers in America”, August Geringer transmitted, to the public and to history, hundreds of biographies of countrymen who were standing at the cradle of Czechoslovak America, and who remembered its first hesitant steps; and who, from the beginning, helped with the flourishing of the future great and most powerful branch of the Czechoslovak nation abroad.

In this way, the publisher of “Amerikán” gained merit by the founding of one of the largest and most valuable sources for future historians of Czechoslovak America. Many important events, much important information from the life of Czechoslovak America, would have been forever lost to history by the death of the old pioneers of the Czechie across the sea, if it were not for these memories, deposited for all time in the so-far 40 yearly calendars of “Amerikán”.

Very often over the last 20 years Mr. August Geringer has been asked by his friends and his colleagues who organized the calendar, to enrich the “Memories” with the biography of not only one of the oldest, and most famous settlers, but also one of those who contributed the most to the development and to the current situation of Czechoslovak America—with his own biography.

Nevertheless, until 1922, this wish was met with a simple but firm refusal. The humility which, in the case of Mr. August Geringer, often reached a point of disgust for all pretension, led to the fact that while the readers of the calendar, “Amerikán” were exposed to the biographies of people who, even though they had lived through important times and remembered great events, nevertheless did not leave lasting traces of their own activities. These readers did not have an occasion to learn about the life trajectory of a man who for half a century had been one of the most important activists in every national or educational movement that Czechoslovak America experienced; a man that, through the medium of his periodicals had an undeniably great influence on the development of the $\frac{3}{4}$ million strong overseas members of the Czechoslovak nation.

It was only last year that colleagues of Mr. Geringer convinced the old publisher, who was just over 80 years old, to confide in the paper his memories of his youth spent in the old motherland and the description of his fight, his strivings, and his enterprises on the soil of the new motherland, America, so that he might impart to paper, to those who were in personal contact with him, or even to others who knew his name from his publications, so that they would have the occasion to learn about the course of his life, and also so that his important biography would be preserved for the future, without which the history of Czechoslovak America would be incomplete. So we can, in this jubilee annual issue of the calendar “Amerikán” finally present the biography of August Geringer, that was largely written by his own hand, and which is accompanied by many interesting and enlightening memories from his impressions and the experiences of his rich life.

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Mr. August Geringer’s Youth

The birthplace of Mr. August Geringer is the town of Březnice in the former Písek Region. There in an old school building where his parents had an apartment, he was born on the 2nd of August 1842; the second child in the learned family of Václav and Amalie Geringer. He came from a long line of teachers. From the time he was a six year old boy he remembers his grandfather, Antonín Geringer, also a teacher at the main Březnice three classroom school. Even the father of August Geringer, Václav Geringer, and his uncle Ignác, devoted their lives to the teaching profession. The grandfather of little August, Antonín Geringer, was transferred from Prachatic to Březnice, where he worked until the time of his death. The Publisher A. G. remembers how in 1848 when he was still a little boy his father would go “along the railroads” to take part in military exercises as a guardsman. [Translator’s note: 1848 was the time of nationalistic uprisings against the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the Czechs took up arms and demanded a new constitution and representation in the governing institutions in Vienna. Their units were called the guards.] Until that time school had been taught in German. In 1849, however, it was ordered that they should be taught in Czech. Václav Geringer, the father of the Publisher, was interviewed for a position at the main school and he served at the Březnice School up to 1853,



Pohled na náměstí Březnice, rodiště Aug. Geringera.

The view of Březnice Town Square, August Geringer’s home town

when he was transferred to the parish-- the so-called Imperial school in Technič, where he worked less than two full years. From there, following his own request, he was transferred to a parish, another Imperial school in Lašovice, where a native of Březnice-- Smolka-- was a parish

priest, and upon whose urging he had asked for that job, and received it. This was in the year 1855. The reason that the publisher's father asked for a transfer from the main school to the parish school in the countryside was that in 1848, the so-called "tithe in-kind share" was abolished and, the teachers received such a paltry replacement in monetary exchange that it did not even replace the straw in the payment in-kind. The income then became so little that during those expensive times a teacher could not make ends meet, since at that time a strych [.7 acre] of ground rye was sold for 40 Austrian gold pieces. As a consequence, the existence of a teacher became a paltry survival, and all teachers were forced to do other paid work, either teaching music or some other profession. The publisher's father, Václav Geringer, had a great love of books, and beginning during his youth as a student he was either bookbinding for himself or for his acquaintances, and he provided the most necessary bookbinding tools for this purpose for himself. Once a traveling theatre company visited Březnice. It employed a skilled bookbinder, Ratysborn, to whom the publisher's father turned to see how to bind books correctly, not only the small ones for reading, but also administrative ones. And so the whole time the company stayed in town, the industrious teacher was improving and he got to the point where he could do the



Školní budova, kde byl narozen August Geringer.

The school building, where August Geringer was born.

trade. He always worked in the morning before teaching school, and in the afternoon after teaching school. That is how he was forced to eke out a living for his numerous family that included parents and eleven children. That was also the main reason why he asked for the

transfer to a countryside parish school, around which was a nice garden and some fields, where he could keep a couple of cows and a piglet and that way at least ensure a livelihood.

August Geringer was eleven years old when he finished the third classroom of the main school and departed with his parents to the new employment place in Technič. There, the parish priest was M. Vimer, a good man and a good orator. As mentioned above, after a stay of not quite two years, the Geringer family found itself at the parish school in Lašovice. This school was quite neglected and so to his father there came a time of heavy work getting everything on the right track. At that time in Lašovice there was only one classroom, which was attended by 240 children from the place itself, and from 11 villages that had been added to the school district. The school room was too small for such a large number of children, and some had to sit on the floor. The consequence of this was that it was an art to keep the children quiet, and an even more impressive art to teach these children something. This drove the father of the publisher to take his son as help, which he did, with the permission of the parish priest. The parish priest, Smolka, grew to like August and he started to teach him more and to prepare him for further study. And he had him as his right hand for everything, and of course, even in the altar boy ministry. This went on for all of two years until the time when the second classroom was built and the teacher's helper was appointed, and this was Mr. Čada, from Smolotely. Mr. Čada was a good organ player, an old bachelor, and by his own word-- as well as by submitted documentation-- the son of a priest. Once the children had been divided into two classes, and once everything had been arranged in the church, August left for Prague for further education. He was a quick boy and it is not surprising that he had also learned bookbinding from his father and worked at it in his free time before and after school and also on Sunday. He always had enough work because religious mothers brought him their prayer books for binding, and in addition surrounding priests, forest administrators, and teachers would bring him administrative books, or reading books, and so he became a widely known bookbinder in the surrounding area.

He was supposed to attend the Real High School in Prague, but he did not do it; he preferred to go and work in bookbinding, while at the same time attending an evening school. He spent a year and a half in Prague, then he departed for Vienna in order to master his trade and his German. He lived at the place of his aunt, the sister of his mother. He found work immediately, and he worked at leather haberdashery. Later he accepted photo album work at a different place, which at that time was just coming into fashion. He was quite prosperous and content with his situation. The brother-in-law of his aunt, Mr. Mareš, had a furniture factory at that time where he built wardrobes and the so-called "secretaries" [šifonéry] [small chest of drawers]; different types of tables with drawers and mirrors, and hangers for dresses. In the evenings and on Sundays August would help with the fitting of drawers, and with mirrors, and he went with Mr. Mareš to sell and to take orders, and also he kept the books. All this was to his benefit, as it enlarged his trade knowledge. During that time he also got acquainted with Vienna, even behind the "line", and it became his home. Once he even had occasion to see the Emperor Franz Josef, during maneuvers that took place in 1861 on then empty lands called the Marie Hills.

Memories of Teaching

In 1862 August received a letter from home saying that his father had been stricken with gout, and that he could not get any replacement for himself, since at that time there were very few teachers, and they were replaced by veteran soldiers. That is the reason why August was asked to come home to replace his father until he had recovered. Then he had to obey, and return home and pass an exam with the Vicar Císař and take over the position of assistant teacher, which he held for six full years. Then he had to do everything that encompassed the teacher's duties. Now we will allow the publisher himself to narrate, and thus we will learn many interesting details from the life of a teacher at that time:

“I will attempt to describe all my duties at that time that were those of a teacher, as far as my memory from those times reaches into the past. I will take it in order from the New Year. After the New Year, there was always Three Kings Day, celebrated on the 6th of January. The day before, water was sanctified along with chalk and in these ceremonies the teacher had to be present to answer the priest. During Three Kings, according to an old tradition, the teacher had the duty of walking through the villages that belonged to the parish and writing the letters, K.M.B on the doors. Those are the first letters of the names of the three kings. For that the teacher was compensated at each building and that is why he would always bring some woman with a basket to collect the presents, and to bring it to his home. Usually the teacher would get, peas, lentils, semolina, poppy seed, butter, cheese, eggs, and whatever else was available from the house ladies. The teacher would enter the house, greet the people, and he would write the letters, K.M.B on each door. He would wish health and happiness, and would go to the next number, until he had toured the whole village. Some house ladies asked to have well written letters; some of them, however, did not care, to the contrary, as soon as the teacher had exited the doors, they immediately erased the writing. They did it because of an old superstition, believing that the erasure of the letters would help the yearling cows and grown up cows to mate. As long as the teacher's sanctified chalk lasted, he wrote with the sanctified one, but if he ran out, or if he lost one somewhere, or if it fell apart into small pieces, he wrote with an unsanctified one, and it was fine.

During each day of Lent the teacher had to take the school children to church for mass, and there according to the order of the parish priest, he had to pray using the rosary. This often happened during a deep freeze in the unheated church, where the children, especially those who were poorer, were badly dressed and insufficiently fed and they were very cold. When the teacher took them back to the school, it took a long time before the children warmed up and sat down for study. That is how the best time, and best instruction was stolen from the children.

Then came Palm Sunday, [Květná neděle], when passions were sung, then the Maundy Thursday with the sanctification of oils, and the deposit of Christ in the so-called “God's Grave”, to which people would go to kiss the Christ on the Cross, to pray, and to bring kreutzers as an “offering”. During Maundy Thursday at nine o'clock in the morning the bells stopped tolling and instead of them rattles were heard and clackers, which performed the service until Saturday, until the moment of the “Rising of the Lord.” On Good Friday Judas was burned, and the Passions were ended. The church was open for the whole day so that believers could take a space by “God's grave.”

On Saturday, at six o'clock in the evening, the Resurrection was celebrated by a procession around the church. Upon returning to the church the singers in the choir section began the song, "He Is Risen at This Moment" and then there was a recitation of litanies, and prayer that ended the celebration.

On the feast day of the Lord, Easter, a great Holy Mass was served during which there was a figural mass with music and songs-- which was the custom on all Holy Days-- pilgrimage, and on All Saints Day, a glorious requiem was performed.

Immediately after the Easter Holidays, the duty of the teacher was to go for "registration." In order to understand better, there follows an explanation that the parish office was keeping the register for the entire parish, and each year it had to be reviewed, amended, and corrected, and then the parish priest had to take it to the regional administrator. The registers [birth and death], had to be assembled by the teacher each year, and in order to be correct, the teacher had to go to every village, from building to building, and ask the owner all the questions that were contained in the register book. That is to say: the name of the farmer, his wife, her maiden name, how many children of what sex, how many farmhands, of which confession, the age of each one, etc. As a rule that the teacher would bring with him, a woman with a back basket that would put the compensation for this work, and it was called "an offering of food" [pomlázka] and according to the judgement of the house lady, and the financial resources, they would contribute from 3 to 12 eggs, and somewhere in addition also, peas, poppy seeds, lentils, semolina, dried pears, for pear porridge, etc. Then once the whole village had taken a turn and the notes were properly corrected, it had to be neatly copied into new books, delivered by the regional administration, and each rubric had to be perfectly noted and added, and then delivered to the regional office in a handwritten copy. The original stayed in the parish, until the next year, as a model for the new register.

On the 16th of May came the church designated holiday of St. John Nepomucene which was celebrated with a Holy Mass over an eight day period. Every day in the afternoon the so-called benediction took place here and then in the evening the teacher had a duty to also perform a religious service in the village of Zahořany, during which the



Školní budova v Lašovicích, kde působil Aug. Geringer.

The school building in Lašovice, where August Geringer worked.

teacher usually recited the litany to St. John and then there was the singing of a song and it ended with the praying of 3 Our Fathers, and the Holy Mary, which was also in my duties.

After the harvest there was a collection of the so-called “post-harvest”, even though the buyout was put into effect in the year 1848. In our settlement the “tithe of the tenth” remained and this was because the farmers did not want to buy themselves out, saying, why buy yourself out when the “tithe in-kind” or “left over from the sheaves” [posnopné] is so small, and each one gladly gives it to the teacher, even though, for example, we have bought ourselves out. The rule was a cottage-dweller was ordered to give one, a bigger cottage-dweller two, and a farmer gave three sheaves, commensurate to the measurement of the field. It was determined for each farmer, what kind of grain he was supposed to give, whether it was oats, barley, rye, or wheat. That was usually done during the school vacation. The teacher arrived at the village to the administrator and he asked him to designate someone with a cart to transport the collected “tithe in-kind.” The farmer who, according to the list given out by the mayor, would install the flat cart in the middle of the village square and the teacher with some farm hand would collect the “tithe in-kind”, putting the sheaves onto the cart with the farm hand. When they were done they were usually also offered refreshment at the mayor’s place. Then either oxen or horses were hitched up, according to the type of team that the farmer whose assignment it was owned, and the “tithe in-kind” was taken to the teacher. That was an excellent help for the teacher, since through this he was assured to have sustenance all year, except for coffee, sugar, meat, and some spices.

At that time teachers were not paid by offices. The parents of the children presented the school tuition to the representative officer, and the representative officer then transferred the collected tuition to the teacher. It was a lengthy and often incorrect procedure, since if the teacher as well as the representative officer wanted to remain in good graces, they could not heavily insist on the parents depositing the tuition correctly. The tuition was established in three degrees and it was paid only by parents who had children in school attendance. Couples without children were freed from this duty. It seems to me that immediately after my departure, the law established for the school pay to be collected by the regional office, and the teacher was paid by the regional office, on a quarterly basis. That was until the year 1870. Additional income came to the teacher during the harvest festival. During the harvest festival, the teacher asked for kolaches, and there were enough of them collected that for several weeks there was a supply to rebake, to grate, and even to dry, and also to give to the poor. In that my dear mother was knowledgeable, and not only during the time of the harvest festival, but during the whole year she supported the poor, to lighten their load as much as possible.



Pohled na náves Zahořany s kaplí, kde vykonával pobožnosti v staně Jana Nep.

The view of hamlet of Zahořany with the chapel, where the religious services took place in a tent for St. Jan Nepomucene.

At the school we also had a cow shed for two cows and several hens; we had a couple of acres of fields that were rented and so we had occasion to learn all of the farming work: plowing, cutting clover and grass with a scythe, cutting with a sickle, and the beating with a flail. At that time I did not learn about penury and misery. There was food and I made some side money for clothing from bookbinding. We lived like lords, and we walked like lords. This was a change from the town life of penury and hunger that we had experienced in the previous position in

Březnice. I also often remember the times when one acre of milled wheat had to be sufficient for the whole large family for the whole month. When I remember how mother suffered during the cutting of those thin bread slices, and how happy I was when on Thursday, when there was no school, I was sent to some village to some farmer, who always gave me something, whether it was potatoes, eggs, or some slice of bread, and while doing it I could extinguish my hunger and what all I had to overcome in this poverty and misery, my heart aches. But that was a good education, for me to experienced penury and hunger, so that later I could stand in the ranks of the suffering and feel with them.

I should not forget to mention that another one of the duties of a teacher was to bury the dead. The tradition of that time was that there were no funerals that would take place without a teacher, and that did not even exclude babies. It was a tradition to go to the house of the bereavement to pick up the corpse and there to sing several Psalms and songs, and when the time to carry out the remains came, to pronounce the so-called speech by the casket of the departed for the forgiveness of the dead one, and together with the public to pray and those were three Our Fathers; and Hail Marys. There was also a tradition that the teacher would bring with him two musicians to perform the so-called “waldhorn” some Psalms on the way, and also in the farm house. During richer and more famous burials there was a band of wind instruments, according to the ostentatiousness of the burial it had no less than six musicians, but up to twelve in the band. During such a funeral, beer and spirits, wine, and kolačes were served, and after each piece, the musicians ate and drank. During poor burials, it was enough to serve some rye spirits. After the remains were taken out during a richer burial there was a funeral march played. If the departed was unmarried, whether female or male, there were usually young men and maids of honor present. On the way funeral songs, Psalms, and sad marches were sung, as well as played. The procession stopped at each cross on the way. They prayed, they played, and so they went up to the church where, in front of the church entrance, by the cemetery, a Latin ceremonial then took place, led by the church and the teacher; then the casket with the corpse was carried into the church, and put onto the bier in the middle of the church. The priest or the teacher, either one of them, did a requiem for the departed in the choral manner, or during a rich burial in the figural way, or then there was a procession to the grave, where there were repeated the prescribed ceremonies. After those the teacher sang, “Salve Regina” and “Animus Fidelium”, and with that everything ended. The tradition was that during the burial of an unmarried person, the young men and maids of honor accompanied the musicians from the church to the inn, where they celebrated with dance and drinking. The maids of honor had rosemary wreaths and the young men had a twig of rosemary attached to the left side of their coat.

During the summer it was not too difficult for the teacher and the musicians. It was different in the winter when it was freezing and there was snow cover. Usually the corpse had to be by the church before eight o'clock in the morning. Rarely, during richer burials, the time was set for nine o'clock, and the lengthened time was paid to the priest. The tradition was to pay the priest before the burial. It was not very pleasant for the teacher, nor for the musicians, to get up during the winter, for example, at five o'clock in the morning and trudge often one hour to the far away village through the snow that reached, for example, up to the knees. In such a case, one had to wear boots reaching up to the knees. At that time funeral songs were used, those written

by Ryba from Rožmitál. There was a big book that offered a choice for each position and age, from a baby up to an old man. There was a different tune for the unmarried men and the unmarried girls, the teacher and the priest, accordingly. There was not a single one of those songs that I would not know, its text, and even its tune.

In the years 1863 and 1864, steel pens were not yet used, and the teacher's duty was to cut pens for the pupils out of goose feathers. He always did this before the beginning of class. The small children would bring the feathers. The teacher sat at the teacher's desk and prepared pens. The students had to bring two feathers: one for his pen, and one was kept by the teacher for the making of pens. When the children were served with the new pens, then there were repairs done to the pens that were already used up. Out of the feathers that were obtained in this way, I made nice quills, and I sent them to Prague for sale. Later, steel pens came onto the market and the work, as well as the business with them, stopped. For the writing of music notes, goose feathers continued to be used, since it was difficult to write notes with the steel pens. It was only later that steel pens were adapted for the writing of musical scores. That was a great help for teachers.

In Prague, and in Vienna, I improved at the bookbinding trade and at the making of female haberdashery to the point that for many miles around there was no one who could compare with me. The consequence of that was that during my free hours I could not satisfy all the orders from the surrounding parish offices, not even from the administration in the Orlik Castle, and I was forced to hire a bookbinding assistant, so that all the orders could be filled. I also received permission from the regional office to sell and bind schoolbooks, which I ordered from Prague, from the Imperial School Depository. The prayer books I bought in Prague from Stýbl, and in Jindřichův Hradec from Laudfrass. At that time the best liked were books by Rufer, and those were: "The Spiritual Guide", "The Devil's and Christ's Deal"; "Nine Steps to Heaven"; "The Absolute Key"; and many others, the names of which have left my memory. The binding ranged from simple leather ones to the most modern embossed ones with deep print and gilded metal frames. My assistant also went on pilgrimages and to open markets in places that were three or more hours away, and he took books, stories, dream interpretation books, calendars, prayer books, the gospels, the history of the Czech Lands, etc., with him. The businessman, Newman, and the leather tanner, Ascherman, went from our village to the markets with a cart, and they would take my assistant and a box with a stand for a certain price. If the open market came on Thursday, the day when the schools were not in session, then I myself would take part in the open market to gain more friends and acquaintances.

It was also a tradition that the teacher was invited to wedding contracts to write the wedding contract. It was always interesting how the parents of the groom and the parents of the bride first struck a deal, then haggled about what each one would receive, and when the wedding would take place, and in which way. The matchmaker, the so-called 'speaker' was the main participant. His duty was to reach an understanding between the two sides, and to lead the contract to a good conclusion. During that occasion the witnesses for both sides had to be there and it could not be done without some flair and it was celebrated with a very rich supper with

good beer, liquor and feasting. Often it lasted until the morning. I don't even remember what the teacher got for the noting of such a contract, besides the gift of food.

It was during the year 1868, during the vacation, when I went with a businessman for the trade in Prague to buy prayer and school books, and to preorder calendars, leather, colors, and metallic book frames, so that there would be a reserve supply for the workers over the winter to fill time and complete the orders. Back home I went through Milín, where there was a travel inn in which coach drivers, and teamsters would usually stop either for noon, or for night to feed the horses, to feed themselves lunch or supper, and to strengthen themselves with some pints of good beer. Our teamster also stopped there. At the entry to the tap room, I looked into the nearby kitchen, where there was a beautiful young girl who was turning around the stove together with her father. She immediately caught my eye, and I liked her skill in the kitchen very much. This was during the time when the plums on the trees were already ripening, and that very noon this handy young girl was cooking plum dumplings for the home help, and I liked to eat them very much, so I took the courage to semi open the kitchen door and ask the Miss, if she would be willing to give me also a small portion for tasting. She fulfilled my wish, for which I wholeheartedly thanked her, and when I was leaving I gave her a few words of goodbye.

I can acknowledge that I liked the young girl from the very first moment, and she entered my heart. On the way I asked the teamster if he knew more about her, since each week he stopped there twice, and if he could inform me what type of girl she was, what type of character. The teamster said: "I have been going there into this travel inn for many years." He knew her very mother, who was willing to help everybody. This girl, since her mother's death was doing the business with her father, and I have found her to be very orderly and industrious." Then the teamster asked me why I am asking about her and her family. I laughed and I acknowledged that I would like to court her and marry her. He answered that I would not get a bad deal.

Having arrived home I decided that I would try my luck, and that I would ask her in writing. I wrote a carefully composed letter, I gave it to the teamster, and I asked him to deliver it to her. I gave him a reward for it, and I asked him to bring me an answer.

The answer was positive, and then, accompanied by a friend, I made a personal visit, which almost had the value of an engagement. I found out that the girl, whose name was Antonie Kolářová, immediately liked me. Then I asked her father for permission. Of course, he did not like it very much that he would lose his helper and good cook, who always knew how to prepare tasty food for the surrounding gentry, however, when youth decides firmly, resistance on the part of the old ones is not very successful. The getting acquainted and the visits lasted several months until finally, on the day of the 4th of February in the year 1869 we celebrated our wedding in Lašovický Church, since the priest Weyvara insisted that he had to join us in matrimony himself. I had to get permission from the Slivec Parish, since the rule was then that the wedding ceremony was performed in the place of the bride's appurtenance. Everything happened without any fuss, quietly, and we went to the school for a lunch that was prepared only for the relatives, the parish priest, his cook, and the chaplain.

To America-- American Beginnings.

On the Sunday before the wedding, I announced our wedding from the pulpit-- once, rather than three times-- and I caused a great surprise to many people, especially to those villagers who had daughters, and were thinking that I would take one of them to the altar, while, on the other hand I was always thinking that it would be better for me to have a town girl, especially one who was excellent in the cooking business. Therefore, it was not a surprise that some of those disappointed ones expressed their displeasure, and that was one of the many causes that pushed me to move to America. My young wife agreed with the plan. I wrote to America, to an acquaintance, a musician from the village, Jan Synek, who the year before had gone to Chicago, and I asked him about the conditions, and the salaries, and I awaited his answer impatiently. The answer came and was enthusiastic, especially the stress was put on my book binding, and it was foretold that in America I would make money. The overseas friend exhorted me to bring with me many books and also book making tools, presses, etc. I confided my plans to my brother-in-law, Frant. Kolář, who was at that time in Vienna, and I told him that I was thinking of leaving for America. The latter immediately agreed, and he offered to go too, and he let his brother, Antonín, who also lived in Vienna, know. It was decided that we would go together. We came home to Milín, we prepared for the road and on the day of the 20th of June 1869, we set off across Prague in the direction of Bremen to America, and directly to Chicago. We were prepared for the road by the firm Kareš and Stotzký to New York, and from there by their representative, Mr. Frant. Brodský on to Chicago. At that time the crossing on the ships was not arranged well, and each immigrant had to bring the necessary metallic dishes for the food on the ship, and drag it with him on the way there. Our crossing on the steamship took 17 days, and it was very stormy. I was sorry that I had taken this step: however, it was too late. The food on the ship was miserable. Mostly we received herring to eat. For food, each one had to go into the kitchen with his metal pot, and eat somewhere in a corner, since in steerage there were no tables at which immigrants could sit together and eat in comfort.

We arrived in New York harbor on Saturday morning, and we immediately passed the customs examination. The representative of the firm, Kareš and Stotzký, at that time it was Mr. František Brodský, provided railroad tickets for us and he immediately sent us to the railroad, and we departed on an afternoon train of immigrants. We had to buy some bread for the road, smoked meat and fruit, since on such trains there was no food car.

We went until twelve o'clock midnight, and the train stopped, since at that time no trains ran on Sunday. We were left to spend the whole Sunday in the forest, idle. Some kind of camp was built there, where local people held their meetings and religious services. They spent time there from ten o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon before they dispersed. In order to have something to eat we had to search for some kind of farm, which we were lucky to find and we at least got some milk. The journey by train from New York to Chicago took five whole days, since they would often make stops and wait until the other scheduled trains had passed by.

We were attacked in the forest in the state of Ohio. The robbers shot into the train car, and we had to hide beneath the seat, so that we would not be injured. That was our welcome to America.

We came to Chicago during the night. Some man called Kantůrek, came to the last station in front of Chicago to meet the immigrants, and then he was immediately enrolling the travelers for the immigrant house of Fisher, which at that time was situated on Sherman Street, close to Van Buren Street. He took us all there, so that we would eat and stay overnight. Those who were supposed to go further west were taken to the corresponding railroad the next day. So all that remained in the possession of the five of us all together was a little more than two dollars. So we were barely able to pay Fisher off. It was already close to morning and we were waiting impatiently and as soon as the day broke, I and my brother-in-law František set off to look for the family of our acquaintance Jan Synek, who at that time lived on DeKoven Street close to the Church of St. Wenceslaus, upstairs in back of Kálal's house.

We successfully asked for the way and in the early morning we surprised him and at the same time we asked him for a loan, so that we could buy the most necessary stuff and we could settle somewhere. The countryman Jan Synek obligingly immediately loaned me all the money that could be found in the house, and it was an amount of \$60, which at that time was a great amount of money. We walked back for my wife, and her sister, Anna, and brother-in-law Antonín, and that same day with all our suitcases we took up residence at the mentioned countrymen's for a short time, until we found an apartment and we could provide for ourselves the most necessary furniture. As soon as the teacher, at that time, Mr. Kubín, learned about our arrival, he obligingly found an apartment in the same house for me, like for a colleague. It was in the house where his family was living, with some man named Ant. Čížek, and we immediately took up residence there. We immediately went to buy a stove at Alois Uher's, as well as the most necessary tools for the kitchen. From Mr. Jan Smrčka, who had a cabinet shop across from the church on DeKoven we immediately bought beds and six chairs. We ordered a teamster to bring us all of our boxes with feather-beds, clothing, books, and bookmaking tools, from the railroad. Meanwhile Mrs. Kubínová obligingly offered help and advice for my wife, and also obligingly loaned us a stove, including the fuel, so that my wife could cook some kind of a home lunch, so that after such long troubles we could straighten up our stomachs and refresh a little bit. By the evening our beds were built. The same for the stove, and we were settled. Of course the sixty dollars flowed away, and there was even debt hanging around our necks. The closest grocery store was beside the church, and was owned by the nowadays respected banker, Mr. Václav Kašpar. We took out a loan there, which was co-signed by my countryman, Synek, but it was not long before we paid it off. At that time the meat was cheaper, but the flour was quite expensive, since a barrel of flour cost \$12. The apartment was also quite expensive. It was composed of a kitchen, two bedrooms, a room and one wardrobe, and it cost \$12 and even more, considering that one had to fetch water, and go to the bathroom in the courtyard.

At that time the Czech settlements were concentrated close to the church and included these streets: Twelfth Street, Wilson, Bunker, DeKoven, Taylor, Forquer, Ewing, Mather, and Polk, where then ended the cross streets Canal, Clinton, and on the corner of DeKoven there was a big dance hall owned by the citizen Hlavín, and an inn, and then came Jefferson, on the corner of which there was an inn owned by Frant. Šulc, a retired soldier and veteran, who was known to everybody, and then came Des Plaines Street where, on the corner of DeKoven was a freshly built church, and then came Halsted Street, where the Czech settlement ended. The other Czechs

in Chicago were settled in a scattered way on the North Side around Larabee and Milwaukee Avenues. It was counted that there were 17,000 Czech souls in Chicago.

Immediately the news spread in the surroundings that from Bohemia had come a young countryman who had brought many books, both for prayers and reading, and so already on the third day, some lady Křenková visited me, who also had three grown daughters, and she bought each one a nice and elegantly bound prayer book, for which I received \$15, and that continued day after day, so that in a short time I obtained so much, that I could pay off all the debts, and even save something for a future time and business.

That year the halls of Slovanská Lípa [Slavonic Linden Tree] as well as that of Sokol Americký their completed their construction. The Slovanská Lípa was on Taylor Street between Canal and Beach Streets, and the Czech American Sokol Hall was on DeKoven, between Canal and Clinton Streets. During the celebration of the opening of the hall to the public on Taylor Street, I was already present.

Immediately after I settled I started to get active in bookbinding, an activity that active member of the Slovanská Lípa, Mr. Josef Nedoma learned about, and he immediately brought me several books to be bound for himself and for the association. Through his intermediary we made the acquaintance of the Mlejnek family, whose friendship we kept until they moved back to Bohemia. Immediately the second week I received work with some Moravian, who had his shop far away by Lincoln Park on Clark Street, where I went on foot, every day, both ways, but it did not seem to me too far away. I stayed there for several weeks, and because he paid the salary badly, and he was constantly fourteen days behind I was forced to leave and find another job for myself. I did lose the salary for the fourteen days. At that time a certain Fr. Bezdička was taking his meals at the Mlejneks. He was a certified bookmaker from Bohemia, from Mýto, the town from which the Mlejneks came. He worked in the town with some Geiger and the owner of a book shop and a factory for haberdashery goods, and he told me that I could be accepted as help temporarily there, which then occurred. Poor Bezdička did not expect that that would be to his detriment. One day Bezdička received some haberdashery work on medical cases, work that he was not taught about, and did not know. When the boss left the shop, I told Bezdička that we could exchange for that period of time the work that he would go unload instead of me, and I would work on those cases. The boss caught me doing the work after his return, and he praised it, and he asked me when I had learned it. I told him in Vienna, and at the same time I acknowledged the work that I could do. From that point I was accepted as a permanent worker and Bezdička as a helper, and when the work was finished I was allowed to continue working, and Bezdička was let go. However, it was not so bad for Bezdička, since I had so much work at home, that I hired him myself. Before I went to work in town, I prepared work for him so that he would have enough for the whole day, and I myself was working during my free time in the evening and on Sunday. I was going to town to work mainly to better learn the conditions and to improve my knowledge of local book binding and haberdashery.

I soon also made the acquaintance of Buehler the bookshop owner, who also had a book loaning shop on Monroe Street, and I gained him as a client and I did all his book work for him. As a consequence I had to leave my job with Mr. Geiger, which he regretted, and in spite of that

he behaved towards me with largess of spirit, since at the inquiry of the firm Gulver Page & Co., which was the only one selling supplies for bookbinders here, he answered that they could give me a credit for \$50 a month and he guaranteed this sum for me.

From DeKoven Street I moved to Canal Street, close to Twelfth Street, after a month, and then after a stay of several months, I also rented a small house on Canal Street, close to Mather Street, and I used the windows as shop windows for books. The first room served as a workshop. Then after a year I got together with Mr. Čeněk Duras, who was a certified typesetter. I moved with him to No. 490 on Canal Street, which was built for us, and owned by Mr. Florian Legros. There we established a regular bookstore and print shop for orders. We ordered several types of Czech letters with diacritical marks from Bohemia and Gregory Foundry, and had an excellent beginning.

Following this, on the 8th of October 1871, came the great conflagration. Our shop and small print shop was saved since the fire on Taylor Street was limited, mainly through the work of Mr. Ed Holý, who defended the hall tirelessly, and with great effort, together with the firefighters. The fire started on Sunday after nine o'clock in the evening, when the Czech Theatre Play, "The Orphan from Lowood", [Sirotek lowoodský] was on. There was a great uproar in the hall and the public ran in all directions. Taylor Street was saved only from Canal to the river; to the west from Canal to Des Plaines, the street burned down. And that also struck my partner, Mr. Duras, whose house burned down. I was so happy that my household remained since at that time I was living only one street south of the border of the raging conflagration. Our working print shop was perhaps the only one in town that was preserved and immediately the next day when the conflagration was still raging in the center of the town we received so much work that we had to work a long time during the day and even during the night. Immediately I had to go to Milwaukee to buy paper and cardboard, and I bought up everything that I could get there. Then in the morning we had to move, since Mr. Legros set up an inn there. We moved to No. 449 in the house of Mr. Řezanka. Before the fire there was a newspaper "New Times" [Nová Doba] that was set in Kašpar's house and was printed in town where during the fire the frames were destroyed and the periodical was not published anymore. We were printing the news about the fire and advertising that the newspaper would not be published anymore. The remains were sold to Racine, Wisconsin, to "Slavie."

In a short time we parted with Mr. Duras. He moved the print shop to Fitzpatrick Building, and he started to publish a new periodical "The Flag of Freedom" [Prapor Svobody], which dissolved after half a year of publication, and Mr. Duras, following that, moved to Nebraska. I joined the company of Mr. Josef Langmajer. We set up a new print shop. We called Mr. Jan Oliverius from St. Louis, and we started to print a new fourpage periodical, "The Chicago Bulletin" [Chicagský Věstník], which was distributed free, and the costs tied to it had to be covered by advertising. After half a year I parted with Mr. Langmajer. I moved to the new building, 463 Canal Street, where I started to publish ethereal novels, for which I was collecting subscriptions locally as well as from the countryside and I accumulated over a thousand subscribers. The first story that was published in my shop was "Filip Foghorn." The second

novella was the “The Son of the Exile” [Vyhnančův syn] and then “The Viennese Executioner”, [Vídeňský kat] and “Father La Rurine” [Otec La Rurine], and with the last one I ended the publication of the novellas.

It was while I still had a small shop on Canal Street, close to Polk Street, that I made an acquaintance. It was on the 15th of February 1870—with Mr. F. B. Zdrůbek, who was going through Chicago to Cleveland to direct “Progress” [Pokrok], and I did not expect that later we would be tied together, or that he would become the editor of my periodical. Already then he bought several books from me.

A Publisher. From a Reader to a Daily

At that time I accepted a good typesetter who was certified in Bohemia, in the person of Gustav B. Reišl, the brother-in-law of Mr. Zdrůbek.

There had been a Freethinker School in Chicago since 1870, and the teaching in it was done by readers from Bohemia, from the Imperial Royal Depository of School Books, stocked by the Emperor himself, and the Good Lord, which the school committee found to the highest degree unsuitable for youth raised in free America, and so they visited me for counsel, and whether I would not be prepared to publish some more suitable reader for the Freethinkers. At that time Leopold Dvořák was the commendable teacher of the school and he insisted the most upon this: that those royal, religious readers that were shameful to read would be taken away and replaced with others, more worthy of American schools.

I agreed, as an experienced teacher, that such a change was called for in the highest degree and I promised to the committee that I would take care so that suitable school books would be published not only for Chicago, but for the whole America wherever there are Czech Freethinking Schools.

I immediately wrote to Mr. Zdrůbek, the editor of “Progress of the West” [Pokrok Západu], staying at that time in Omaha, and he soon arrived after that so that we could consult about the parts of the first picture reader. Mr. Zdrůbek already had considerable experience with school affairs and needs from his teaching work in Caledonia, Wisconsin and Wesley, Texas. He was persuaded to try this project, as well as that of a second reader, if the first one was officially accepted, and if it accomplished its goal, and if the preparations were immediately taken care of. These, however, during the conditions then were difficult.

In the whole of America at that time there was no possibility of finding anything acceptable for the Czech letters, and so immediately, several types had to be ordered from Prague. Those letters, however, were taller than American ones, and had to be cut, especially cut and arranged for a local printing press. Nevertheless everything can be accomplished by a strong will, especially if an honorable goal is inspiring it, and even though the first attempt was not perfect, the path for the work was opened. The manuscript came, the letters came. Pictures were ordered, that at that time were very expensive, and the first typesetting was taken care of by an officially examined typesetter, Mr. G. B. Reišl. The corrections had to be sent to Omaha to Mr. Zdrůbek for him to read and correct, which caused quite a big delay. Then the whole reader had

to be electro-typed, arch after arch, since the supply of the Czech letters was not enough even to typeset the whole sixteen page arch, so that it could be printed from it. In spite of all those difficulties, the reader was successful and found a liking and it spread among the Czech teaching corps, so that it reached up to twenty printings, and it is still used today, in many Czech American schools. So our school was helped and every progressive countryman who loves freedom was thankful for it.

I should not neglect to impart to you how I became a Freethinker. Immediately after my arrival to America I provided myself with Freethinking newspapers published in America and Freethinking books from Bohemia and Moravia, and it did not cause me any difficulties to turn away from delusion and superstition to truth. Already in Bohemia, thanks to one book seller, from Sedlčany, I got into my hands a book with the title: “The Notes from Dr. Augustin Smetana” [Zápisky Dr. Augustina Smetany], which I brought with myself to America. Whoever reads the book and cogitates, and thinks through its content, cannot stay orthodox and a religious person. According to Professor L. Klácel we “dared to become wiser.” And in this Freethinking conviction I will remain faithfully until my demise. I raised my family in the Czech way, Freethinking, and I can boast that the whole family, which is composed of two sons, Miloslav and Vladimír, and two daughters, Vlasta, married to the famous traveler, E. St. Vráz, and Augusta, married to the editor and writer, R. Jaromír Pšenka, in spite of the fact that they were born here, not only do they know correct Czech language, but they also gained perfect education in Czech writing, and this was a great blessing to me, that I was able to accomplish that.

This can be accomplished easily only if the parents take it honestly upon themselves and talk with their children only in Czech at home, and offer them the attendance in a Czech school. The knowledge of the Czech language in word, as well as in writing, never harmed my children. To the contrary it was always to their advantage. Our Czech American parents should not forget that their children will learn English as soon as they get among other children, mainly at school. The influence of the street and American school causes English—if the parents have been neglectful-- to become their only language of communication. Only if the parents continuously and constantly talk to them in their mother tongue at home will the children then keep their knowledge of Czech language, and it does not harm them in their lives, especially, if they are supposed to learn another language, German, French, and Spanish. The knowledge of two languages makes their work immeasurably easier.

Nevertheless I will return to the description of my following happenings and experiences. The main thing, however, is what led me to becoming a publisher of Czech periodicals.

It was in May of 1875, when the editor of “Progress of the West” [Pokrok západu] [published in Omaha, Nebraska], Mr. F. B. Zdrůbek came to Chicago to visit his friends here, as well as in Caledonia, and Racine, and he also planned to go to Milwaukee. He also stopped at my firm, and I immediately offered to be his partner on his journey so, happily, we departed together. On the way we spoke together about the aims that our nation had assigned to us and about the uplifting goals that Freethinking put into our view and about the situation and the future of Czech immigrants to America. We came to the conclusion that if our countrymen are not going to become a regressive element; if they are to remain faithful to the great calling of

their nation, even here on the soil of their new motherland; there was a need to found a periodical which would spread the principles of Freethinking, not only among those awakening, but even among those vacillating; among their followers expressed rightfully and justly from the decidedly progressive position. Those who were raised on the religious side with devotion to the priests, and kept to it, had their newspaper that was taking care of their spiritual needs, but the countrymen thinking in a freer way, did not have a similar spiritual support.

In this conversation I expressed the fact that already for a considerable time I had been carrying the wish to publish as perfect as possible a periodical serving freedom forthrightly, if only I had someone that would lead it consistently and relentlessly in this spirit, so that in a short time the example of so many unhappy predecessors would not disintegrate into a premature grave. We counted that so far there were not enough Freethinkers who decidedly had declared their conviction, and who were independent from priests-- however, most of them were in Chicago, and if such a periodical could be founded, it could only be here. Even though I was ready to try it—although only with a weekly—if I could gain Zdrůbek as a helper, I hoped that both of us would stay firmly together, and that we would not be scared off by the difficulties, and we would turn out good work.

Zdrůbek recognized that he could not act as powerfully and freely for the nation and for the Freethinking Community in Omaha, as would be possible in the center of American Czechs in Chicago, and by his service, he could contribute more to the development of the nation and to Freethinking than further in the west. He recognized that there was also better opportunity for self-education in the rich libraries in the city. He promised that he would fulfill my wish, even though he knew that with me he could not expect such a profitable situation as he had in Omaha. He was willing to accept a less lucrative position that asked for more work so that he could expend his youthful strength for meritorious work. (He was at that time exactly 33 years old). Nevertheless he expressed his wish that if now he was to undertake something that it would be the best, and therefore the first, Czech daily in America. That was somewhat too courageous for the conditions then and I was afraid that my strength would not be enough for it. Nevertheless it was concluded that Zdrůbek would come to join me, and we would undertake whatever was possible.

After his return to Omaha Zdrůbek gave up his position with “Pokrok Západu” and he came along with his family to Chicago where, as early as 1868 and 1869, he used to work and was known by numerous friends. He came on the 15th of September 1875 in order to engage in a new project in which he could work with love.

Now in earnest the question was whether it was to be a weekly, as I wanted, or a daily, as Zdrůbek wanted. The situation was propitious for a daily. We took the advice of friends. We thought through the conditions and needs of the national life, and the majority of my friends, as well as Zdrůbek's, were in favor of a daily. The Czech immigrants were increasing in all the states, especially in Chicago, and as the readership was strongly multiplying and continuing with the times they were asking for more than a weekly, so that it wouldn't take long and a daily could be founded. So why not immediately. Good will, enthusiasm for the project, young strength,— we both, myself and Zdrůbek, were of the same age, only six days apart from each

other—the enterprising of the one, and the endurance of the other, all of that was taken into consideration in the decision. I was still unconvinced, since I was afraid of a lack of my sufficiency concerning the financial means, and then I did not have much experience in this profession. When all of my friends and my acquaintances with whom I was taking council in order to know how strong of support I could count on, went with the daily attempt, promising their ardent support, financially, as well as spiritually, I believed those promises and I relented that I would try with all my strength, although with fear and great wariness.

Immediately, I started to make preparations in my print shop for the publication of the first Czech daily in America. Zdrůbek was writing the reading parts. There was a collection of advertising for the first issue and the typesetting started. The daily sheet received the name “Svornost” [Solidarity] and the weekly received the name “Amerikán.” The weekly was inescapably needed for the subscribers as well as the publisher. The daily could not be published for a long time by itself, if it was not helped by a weekly that was put together from the daily, using the same typesetting twice. Then the weekly accompanying the daily could contain all the news quickly, which was not possible in the case of weeklies. The second incentive for the publication of the weekly was the circumstance that at that time rural mail was mostly distributed only once or twice a week, therefore it was not possible to send a daily to the countryside in such places and that was exactly the case of the settlements with the most Czechs. Even given that it was decided that the daily in its beginning could not be given more cheaply than \$7 per year, which for the rural agriculturalists was too high an expense. The enormous concern, work, and expenses started. I took mine and my wife’s hard saved \$1,500 that we saved over the 6 years of industrious work together and I bought reserves of letters, frames, shuttles, paper and all the rest that a print shop needs, that was not yet there for the print shop jobs at that time.

When all of that was brought home I had gone through practically all the capital that came from my and my wife’s hard work. There was nothing left, and then I had to take everything that was in the bookshop and the bookbinding stores, and put it towards the periodical until all the reserves were used up.

The first number of the first Czech daily in America was published on the 8th of October 1875. The second one on the 12th, and the third one on the 15th of October, after which it was continued until all of the collaborators got used to the work, and could sort it and divide it daily, except for Sunday. The print shop was at No. 463 on South Canal Street where, under the shop and the print shop, as well as the editorial desk, there was an inn space of the well-known countryman and theatre amateur, Mr. Anton Petrtýl. He had in his inn a pool table, and when many happy guests had congregated around the pool table and were screaming and making noise with their balls, singing and laughing, it provided for lovely work for everybody above them in the editorial room of the “Svornost” print shop, for whose work output there was eager expectation. Such entertainment during our work lasted almost the whole year until Mr. Petrtýl caught gout in his cellar space, and moved to a more propitious place on DeKoven Street across from the Czech American Sokol.-

The size of “Svornost” was in the beginning 2 inches x 8 inches, and 4 pages, each of 5 columns. The tendency of the periodical was best expressed in the introductory address stated in

the first number of the periodical which was the following: INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.—Chicago is the center of life and business for the educated part of the United States and it is also at the same time the center of American Czecho-Slavs. Czechs look towards Chicago from the east as well as from the west, from the north as well as from the south. Everyone has visited it at least once, and gladly returns here to see the most interesting town among American metropolises, and in which many certainly have several relatives, friends, or acquaintances. Each American Czechoslav has looked towards Chicago for many years as a center of national life, looking for inspiration, for a guiding light, leaders, supporters, and disseminators of national education, and in general of everything good and inspired that has grown on the American soil for the Czechs. There was a time that Chicago was counted as the first and leading place of American Czech life and both Czech American Congresses, the first and the last one happened here with great national enthusiasm.

It is a pity, however, that this time has seemingly passed forever—it is only seemingly, whoever knows Chicago, and the Czech life in it, the strength, the men, the youth, the women, and the young girls, the families, who in spite of the unpropitious situations, not only have not stepped back, but to the contrary, have progressed in their consciousness and self-awareness, in their knowledge and ardor in which the love of the mother language is still burning and the ardor for education, the lifting up of oneself, and the improvement of our nation in this place—anyone who knows these forces does not despair, to the contrary, he keeps our firm conviction that if we reach unity and strong united activities that Czech Chicago in its Czech heart will once again be what it is supposed to be and that is the head and the center of Czech national life in America.

In the last six years there were many mistakes, deceptions, circuses, a lack of consciousness, and a lack of unity that gave Chicago a reputation that was very negative among the Czechs, and which undercut the confidence that the Czechs have in it. Nevertheless all this can be corrected if Chicago Czechs unify to seize and learn about their calling, and to march towards the outlined goal.

There are so many national associations; there are more national gathering places; there are so many Sokols which, besides their exercise, have as a goal the fraternity without which Czech Sokol will cease to be Sokol! Czech schools, Czech theatres, self-aware Freethinkers, Czech order: and we should be despairing?—All these associations have noble goals, uplifting brotherly national ones, and these could not be gained for the uplifting goal of national unity—in all the associations and even besides them, there are numerous young men and youth, ladies and young women of noble thoughts, recognizing good and beauty, and those could not overcome dislikes and mistrust and unite faithfully beneath the flag of glory of the Czechs in Chicago?—there are only a few backbiters, brawlers, and destroyers of unity, and these are the ones who should get to the top and lead the other peace loving nationalists towards a certain national destruction?

The Czech ethnicity in America has a future if it does not kill itself by a lack of unity and indifference. The Czechs in Chicago have a great future ahead of them if they work in their own profession, in their own associations, in their circle, in their family, for the awakening from indifference and towards the cleaning away of personal disharmony and disagreement, which do

not belong in public life. Then each association will flourish side by side with others and the flourishing of each one will lead to the flourishing of the whole Czech community.

It would not be good or even possible to want to meld and to merge all local national associations into one big club. Each one has its own specialty, its own strength, and its own future— however, by the uplifting of each one, we will uplift the totality, and when these separate associations in solidarity stand side by side and help each other mutually, then their leading idea remains the same and the goal will be reached.

This is not a task for one day or one year, but when all the good and honest nationalists will work towards this goal, we will once again build Czech Chicago, we will gain the trust of the whole of America, including our mother country, and we will not bypass the happy and contented national life.—Let it be so.

“SVORNOST” [Solidarity or Unity] our Czech Chicago daily and the weekly “Amerikán” take their uplifted goal from the above mentioned position. It wants, according to all its strength, to be helpful in reaching this goal. It is not that the publishers would perceive its idea as their own certified invention, and its strength all powerful, to the contrary: they want, through their tireless and ardent and honest work to offer inspiration to all the nationalists in Chicago and beyond, remembering our uplifting goal so that one would work towards it, and at the same time that the Czech readership in America would receive what almost all ethnic groups in America enjoy, that is a daily newspaper that would satisfy a very important need and the still lasting lack of our literature in America. Each person who wants to be informed about current as well as political happenings in the world, cannot be satisfied with only a weekly and has to have his newspaper every day, since he has to learn what happened immediately while it is still warm, that is the same, or at least the next day. We have hundreds of readers who have to subscribe because of that. German or English newspapers are often very expensive. We have to correct this. Our newspaper will be bringing from day to day the newest news from the telegraph from the whole America and the whole world, and will be on a par in this regard altogether with the German as well as the American dailies. Through its low cost it will then also convince many people as well as by the fact that it will be a national Czech newspaper that will bring the freshest news from the mother country, which cannot be found in foreign newspapers.”

In the next part of the introduction it was announced that in Chicago the new daily would be distributed to subscribers every afternoon, and subscribers in places up to 500 miles from Chicago will receive it the next day by mail etc. Then the editor announced that as far as politics is concerned he will remain neutral on all sides, and he will industriously observe workers’ interests, and he ended with this paragraph:

“Altogether our newspaper will strive to fulfill all the duties of a daily newspaper and the needs of the Czech American readership, and through that to gain the positive view of countrymen in full measure and their multisided support.—Nazdar, to success!”

This is how the first Czech daily in America saw the light of the world; and this year, 1922, it reached its 48th year, while it saw a great number of other Czech American newspapers being born and disappearing. The editor of “Svornost” [Solidarity or Unity] in the beginning for

a long time was F. B. Zdrůbek himself, proven in his profession and known to a wider readership since the “Pokrok” [Progress], and “Pokrok Západu” [The Progress of the West] while the main part of the work of the administration and all the correspondence while administering the book shop and book binding store was done by me. The representative of the newspaper was František Kozák, who had just then arrived from New York. His service, however, as was soon demonstrated, did not help, because of his low energy and lack of interest. To the contrary, it turned out to be damaging since a good representative working for a newspaper is very important, especially during the beginnings. He stayed in this office until the end of April 1876. And during that whole time I could not get orderly work from him, and I was glad when at least I was able to get books and the lists from him, when one late morning, I found him still in his bed. This lack of order hurt the newspaper very much in the beginning and it led me into frequent, and not minor difficulties. After him the representation was taken over by Citizen Frank Sadílek, who later settled in Wilber, Nebraska and was active for a long number of years successfully there. He, however, because of his good modest nature and shy character was not made for this kind of work, and he gave it up in a month, turning over the representation to Citizen Al Volenský, known throughout America among the Czechs and who served our enterprise faithfully until his death on the 16th of December 1893. When I look over the books and the bills of the first year, many times I express how I don’t understand how I could overcome those difficult and cursed beginnings, as well as all the difficulties. Horror strikes me when I remember all that had to be done and suffered through.

Most of those who had convinced me to publish the daily did not fulfill their promises. Only several honest friends remained, strengthening me and supporting me. Anyone who knows about those hard works and difficulties recognizes that if it were not for my interminable patience and faith that I would finish what I started one day, the first daily would not have stayed alive for long. My long years and unforgettable colleague F. B. Zdrůbek expressed the highest recognition for me when, on the occasion of “Svornost”’s [Solidarity] quarter of a century of existence, he expressed the conviction that for sure there would not be another person who during all those hard times would have stayed so steadfast and so resolved to preserve the first Czech newspaper for the Czech American readership.

The difficulties were constantly increasing instead of decreasing. First of all in the beginning I could not even think about getting my own printing press-- to the contrary I had to take the frames that were set at home and assembled daily, to town. “Svornost” and “Amerikán” were printed in the printing shop of Gindeli, who had his plant in the building “Staatzeitung” on the corner of 5th Avenue and Washington Street.

Citizen Bílý was taking the frames from DeKoven Street on his “express” and once he had an accident, after which he brought part of the “Svornost” in a bag, since the frame broke on his way. The print setters were really very happy, since they had to devote the whole night to it, to straighten up the letters and arrange the advertising for the next number. My friends advised me to get a horse and a cart for myself so that it would become cheaper for me, and also in other ways it would be helpful for the enterprise. I listened to them and I bought a horse from Citizen Fikar, a butcher, however I was not lucky in the transaction. The horse was fat, young, and

spirited, however, he was capricious and when he decided to, he stopped, and there was no way to move him from the place, no good way, or bad way. And then often he would be late to the printing shop with the frames and then the newspaper was distributed later to the discontent of the subscribers who expected to get it at a certain time in an orderly fashion. It was sad then when the correctness of the newspaper publishing was dependent on the good will of a moody horse. The reproaches, I would say, were suffered by the publisher and the representative. After half a year of suffering with the horse, and the constant disorder and difficulties my patience ran out and I recognized that I had to have a big press for the printing at home, if I was to continue correctly—however, how to get it during such an uncertain and low situation in which the newspaper still found itself? Friendly help in difficulties is the rarest, and I found it from a faithful friend, the too soon deceased Citizen Honomichl who, even though he was discouraged by others who said not to do it, loaned me \$800 to buy the press, so that the newspaper could be printed at home with less hardship and difficulties. Citizen Honomichl was not only an ardent friend of mine and of “Svornost”, [Solidarity/Unity], but also a devoted supporter of Czech writing and the Czech nation, and he also led his family in this sense. When I needed something later, Citizen Honomichl did not pay attention to the dissuasion of others and he loaned me altogether \$2,400 dollars, not being afraid that he might lose it. His strong help is what my “Svornost”, can be grateful to, since when it was the worst, his help was assured.

Therefore I bought a press with a big drum, rotated manually, that could also be outfitted for steam power. It was self-evident that there was no money to acquire even the smallest steam engine and I was left with the hand rotation, even though it was in itself the most difficult labor. However, that was not the case for long, since the typesetters, the representative, and even I myself got very tired of the rotation with the print, even though we were trading off, and there was no other way than to buy a standing steam engine on credit and to power the printer with steam. All this was done in the basement of the house, no. 463 South Canal St. after Mr. A. Petrtýl moved out his inn business.

So the press was bought from a known firm, Barnhard Brothers and Spendler, with which I was already trading from 1870 and whose trust and credit I used in full. It was the only American firm that could be convinced to put accents on Czech letters that were cast here. In the beginning, it did not pay off for it either, because supposedly the manufacturing of accented matrices cost them more than they sold of the Czech letters. Later, however, they did not regret that they had listened to me, since everybody that was founding a Czech print shop had to turn to their plant.

I will still return to the desperate beginnings of “Svornost”, and “Amerikán“. No print shop that was founded later knew even half of the difficulties and hard work as mine of the first daily. For the whole time that F. Kozák was the representative, he did not achieve more than 210 subscribers, and he would bring from them weekly sometimes \$10. The most that he ever brought was \$20 in one week. And I was supposed to support myself, while paying an editor, and four typesetters. For that paper, rent, ink, oil, and other small costs were supposed to be paid. It is true that there was some income from the bookshop and the book printing, however all of that was swallowed by the print shop, and I still remained in debt to my workers and I had to

send my good and economizing wife to the butcher, grocer and others to buy on credit. She had never been used to that and it was so hard for her, as anyone who has fallen into similar difficulties can understand. Often I had to justify the recriminations of my wife, as to why I did not stay with my small shop, and the trade which fed us in all contentment, and why I was sacrificing myself for the nation, and Freethinking, while the whole family had to suffer so many difficulties because of it. While she reminded me, she foresaw correctly that even when all my businesses were successful and I got some possessions through my work, I would be a thousand times recriminated from all sides, which does not happen in any other enterprise like it does in this one. And this really did fulfill itself to the last word, when the biggest difficulties were overcome, and I got out of debt in the town and started to pay my employees what I owed them.

When I asked Representative Kozák why he could not find any more subscribers for the newspaper than the 210, he answered that our people do not yet know how to read every day, and that for each one of those non-habitual persons there was too much, and for some it took a whole day of talking, before they read aloud the little content of “Svornost”, and there is still a whole heap of it left for Sunday.

It is true that among us, there were only a few who were already used to reading newspapers in Bohemia. Nevertheless there were many who got used to it quickly, and the others were slowly learning, an activity that was helped perhaps most of all by the publication of the spellbinding novellas, with which “Svornost” started. The first such novella was “Císař Josef II. a krásná zpěvačka” [Emperor Josef II and the Beautiful Singer].

During the time when A. Volenský accepted the job of representation a part of the Czechs started to move to the northwest part of town where G. B. Reišl started to increase his activity and with the help of local countrymen he founded the Sunday Freethinking School with an exercise association Czechie. The first report by Volenský states that he got 25 good subscribers here, who were on time, and he was in every way taking care of their contentment. In the report he already had 237 subscribers there, and when he brought it up to 280 subscribers “SVORNOST” was enlarged, which happened on the 6th of September 1876, therefore eleven months after it started to come out. Now it had 6 columns in size, 14x21 inches on four pages. Immediately after it was enlarged, the report by the representative notes an increase of thirty new subscribers, which proves that our countrymen were learning how to read faster and more diligently, and before the end of the year there were a full 100 new subscribers since the enlargement of the periodical.

However, what was it worth to be jubilant over this small successes, when I was SUBMERGED UNDER DEBTS, like I was underground and there was little hope left that I would be able to escape bankruptcy. I was not worried about myself, since I would have fed myself well with my trade, however how would I be able to take care of my editor, whom I pulled out from a secure situation, so that I would gain his help for myself, and how could I pay my typesetters what I owed them for their work, when they had economized with me, since I could not pay them correctly. This was holding me back from the fateful step, since I did not want to defame my name, which up to now I have kept honest, through bankruptcy and the reproaches of those who had debts to be paid with me.

And so one day when I was in desperate uncertainty, I called together all the personnel of the enterprise for advice. I explained to them the situation in which I found myself at that moment. Finally I said: "If you are willing to fight with me until we win, then I am not afraid of the worst. Then I am concerned only about you. If you will be content for a time with what I can give you from the income, be assured that no one among you will lose even a cent from my enterprise."

The employees unanimously agreed that on the way to victory over the difficulties, they would have to be helpful through their lowering of expectations, and depend on my rectitude and perseverance, and they promised that either they want to win with me, or honorably fall.

And they won. The united and devoted work and conscientious service of all of them bore good fruit. The subscribers increased and the income multiplied, so that slowly I could pay off the debt to my workers incrementally, until over several years I paid them all the money owed to the last cent and I was left only with business debts.

During the increase of the size "Svornost" came out with this editorial, which describes the conditions of the enterprise in the best way:

"SVORNOST" AT AN INCREASED SIZE, now all normal sized letters, is coming today to the hands of honorable readers. We had expected to be able to do so by September 1st; however, there was no way to assemble the needed money in those hard times, since there were not yet subscriptions from the countryside, and even in the town it was only a little bit better.

However we were forced to hurry up with the increase, since the demand was calling for it. First of all our readers who were used to reading it every day were wishing to have as much as possible of this reading, which is praiseworthy progress among Chicago Czechs. The second point is that Czech and other tradesmen started to become convinced that the advertisements in "Svornost" were very profitable, and the number of advertisements started to multiply, so that a small paper would not have enough room for reading material. Finally there was truly too little space in a small newspaper for longer news and opinions that demand to be presented as fast as possible without any delay, on the next day for the public, so that the readership of a Czech newspaper would not lag behind the readership of German newspapers.

All that was pressuring me to increase our daily and to gather all our humble strength to fulfill the demands of honorable readership so that I would have kept not only the trust of the up to now supporters, but I would also gain new ones who were waiting until "Svornost" increased.

I am not increasing expenses from the increased size of the periodical from luxury and too much income. To say the truth I am too far from that. If I did not have enough good credit, I would not have been able to reach it. However, willing to fulfill the necessary need and while trying to continue forward I have undertaken the increase in the firm hope that the honorable subscribers will increase and like unto now, will continue to correctly pay their dues to us. This hope in connection with the so far experience with a great number of orderly and progressive Czechs in Chicago is the capital with which I am enterprising this, and I certainly won't be disappointed.

Let's continue together. To the friends of "Svornost": please be active among your neighbors and acquaintances to increase "Svornost". It will be to its benefit, and yours. After all, as soon as there is a significant portion of subscribers added to the newspaper we will look to increase the strength of the editor room and the benefit from that will be totally yours.

There is no American town, even among those who count the same number of Czech inhabitants as in Chicago that has risen to the same number of enlightened Czechs, so as to keep their own daily. It is our pride and certainly there is no Czech who has cause to regret for the several cents a day, for which he is offered so much spiritual food from day to day.

After all there is no way to serve all sides and all individuals. Nevertheless, everybody who does not have a prejudice will recognize that we strive consciously and without taking sides to serve the interest of everybody, and to accommodate many pressing circumstances. And there is no surprise that we also meet an enemy, since every good project has its enemies. Nevertheless our public has proved already what they think about the screeching of our enemies. After all they have been convinced about their lies several times and we will not be harmed by their lying even into the future.

Let's march forward united! The publisher.

As written above, immediately from the publication of "Svornost", the weekly "Amerikán" was also printed, mainly for rural subscribers. From the beginning it was published with pages of 14x21 inches size, and immediately from the very beginning, the number of subscribers reached over 500. They were slowly, constantly, increasing-- and in the year 1878, there were already 2,000 of them. That year I recognized that it would be good to send the Czech villages, my traveling representative, to make the countrymen personally acquainted with the newspaper, and to exhort them to the subscription and expansion of subscriptions. The first such traveler for the enterprise was Mr. Frank Štětka, who still that year, in September, took over the position of an accountant in the plant, and in 1879 he travelled for the business to the states of Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Dakota. The second year, Missouri, and Kansas, and so he was continuing to do it wider and wider, until in 1882 he went through the whole East, and its bigger towns settled by Czechs, such as Pittsburgh, Allegheny, Baltimore, New York, Boston, Brooklyn, Cleveland, etc. His travel was successful. The countrymen welcomed him everywhere in a friendly way, they hosted him and went to their acquaintances, so that he acquired quite a few friends and subscribers for the weekly "Amerikán." This newspaper was a great favorite with the readers, because of its political, conscientious, non-partisanship, and the abundance of good reading.

After the Countryman Štětka left the enterprise, the very well-liked Citizen August Volenský took over the travelling each year for several months, and he did this until the winter of 1893.

THE PERSONEL OF "SVORNOST"—The first typesetters of "Svornost" were Masters G. B. Reišl, Josef Ceram, who is now the organizer of the „Spirit of the Times“ [Duch Času] and at the time, a teacher of physical education in public schools; H. Vávra; Jos. Kerner; very soon Fr. Lier started to learn it. He came from New York to Chicago to stay with his sister, Mrs.

Kozáková; then Josef Růžička, the son of a known coalman, who worked with me from 1876 to his premature death. Already before the coming out of “Svornost” the enterprise had a book apprentice, Josef Holán, later the shop foreman, in the printing department with the presses. Besides him also, learning the printing, was Vác. Medek, and Jan Novák worked with the bookbinding. Ant. Seidl joined the trade apprenticeship in 1876 and Fr. Loudl in 1878. The same year Zavadil joined us, and he has been employed to this day in the plant as a shop foreman of the “jobs” department.

In the year 1876 I also had a wallpaper business, and I was putting it on the walls in rooms and shops, and I was doing the decorative work, myself, along with my workers, and I decorated many Czech and German inns, according to the tradition of that time, in the tap rooms with gilded molding, frames and velvet decorations. The profit from all this was flowing to keep “Svornost” afloat, and often it helped at the moment of greatest need.

In May 1876 I started to publish the humoristic picture periodical “Imp”, [Rarášek] under the direction of Gust. B. Reišl, who also became an associate editor of “Svornost” along with F. B. Zdrůbek, his brother-in-law. After two years of publication, this periodical became bigger, and received a new name, “The Spirit of the Time”, [Duch Času], as the Sunday newspaper, accompanying “Svornost” in its decidedly Freethinking content. It was published on eight pages of pink paper for four years. However, because of its color, it was recognized immediately in the rural post offices that it was the “devilish” newspaper, and as the priests were verbally attacking it, many subscribers encountered difficulties from their loving religious neighbors, who would take it at the post office, and burn it. We abandoned this color and with its first increase it was published on white paper, and it has been, up to the present time, published in the same format.

THE WORK “SVORNOST” IN THE FIELD OF FREETHINKING. The beginning of the publishing of “Svornost” meant also the beginning of heightened work in the field of Freethinking. In 1876 the big religious split in the womb of the Czech Church around St. Wenceslaus happened with the support of “Svornost”, “Duch Času” and the Free-thinking community and lecturers. It had palpable consequences for the whole life of Czechs in Chicago. The Freethinking element kept itself firmly Free-thinking, and lecturers were regularly organized by the editor and orator of the “Freethinking community” Fr. B. Zdrůbek. Every second Sunday there was a lecture in the hall of the gymnastic association Sokol; in Čech hall in Pilsen; sometimes by the cement factory; and at other times on the northwest side, and the lectures did not have any entrance fee and were free for everybody, and they were attended in great numbers by men and women, as well as youth. They influenced positively the quick thinking brains and they inspired independent thinking, moral growth and self-realization.

In the beginning many were frightened by priests and they were afraid to go to the lectures, and many a grandmother expressed herself that those were the “devil’s” meetings with hellish teaching, nevertheless they gradually became convinced that quiet contemplation about religion is a pleasurable and propitious activity, and they got used to coming to the “sermons” of the Free-thinking community as ardently and regularly as if it were church.

Then what happened was that a split in the Catholic community of St. Wenceslaus happened and 400 members pulled out of the church, to which they had been driven by the greed of the priests and the bishop, who took the school building for the Czech School away from them, which had been built with their hard earned and saved money. There were other causes for the discontentment that added to it. They fell away from the Church and the preacher was vilipending them from the pulpit and they were condemned. In addition, this rather strengthened them in their pulling away. As a group they joined the Freethinking side. They were visiting the lectures and they commented positively that their eyes were open and they saw through the whole priestly business-like framework knitted for the submission of the people.

This split appeared in the public Czech life very palpably and negatively, since the believers were bringing enmity from the churches, hate, and vengeance in their hearts against the heretics, and then against all the Freethinkers altogether, and whenever there was an occasion that offered itself, especially in inns while drinking a glass of beer, there religious disputes took place among the opposing sides, which often ended even with brawls.

This intolerance and religious grudge spread also into businesses and associations. And it made out of neighbors and countrymen enemies and enraged opponents. At that time the editor, Zdrůbek called the Czech priests to a public debate in front of people on both sides, so that the Free-thinkers would learn from the explanations of the priest why the believers stay with their faith and the believers would know why the non-believers are attached to their Freethinking conviction. In this way, they would learn how to recognize the others, how to honor them, and tolerate them, and they would stop persecuting each other, and the course insults, and disputes.

Father Vilem Čoka, one of the most educated Czech priests in America at that time took on to himself the defense of the Faith during the disputation concerning the sentence: "Holy Faith is destroying human morality", and the disputation took place for two days, on the 17th and 19th of April 1877 at the school of St. Wenceslaus on DeKoven Street. Each side received a hundred tickets for its supporters, and both were represented evenly. Both disputations took place under the chairmanship of Mr. Václav Kašpar with peace and order.

The consequence of this was that the public disputes and hate stopped. There were no fights because of religious views to be heard of in the inns. The sides became mutually convinced of their opponents' honor and ardor for goodness and morality and tolerance started to put down roots and grew continuously from that time.

The pacification of the sides, of course, could not be reached and nobody in their right mind is demanding it, since each side is left to defend their principles, convictions, and freedoms, and to offer to the other side the same free ideas and freedom for their points of view, without hatred or animosity.

From that time the religious peace started in the Chicago Czech society. The priests became more tolerant and they were not hatefully attacking the Freethinkers. They were not chastening as ardently as before, and the Freethinkers were organizing their lecturers regularly from that time on, and they were prospering in the respect of the same freedom for everybody,

and founding Freethinking associations, whose number in Chicago strongly exceeded the number of believers in all the local churches.

In the year 1877 the first Sunday Freethinking School was founded on 19th St. close to Hoyne Ave, and when it was difficult to find a teacher, August Geringer took on the obligation, adding to all of his worries and work, agreeing to teach there every Sunday afternoon, which he perceived as rest and recreation, since he liked to do school work. He continued until the end of the year 1878, when he added to the editorship Mr. Fr. Cetlovský, who eagerly took over the instruction while Mr. Geringer was paying for his travel and other small expenses tied to it. Mr. Cetlovský stayed with “Svornost” until 1883. The same year a former typesetter, Mr. Fr. Zajíček started to work with “Svornost.” He is nowadays a notary on 18th Street, close to Blue Island Avenue. In the year 1880 he became the foreman in the print shop and he stayed there until the 23rd of May 1881, when he established a notary in which he has been working profitably to this day.

On the 17th of May 1879 “Svornost” was enlarged for the 3rd time to the dimensions of 17x23 inches and 7 columns per page. In the address for this occasion written by Mr. Zdrůbek it states:

“We decided to increase once again the newspaper and we pass out today a daily Czech newspaper in America, which is the same size as the Prague daily, “Národní Listy” [National Newspaper] . And there is another difference that in the “Národní Listy” there are fifteen editors working, whereas in our enterprise, there are only two, since because of the income we cannot pay a large work force. However we hope that the favor which has taken our newspaper through the bitterest times to this level will continue to make it possible for us to strongly endure through our times and benefit the national life here in Chicago ever more and more. “

Since “Svornost” as well as “Amerikán” were improving through the increase in the favor of subscribers, who liked in the newspaper, mainly its impartiality, the publisher took steps to increase it even more, from 7 columns “Svornost“ became 8 columns, while the size was 18x24 inches and “Amerikán” was transformed into a 16 page newspaper in a book format, 10x14 inches, the same year.

OUR OWN HOME.

For many years I had to pay a rent of \$110 per month, keeping the ground floor for the print shop and the upper for a residential apartment and editing room. The owner of the house was of Jewish Faith, his name was Notka, and he knew the reliability of his renter. He never pushed or reminded when the rent was not ready on time. This happened usually during the summer months, when no money was coming from the countryside, and only when in the Fall and towards the New Year, the subscriptions were coming, and money for books and printing jobs from other states, were all the debts paid off, so the worries and suffering of the publisher relented always at that time and his head became lighter.

When the publishing of the periodicals was secured, my friends advised me to think about my own house for myself and my print shop. They offered to enroll me into a self-help

association with several participants for the purchase of a building lot, and to save in the association for the construction. I heeded the advice and according to their suggestion I bought the corner on 12th Street and Clinton, where there was a wooden apartment house, which was not needed by our business. I then moved the wooden building to the back part of the building lot, and I started to build a three story house in the front with a comfortable basement space that had light and where in the front the typesetters were placed and in the back were the printers and type prints with the paper cutter. This purchase happened in 1885, which is years after “Svornost” was founded, and the building was done in 1886. The biggest helpers and advisers were my acquainted citizens, Vác. Kašpar, and V. Topinka. I took out from the self-help association twice, each time \$8,000, which I was then paying off in weekly installments, which was really a big load for me. The payoff took a whole twelve years; however “Svornost” and “Amerikán” had their own home and their existence then was assured.

Of course after the moving of the plant to the new building new worries started. The printing presses had to be exchanged and additional ones had to be purchases. The steam kettle had to be made larger, and other different tools purchased, so that I had to take on new debts. However, when all the place was not sufficient for the plant, since it was necessary to increase the number of presses by two and to change the place of the typesetter, which at that time was still on the ground floor, to a better place, I was pressed to build a second part of the building.

The second part of the building was finished in October 1892. Then it was necessary to build a big steam boiler producing 40 horsepower, a new steam machine with 20 horsepower, two new presses, a new cutting knife, and many other tools.

At that time, of course there was already a need for all of this, since by that time “Svornost” was already so widely distributed that it had to be printed twice on two big printers, and that only so that the rural addition could be taken on time in the morning to the post office and then only was printed the second edition for the town. The distribution of “Svornost” in town as well as in the countryside continued on so that I had to start to think about the purchase of a big speed press, the so-called auto-feeding press, which happened on the 29th of November 1896, when “Svornost” was once again increased in size and was published then with six and sometimes eight pages with seven columns in the size of English language dailies. This progress demanded also the introduction of typesetting machines that were provided in the year 1899, and their numbers increased in the following years with the most modern typesetting machines so that the periodicals were still easily read and printed with new letters to keep the readership content.

THE PUBLISHER OF THE BIGGEST CZECH CALENDAR AND 200 BOOKS

The personal memories of Mr. August Geringer which we are submitting to the Czechoslovak public are augmented by the editor of this calendar, along with certainly other important addenda: “Svornost”, [Solidary/Unity] “Amerikán”, and “Duch Času” [the Spirit of the Times] in later years as well as “Slavie” purchased after the death of its last publisher, Mr. L. J. Tupý and the special publications of “Amerikán, Oklahomské Noviny, Baltimorské and Alleghenské Listy, [The Oklahoma News, Baltimore and Allegheny Gazettes] are not the only

publications published by Mr. Geringer. Already from the year 1878 Mr. August Geringer has published also the calendar “Amerikán”, that over the 45 years of its publication became undeniably the richest and biggest by its arrangement, most beautiful calendar published in the Czech language on this and even the other side of the ocean. Already before Amerikán, in America attempts were made in several places to publish a Czech calendar, nevertheless none of those calendars lasted for a longer number of years, and even among the calendars that were published later, seldom did they live for several volumes. And so “Amerikán” remains the oldest of all Czech American calendars, among which it is, both in its area of distribution, as well as in quality, in first place.

The main idea of the publication of the Czech calendar was to give Czech America a book that would keep a constant indicator of happenings in the history of the overseas branch of the Czech nation. And that was successfully achieved in the fullest sense immediately from the first edition of the calendar “Amerikán”. Of course the first edition could not, even from far away, equal the present day annual editions. It totaled 144 pages. It was printed on quite coarse paper. It was hand typeset, with not always the freshest letters, and it was decorated by wood cuts, which today’s readers of the calendar that contains beautiful illustrations would consider primitive to say the least. Nevertheless its content in the first calendar was immediately a showcase and proof of the publisher’s intention to lead a Czech American reader always along the path of progress and self-awareness. The first story in this first year of calendar “Amerikán” was a short story from the American Civil War, “Věrně Modrý” (True Blue). Another contribution was a fantastic humoresque “The Steam Man in the Prairies, otherwise the Artist and the Hunter” [“Paromůž na prériích” anebo “Umělec a Lovec“]. Immediately after the humorous essay, we find an expansive essay, “Every Beginning is Difficult or The True Narration About the Life of the First Czech Immigrants in New York” [Každý počátek je těžký” or “Pravdivé vypravování ze života prvních českých vystěhovalců v New Yorku”], put together by F. B. Zdrůbek. By this essay, therefore, already in the year 1878 the memoirs of Czech American settlers were started and they have been continued in every subsequent annual issue. What is interesting is that in the first annual edition there is also mention about the hard first beginnings in America of Vojta Naprstek, then about the enterprise of František Červený, the brother of the maker of musical instruments, Václav Červený in Hradec Králové. Presented in the following article is the also interesting story of the first Czech association in New York, among whose founders was František Brodský, who immigrated to America in 1851. Additionally, the first issue introduces brief notes about the life of František Korběl, who later became the patron of national institutions and Václav Kašpar, a former grocer and the founder of the biggest Czech-American bank. In the first year of the calendar is also a story of the first Czech periodicals in America, “Národní Noviny” [National Newspaper], which later merged with “Slovan Amerikánský” [American Slav] into “Slavie”, then a description of Czech life in Chicago, and then a crudely-made carving of the two first Czech halls in Chicago, and even a list of Czech organizations, including clumsy pictures of Czech churches of that time; then there was an article, “Cleveland and its Czechs” from the deceased Václav Šnajdr. There were concise, but well-organized, and for that time remarkably accurate statistics of small villages, places and towns and counties in the United States that were settled by Czechs, divided up into individual states. Continuing there are biographies of the oldest Czech editors in America,

among which are Ladimír Klácel, Karel Jonáš, Václav Šnajdr, Lev. J. Palda, Jan Rosický, Jan Milostín, Bárta Letovský, František Boleslav Zdrůbek, Gustav Bedřich Reišl, and J. V. Čapek.

The contents of the calendar are richly spiked with humor. It ends with an overview of world happenings in the year 1877 (at that very time the Russo-Turkish war took place in Europe) and by the list of rulers of all countries on the Earth.

As can be seen, great care was devoted to the layout of the very first issue of the calendar “Amerikán”, so that it became not only a welcome book for readers, but also indispensable help in the household of each Czech American. From that first issue the rise of calendar “Amerikán” does not stop. This applies not only to the number of pages and layout, but also the choice of content. Calendar “Amerikán” is, among all the published calendars in America, the only one that can brag about the fact that its material is completely original in each yearly issue and is the work of our best specialists in Czech American life in all types of work and life callings and written by good writers, Czech-Americans as well as from the old country. For a number of years now, ever since August Geringer’s main colleague has been his son-in-law, Mr. R. Jaromír Pšenka, who is also the editor of his newspaper, the calendar “Amerikán” has contained short stories, humoresques, sketches, and other amusing reading of literary level, which gains recognition, even from professional critics in the old country. In addition to that, each year the calendar contains a large section of educational essays, written primarily by our specialists, travelers, physicians, etc.. It has a great illustrated comic part, amusing and decorated by illustrations made either by the best among our Czech American painters-illustrators or, as is in this yearly edition, by a photographic process where scenes that are presented as an illustration are enacted by professional persons assembled at chosen places, and photographed by a professional photographer, so that they simulate a complete impression of reality.

Among known Czech American activists, literary writers, newsmen and so on, who became members of the editing staff of “Svornost” and of other publications published by Mr. August Geringer, or the outstanding members of the technical and administrative personnel, we mention Pavel Albieri, a Czech writer who was a member of the editorial staff for two years; Bartoš Bitner, later the Publisher of “Šotek” [The Goblin], who was employed by August Geringer several times; Dr. Molkup, an excellent journalist who gained experience under Geringer in typesetting, bookkeeping, and even editorship, and while doing that he finished his studies as a Dr. of Medicine; Dr. Karel H. Breuer, now an outstanding Czech physician in Lincoln, Nebraska; Karel Štulík, an excellent activist in Sokol; J. L. Kuták who still today is one of the greatest experts on the United States, who several times as a business representative crisscrossed the United States; Karel Růžička, the later manufacturer of cigars; V. L. Šíma, the teacher in the Czech-English Free School, who for years was the organizer of the children’s section in “Svornost” and “Amerikán” ; Dr. J. Rudiš Jičinský, who later became the longtime editor of “Sokol Americký”; Josef J. Hájek, an excellent worker in the field of Freethinking and for many years the editor of the “Iowa Newsletter” and of “Svornost”; František Peřina, who created some of the most successful figures in “Duch Času” [Spirit of the Time]; Josef Tvrzický, one of the foremost Czech American revolutionaries and workers, who died,

unfortunately, before his time and in a tragic way; Josef Mach, an outstanding poet and journalist.

Among others let us name Frank Čemus; Dr. Václav Anýž; Tomáš Vonášek; Matěj Mašek, the former United States soldier who for many years deposited his rich experiences in beautiful short stories that were published in numerous annual issues of the calendar “Amerikán”; Vilém Kroužilka, a quick thinking young worker in the field of literature and Sokol, unfortunately also cut down by death before his time. The administrative leadership has been in the hands of administrator Mr. Jindřich Kolben, for already 20 years. He is from the famous Prague Kolben family. Mr. František B. Zdrůbek, who was the spiritual father and co-founder of “Svornost” and “Amerikán” remained the editor of these periodicals until his death on the 14th of September in the year 1911, when he departed not only from us, but from the whole Czechoslovak America for whom he had been a father figure and irreplaceable teacher.

Besides the newspapers and calendars over 48 years of his publishing activity, Mr. August Geringer published about 200 books through his printing and publishing, among which the great majority had a valuable content -- educational, historical, scientific -- or were of a general informational nature. With these books, of which thousands and thousands of copies can be found in the homes of Czechoslovak families in America as well as in the old country, and as well in numerous libraries, and small library rooms in settlements of Czechoslovaks spread between the Atlantic and the Pacific, Texas Bay and the Canadian Plains, Mr. August Geringer built for himself an unperishable monument. We cannot here name the list of all those great publications, as well as smaller books that he through his own outlay, published, and we will mention only the most important. The first publication of this kind was the Czech American Reader, put together by F. B. Zdrůbek, which has already been mentioned above; soon after that, the editor F. B. Zdrůbek put together the Great Historical Czech American Reader, and when its publication turned out to be very welcome in Czech America, he published a second volume of it. In later years Mr. Geringer had a new Czech Reader prepared for the Czech American schools by a Czech teacher, the chairman of the teachers union in Prague, Adolf Frumar. Like Zdrůbek's, the Frumar Readers are still in constant use in many Czech American schools. Early on the need for a good textbook of English was felt among many American Czechs and Editor Zdrůbek took on the assignment and put together a very nice, systematically arranged, and rich textbook that surpasses all the existing textbooks. It was called “Českoamerický Tlumač” [the Czech American Speaker/Translator], which opened a way into American life for thousands and thousands of American Czechs; it introduced one into the English language by a really easy and easily understandable way.

Beside the Tlumač“ Mr. Geringer published also a smaller and cheaper little book, „Anglicky Snadno“ [Easy English] by Professor J. J. Zmrhal, the Inspector of Public Schools in Chicago.

One of the biggest books published by Mr. August Geringer and prized the most by American Czechs was “Dějiny Ameriky” [History of America] written and edited by Josef Čermák, the longtime editor of “Duch Času” [The Spirit of the Time] in 3 beautifully bound

books. Besides that, Mr. Geringer published a popular and cheap edition of the History of the Czech Nation by Palacký, and with these two works he contributed to the education and knowledge of American Czechs with the history of their old, as well as their new motherland.

One of the most popular works in published in America is the „Home Cookbook“ that was written by the departed Mr. Emil Beránek and which was an excellent manual for thousands and thousands of our house ladies, introducing them to the art of cooking in the Czech as well as American styles. This excellent book has to be republished over and over again every few years. Similarly useful and for businessmen, farmers, and builders, etc., an essential book, is the “Rychlý Počtář” [Quick Calculator]. The textbooks of Czech and English languages were greatly supplemented by the publication of the Czech-English and English-Czech dictionaries, compiled by F. B. Zdrůbek, together with the great Mourek dictionary, which Mr. Geringer purchased outright from a Prague Publisher. For the Czech American associations the Geringer Publishing House has published many essential manuals, such as “Parlamentární pravidla” [The Parliamentary Rules]; “Pohřební písně a nápěvy” [Funeral Hymns and Songs]; “Pohřební řeči” [Funeral Orations]; “Proslovy a řeči k slavnostem spolkovým” [Introductions and Speeches for Association Celebrations]; “Sto deklamací pro mládež” [100 Declamations for Young People]; “Uplná sbírka řeči a prosluvů ku všem příležitostem spolkovým a národním” [A Complete Collection of Speeches and Addresses for All Occasions of Associations and National Groups]; “Ústava spojených států” [The Constitution of the United States]; “Zpěvník Českoamerický” [The Czech American Songbook], etc.

It is a long list of works intended to free American Czechs from spiritual slavery and to teach them to think independently and become worthy of the name “Freethinking people”. We have selected here only a few of the main ones. The beginning was the publication of the protocol of the two public disputations between Frant B. Zdrůbek and parish priest V. Čoka. Further published were; “Katechismy svobodomyšlné mládeže” [Catechisms for Freethinking Youth] and the work “Křesťanství a vzdělanost; [Christianity and Education]; “Lež náboženská v lidstvu vzdělaném” [The Religious Lie Among Educated Humanity]; “Mistr Jan Hus na koncilu kostnickém” [Master John Huss at the Council of Constance]; “Síla a hmota” [Force and Mass]; “Paine’s immortal work, “Věk rozumu“ [The Age of Reason]; Klácel’s “Vesvěrnost” [The Universality]; J. J. Král s “Věra a věda” [Faith and Science]; Straus’s “Život Ježíšův” [The Life of Jesus]; Mangasarian’s “Bible v pravém světle” [The Bible Unveiled]; Koenig’s “Církev vraždící” [The Murdering Religion]; “Životopis Karla Darvína” [The Biography of Charles Darwin]; and many other similar works that were religiously Freethinking in tendency. Among the most recent literary works that were published by Mr. August Geringer, let’s us mention, Škaloud’s immortal humoresque “Bordynkáři” [Borders] and “U Kratinů” [At the Home of the Kratinas], which have already seen several editions; the writings of Bedřich Moravec are hungrily searched for by thousands of Czech American female and male readers; nice Free-Thinking and educational works of the old collaborator of “Svornost” and “Amerikán” Josef Buňata; then “Nová země” [The New Land] with stories of the first Czech immigrants, written by Pavel Albieri; some of the works of Mrs. F. Staňková-Bujárková; and a great number of original works of the most prolific Czech American writer, R. Jaromír Pšenka, some of which have been published even by outstanding publishers in the old country.

This, however, is only a cursory overview of the books published by the publishing house of Mr. August Geringer over the almost 50 years of his activity in America.

AGAIN INTO A NEW HOUSE.—In September of 1917 when the enterprise of “Svornost” and “Amerikán” was already 42 years old it had to move again for two reasons. The 12th Street where its building was standing was being enlarged and forty feet was taken away from all the buildings on the south side, among which was also the Svornost building, The only space remaining at all was insufficient for the enterprise, which anyway already needed a bigger facility. Besides that the old Czech quarter in the center of which “Svornost” grew, was already almost altogether abandoned by the countrymen. The Czech areas of the town, Pilsen, California, Lawndale, and New Tabor were several miles further to the west, so there was a new place purchased for the construction of a new building for “Svornost” several miles further to the west, directly among the newer Czech areas of Chicago, known as California and Lawndale, Marigold, or New Tábor, Hawthorne, etc. Here on Crawford Ave., which connects



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<p>The House on Canal Street in which Svornost was founded in 1875.</p>	<p>The Building of the Svornost Enterprise from 1887 to the year 1917.</p>
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The Svornost Building Since the year 1917

several Chicago Czech areas, not far away from 26th Street, the main business street of Czech Chicago, in 1917 there was a new building built, that was commensurate to all the demands of a modern printing enterprise and a publisher of great periodicals. The building covers 83x115 feet, and it was built by a Czech architect, Robert Layer, in a simple, but pleasing style. The whole printing plant, including the offices, editor room, and administration is built on the same level, on the ground floor, which is permitted by the enormous surface of the building. In the front the building is heightened by one floor on which is the apartment of the publisher, and half of that floor is taken by the book depot. On the ground floor, under the apartment of the publisher, there is a big office measuring 25x40 ft. immediately beside the administrative office there is a large, light, and airy room reserved for the editorial staff. In a space of 30x32 ft., are situated 10 editorial desks, where editors as well as newsmen sit down to their daily work.

All the rest of the building on the ground floor is occupied by typesetting, printing and the mail room. Seven thousand five hundred square feet is devoted to stands and letters and tables with metallic tops for the frames linotypes, presses of different sizes from a small hand cranked press, for the printing of flyers and such, to an enormous three level duplex to print "Svornost" and "Amerikán". In the best position, by a room of enormous windows facing the south side there are 5 matrices of linotypes and intertypes, those smart fine machines that work with almost human-like intelligence and which cast in metal whole lines of set letters according to the typing of the typesetter, who sits by the keys and pushes different letters.

Besides this there are another number of helping machines, such as an electric folder, which is employed for three months out of the year to fold the paper arches for the calendar “Amerikán”; an electric cutter that cuts a half foot high layer of packed heavy paper, with the same ease with which a table knife cuts a boiled potato; a machine for the melting of metal; machines for the casting of metallic lines, and the cutting of metal, etc., etc.

All the machines run on electricity and to run them the plant has more than 20 electrical motors from completely small ones to a 15 horsepower heavy one, which runs the big duplex press. What a difference from the first plan of “Svornost” made with a hand cranked press, the handle of which was traded back and forth between the publisher and his wife and other three members of the “plant!”

It should be added that since April in the year 1929, “Svornost” comes out in the afternoon, daily and contains news and happenings of the same day. The change from a morning daily to an afternoon one did contribute greatly to the increased territorial cover of “Svornost”. [Unity/Solidarity].

In the new home of “Svornost” and “Amerikán“ which by its spread and modernity can stand side by side with many renowned enterprises in the English language, the head of this business enterprise, Mr. August Geringer, has now reached his 80th birthday, surrounded by his contented colleagues and employees, who now number 100. On the 2nd of August he could look back with satisfaction not only to see from which small beginnings he reached such a high goal, but also what role his periodicals have played in the life of Czech America up to this time, as well in the life of the whole Czech nation.

In the editorial staff of “Svornost“ first appeared the idea of founding the Czech National Cemetery. “Svornost” collaborated in the building of the orphanage and shelter. “Svornost” and “Amerikán” were one of the main supporters of the Sokol movement in America. “Svornost” was a helper and textbook for teachers in all the Czech schools in America. “Svornost” was, for four and a half decades, a supporter of Czech national and association life, and when in 1914 the World War broke out and a propitious moment came for the Czech nation to oppose its ages long tyrant and try to fight for its own freedom and independence, it was “Svornost”, which without hesitation declared itself for this fight and for the whole time of the Czech political immigration activity together with Masaryk and Štefánik at its helm, it was “Svornost” that was the main consistent source of support, moral and material support of this great and historical movement that on the day of the 28th of October 1918 peaked with the declaration of the Czech Republic. “Svornost” never lowered itself to undermining work, never loaned its columns to movements that through gossip, or currents of gossip, or the feeding of our inherited bad habit, which is through suspicion trying to poison our national life, in order cause disunity, and , as well as to make bitterly impossible the work of the most meritorious workers.

For this activity “Svornost” and “Amerikán“ and their Publisher August Geringer received recognition not only from all honest Czech “Amerikán” national activists, but also from the outstanding agents and main fighters for the freedom of Czechoslovakia in the old mother countries. Already before the war when Tomáš Čapek in the year 1911 published his

book “Padesát let českého tisku v Americe”, [Fifty Years of Czech Press in America] this leading historian of Czech America wrote about the publisher of “Svornost” these words:

“Mr. August Geringer the native from the Písek Region, and who moved to America in the year 1869—27 years old, is the most enterprising publisher among the American Czechs. His periodicals, the daily “Svornost”, the weekly “Duch Času!” and the bi-weekly “Amerikán” have an enviable circle of readership. The daily „Svornost” was founded by Geringer in 1875 -- it was the first Czech American daily altogether, and his calendar Amerikán has significant circulation .. Geringer worked himself up through exemplary industry and iron endurance, since he was not scared away by numerous beginning setbacks.”

In addition to this more detailed overview of the life work of Mr. August Geringer, it is only possible to add that he was faithful to himself and as a consequence to his activities, into his advanced age. Even today this life of achievement was possible only rarely for a public official and so he could celebrate his 80th jubilee in comparatively good health, surrounded by the respect of enlightened countrymen on both shores of the ocean and covered by an unbelievable multitude of expressions of well wishes.

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The 80th birthday of Mr. August Geringer was celebrated according to the wishes of this humble, jubilant, quite quietly. “Svornost” and “Amerikán” were published in their usual form with the picture of the celebrated man; the pictures of his enterprise from the beginning to the present, and with a comparatively succinct biography of him. The celebrant was emotionally touched, mostly by expressions of devotion and respect which were heaped onto him, that significant day, by all of his employees. Immediately in the early morning when he entered the editing room, he was quite surprised when he was surrounded by all the members of the editorial staff, who one after another wished him well on the occasion of reaching 80 years. A similar scene awaited him when he went to the typesetting and printing room, where he was surrounded by the members of the technical personnel, whose representative handed him a beautiful bouquet made of eighty fresh roses. The celebrant was unable to utter a word. His eyes were filled with tears; at that time through his brain flew a memory about his bitter beginnings, when on payday he had to anxiously scrape together a handful of dollars for the salary of several employees of the enterprise, and now, during the celebration of his eighty years, he is standing in an expansive print shop of a newspaper enterprise employing about a hundred contented and grateful employees. Certainly a moment which would be the wish of each mortal to reach in their life. The heart touching scenes were repeated when, during later hours, the whole administrative personnel, gathered and with congratulations handed to the jubilant a big basket of beautiful flowers. Then the whole morning, as well as the whole afternoon, friends of the old publisher arrived to shake his hand and to wish him health and contentment in the autumn days of his fruitful life. Touched by so many demonstrations of favor and devotion, Mr. Geringer was thinking about how to repay the employees, so he abandoned the original plan to organize a banquet or some other celebration for them, or some other celebration and instead of that, the next Saturday, each and every employee of the enterprise received with their envelope a second

one with the thanks of the jubilant and a golden edition, which allowed each to celebrate the jubilee of their employer, according to their own wishes, in the company of their families.

The celebrant received more than numerous written congratulations, especially, of course, from members of his family, especially among those who live beyond the sea, who sent him letters, as well as congratulatory telegrams. The rare celebration was rendered bitter only by the thought that his companion of many years,--his beloved wife-- did not get to experience all the joys and honors that the old worker received. Mrs. Antonie Geringer departed from her husband and her children forever, on the 26th of December 1913 and her ashes now lie in an urn in a prominent place in the columbarium of the first Czech crematorium at the Czech National Cemetery in Chicago.

Among the still living descendants of the Geringers, the oldest son Miloslav, who is the business director of the enterprise "Svornost" and the youngest of the children, Augusta, married to the head editor of "Svornost", R. Jaromír Pšenka, both live in Chicago. They took part in the quiet celebration of their father with their families. The son, Vladimír A. Geringer, who was for years a collaborator with his father, is now a business commissar of the United States in the Czechoslovak Republic, and the daughter, Vlasta, married to the famous science writer and traveler, E. St. Vráz, has just now arrived at the old country to be with her husband, who has been there already since last year, and organized a non-stop number of highly successful lectures. The not-present members of the family, of course, spent this significant day of the 2nd of August with their beloved father in spirit.

Mr. Geringer could never separate from his enterprise, even though he was offered a pleasant home with any of his children to live in peace and comfort. He had a modest apartment built, also near the new enterprise, so that he could, according to his decades-long clock-like devoted habit of regularity, be the first person in the enterprise in the morning, and in the evening be the last member of the staff going home to rest after the daily work. All the letters that come daily are going through his hands and he sorts them for the various divisions of the enterprise and on the more important questions he orders how they should be answered and some of them he even answers himself. He reads, as well as writes, without glasses. And this faithfulness to his life goal, and this extreme industry, can be credited for this man reaching eighty years of his life in a comparatively good state of spiritual freshness and, for such an advanced age, in acceptable physical health.

This is certainly a beautiful, enviable autumn, following a fruitful spring and summer, an autumn that is bearing the beautiful fruit of success, and also reward for years of experiencing difficulties and worries, and many times even bitter wrongs and ingratitude.

May the autumn of his life rest in the sunshine of the life-giving sun of gratitude and recognition, and may it last many additional years.