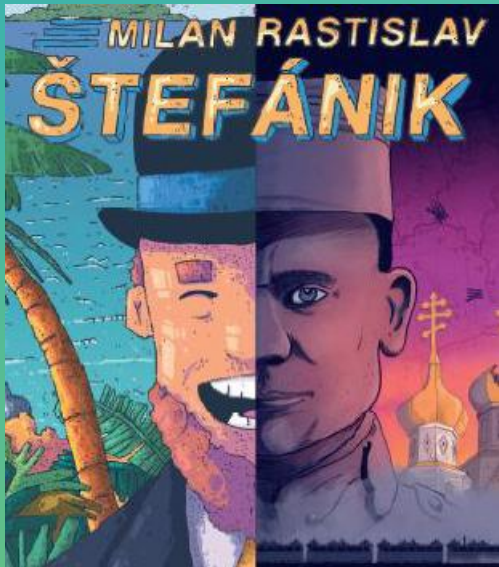


MILAN RASTISLAV
ŠTEFÁNIK
DURING THE FIRST WORLD
WAR

A PRESENTATION TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
ŠTEFÁNIK, A HERO OF THE GREAT WAR



BACKGROUND



Štefánik was going to be a great asset to the Allies and was to play a key role in the independence of Czechoslovakia. But how did a scientist end up in this position?

1914–1918: During the First World War, the Allies (France, the United Kingdom, Russia, etc.) were opposed to the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary).

Štefánik, who was already a renowned astronomer and a naturalised French citizen since 1912, was enlisted in the French army in August 1914.

ŠTEFÁNIK 1914 - 1915 : FROM ASTRONOMY TO MILITARY AVIATION

1. MOBILISATION AND COMMITMENT

the 2nd of August 1914: Štefánik was called up to serve in the **French infantry**, but his scientific background quickly resulted in his assignment to **military aviation**.

January 1915: He obtained his **pilot's licence** at the Chartres Aviation School and joined the army as **second lieutenant**.

May 1915: He joined the **MF 54 squadron**, where he organised a **weather forecasting service for aviation** (this was a first!).

His expertise in **meteorology** and **scientific observation** was put to use by the army.

ŠTEFÁNIK 1914 - 1915 : FROM ASTRONOMY TO MILITARY AVIATION

2. MISSION IN SERBIA: A TURNING POINT

August 1915: Štefánik was sent to **Serbia** with the MFS 99 squadron to support the Allies against the Austro-German offensive.

He organised **reconnaissance flights** and **rescue missions** there but was forced to retreat with the Serbian army via Albania (winter 1915–1916).

Quote: "The departure of Second Lieutenant Štefánik is greatly regretted by the 10th Army" (French military report).

Štefánik discovered how important **international cooperation** was for resistance.

1916–1917 :

DIPLOMAT AND
RECRUITER FOR
THE
CZECHOSLOVAK
CAUSE

1. CZECHOSLOVAK
NATIONAL COUNCIL

Štefánik met **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk** (future president of Czechoslovakia), Josef Dürich and **Edvard Beneš** in Paris.

Together, they founded the **Czechoslovak National Council** to secure independence for their country (which was under Austro-Hungarian rule).

From then on, Štefánik played a very important diplomatic role, representing the newly formed Czechoslovakia amongst the **Allies** (France, the United States, and Italy).

1916–1917 :

DIPLOMAT AND
RECRUITER FOR
THE
CZECHOSLOVAK
CAUSE

2. MISSION IN RUSSIA:
CREATION OF A
CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY

1916: Štefánik was sent to **Russia** to recruit **Czech and Slovak prisoners** (captured from the Austro-Hungarian army) and form a **Czechoslovak legion**. Before arriving there, he went to Romania.

Mission: To persuade prisoners to **desert** the Austro-Hungarian army and to negotiate with the **Russian government** to arm and train these volunteers.

Result: **14,000 volunteers** were recruited and constituted the core of the future Czechoslovak army.

1916–1917 :

DIPLOMAT AND
RECRUITER FOR
THE
CZECHOSLOVAK
CAUSE

2. MISSION IN RUSSIA:
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Russia had been at war since 1914 and was experiencing **political crises** (1917 Revolution).

After the **Russian Revolution (1917)**, the Czechoslovak Legions found themselves **trapped in Siberia** between the Bolsheviks and the anti-revolutionary forces.

Štefánik had to **improvise** in the face of the upheavals in Russia. He negotiated with the **Allies** to evacuate the legions via Vladivostok.

The legions became a **symbol of resistance** against the Central Powers. They played a key role in the **Russian Civil War** by supporting the anti-Bolshevik forces.

1916–1917 :

DIPLOMAT AND
RECRUITER FOR
THE
CZECHOSLOVAK
CAUSE

3. MISSION TO THE
UNITED STATES

June 1917: Štefánik arrived in the **United States** (which had just entered the war).

He was to **recruit** Czech and Slovak volunteers from among the immigrants.

Štefánik had to **convince** President Wilson to be supportive of the Czechoslovak cause.

Success: The United States recognised the **Czechoslovak National Council** as being a legitimate government.

1918 : GENERAL AND MINISTER OF WAR

1. CREATION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY IN FRANCE

December 1917: the French President **Raymond Poincaré** decreed the creation of an autonomous **Czechoslovak army** in France.

Štefánik was appointed **battalion commander**, then **brigadier general** in 1918.

Together with General Janin, Štefánik was given the responsibility of organising the training of **60,000 Czech and Slovak volunteers** and coordinating with the **Allies** to integrate this army in the front lines.

1918 : GENERAL AND MINISTER OF WAR

2. CREATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

the 14th of October 1918: Czechoslovakia was recognised as an independent state by the Allies.

Štefánik was appointed **Minister of War** of Czechoslovakia in October 1918, following the Geneva negotiations.

the 28th of October 1918: Official proclamation of independence in Prague.



EduLand

Erasmus+

Enrichit les vies, ouvre les esprits.



Co-funded by
the European Union

↑ ۙ ۙ ۙ национален הַפֶּשַׁח 文化 شَرْقِيَّة
inalco
Institut national
des langues
et civilisations orientales



© Diana Jamborova, Dominique Noël for english version
Illustrations © Eniac (Tomáš Cíger), Frenky (František Hříbal), IA