



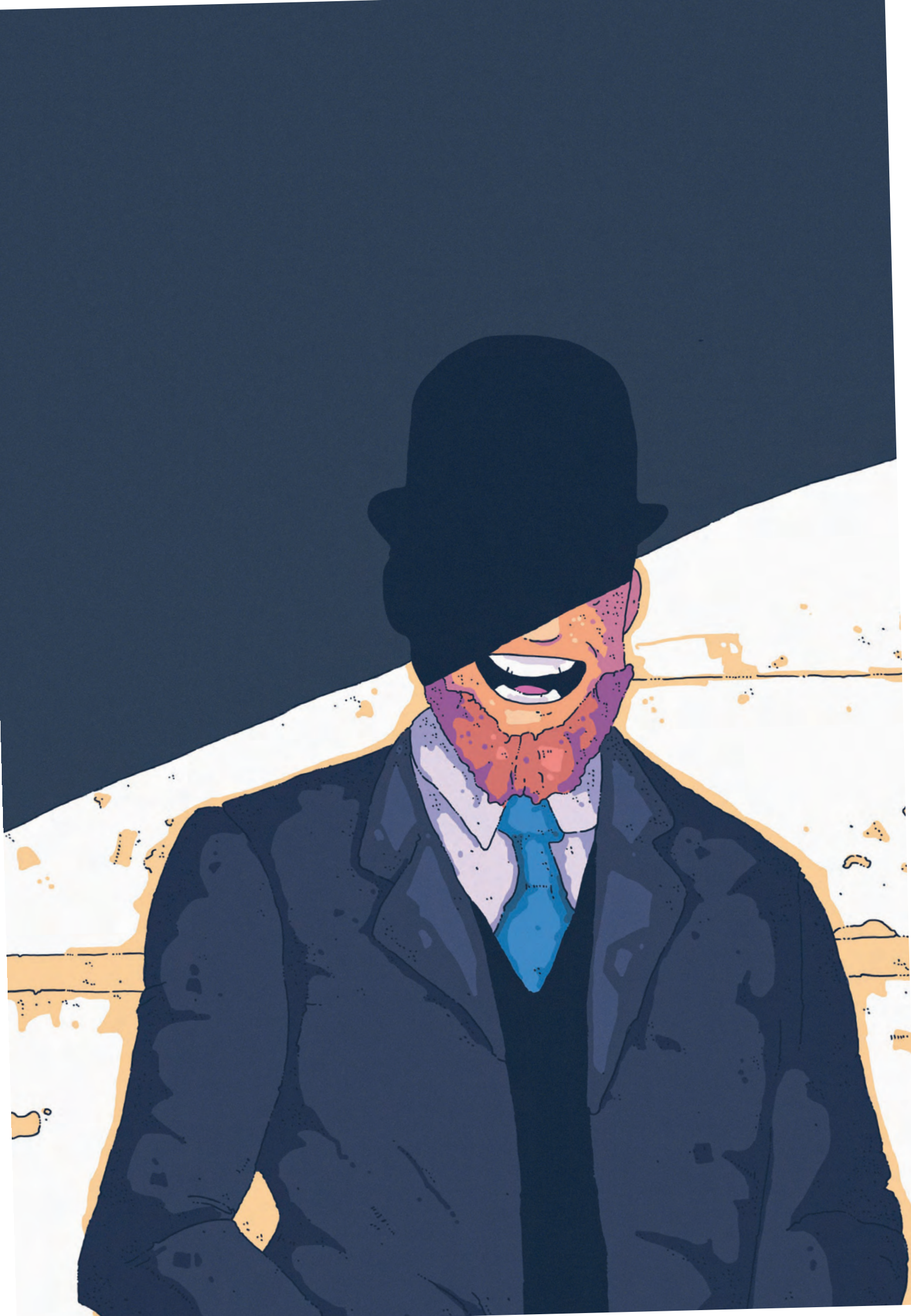
THE ADVENTURES OF MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK



THE ADVENTURES OF
 MILAN RASTISLAV
ŠTEFÁNIK

Tomáš Kriššák, Tomáš Eniac Cíger, Frenky Hříbal

Translated by Krištof Klestil and Dominique Noël



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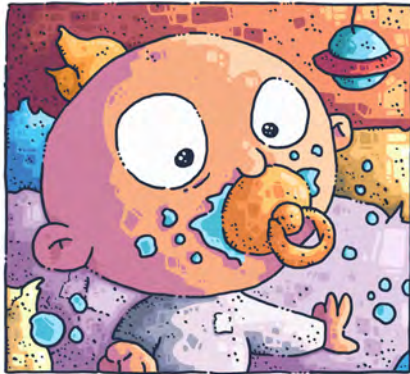
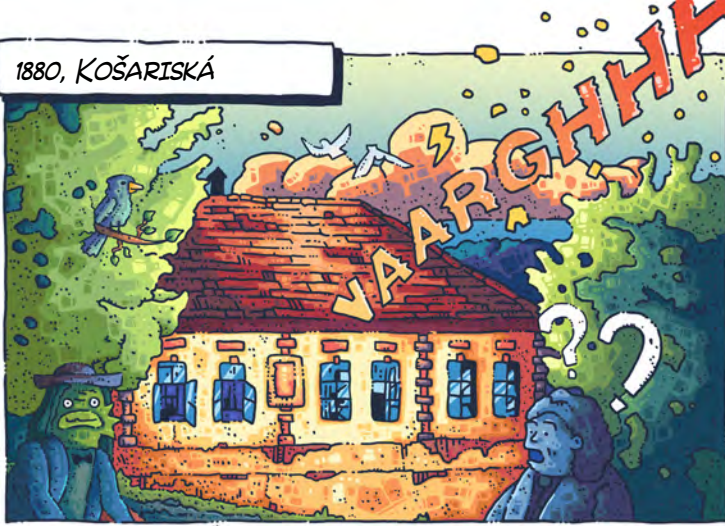
“I was once again back in the world of the living. I was aware of those huge waves, those merciless waves and I understood that in spite of all my self-confidence, in spite of my friends’ hope and encouragements, in spite of my enthusiasm and relative happiness, the future remained very uncertain. And so I threw myself into battle with a calm heart. I was serene because I understood that the meaning of life is not to be found in worldly achievements, but in perfecting our spiritual being”



MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK WAS THE SIXTH OF NINE CHILDREN OF AN EVANGELICAL PRIEST. HE BEGAN HIS STUDIES IN HIS HOMETOWN KOŠARISKÁ AND CONTINUED THEM IN PRAGUE, WHERE HE WAS INFLUENCED BY THE IDEAS OF T. G. MASARYK. LATER ON, HE DECIDED TO MOVE ON AND STUDY ASTRONOMY AT THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY.

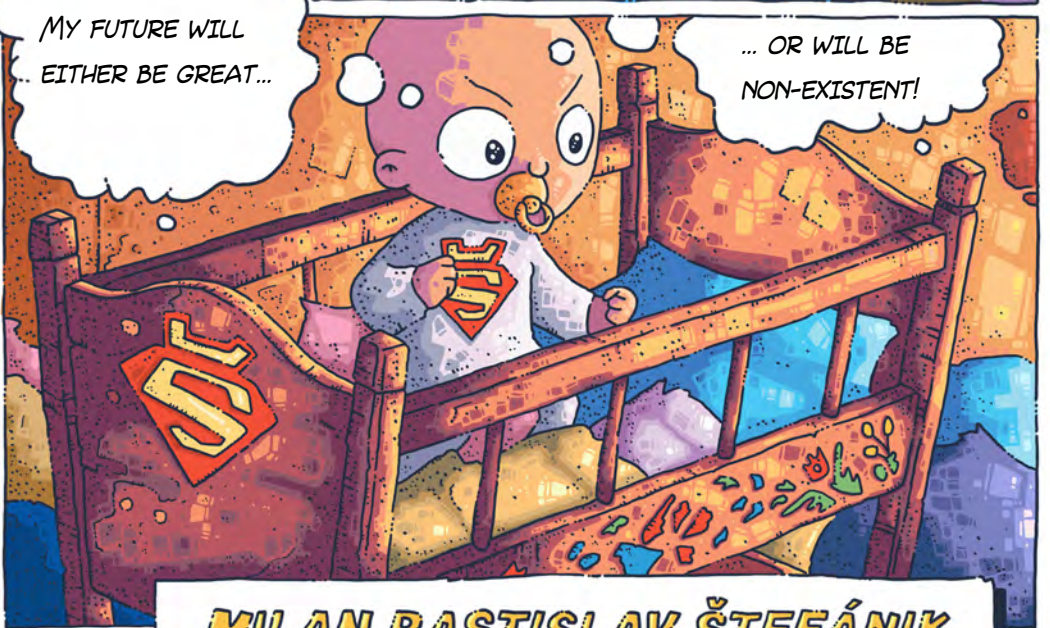
AFTER HIS STUDIES, AT THE END OF 1904, HE WENT TO PARIS TO PURSUE HIS DREAM OF BECOMING A WELL-KNOWN ASTRONOMER. HOWEVER, HE WAS BESET WITH MATERIAL DIFFICULTIES. LATER ON HE JOINED WELL-KNOWN ASTRONOMERS' CIRCLES AND ORGANIZED SCIENTIFIC EXCURSIONS TO MONT BLANC, TURKMENISTAN, RUSSIA, CENTRAL ASIA AND AFRICA, LOOKING FOR A SUITABLE LOCATION ON WHICH HE COULD BUILD AN OBSERVATORY. HE HAD ALREADY RECEIVED FRENCH CITIZENSHIP BEFORE THE ONSET OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND SOON AFTER, WAS AWARDED THE LEGION OF HONOUR FOR HIS EXPLORATORY AND SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS. IN 1915, HE WAS ALSO REWARDED FOR THE PART HE HAD PLAYED AS SOLDIER DURING THE WAR. AT THE END OF THAT YEAR AND THANKS TO HIS CONTACTS, HE JOINED FORCES WITH EDVARD BENEŠ AND T.G. MASARYK EXILED IN PARIS, TO EXPLORE THE IDEA OF A COMMON STATE FOR CZECHS AND SLOVAKS. TOGETHER THEY FOUNDED THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1916, A SORT OF TEMPORARY GOVERNMENT FOR THE FUTURE COUNTRY. HE SET ABOUT RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS IN RUSSIA, ROMANIA AND THE UNITED STATES. IN OCTOBER 1918 ŠTEFÁNIK WAS APPOINTED MINISTER OF DEFENCE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. HE STARTED PLANNING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEWLY CREATED STATE WHILE ALSO MAKING PLANS FOR HIS UPCOMING MARRIAGE WITH THE MARCHIONESS GIULIANA BENZONI. ON THE 4TH OF MAY, 1919, IN THE COMPANY OF LIEUTENANT SCOTTI, SERGEANT MERLIN AND THE RADIO TELEGRAPHIST, HE TOOK OFF FROM CAMPOFORMIDO AIRPORT IN ITALY ABORD A CAPRONI 450. JUST A FEW MILES FROM HIS DESTINATION, NEAR THE VILLAGE OF IVANKA PRI DUNAJI, THE PLANE CRASHED FOR REASONS WHICH REMAIN UNKNOWN TO THIS DAY. MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK WAS LAID TO REST NEAR THE BRADLO CAIRN IN HIS BIRTH REGION BETWEEN BREZOVÁ POD BRADLOM AND KOŠARISKÁ.

1880, KOŠARISKÁ



MY FUTURE WILL
EITHER BE GREAT...

... OR WILL BE
NON-EXISTENT!



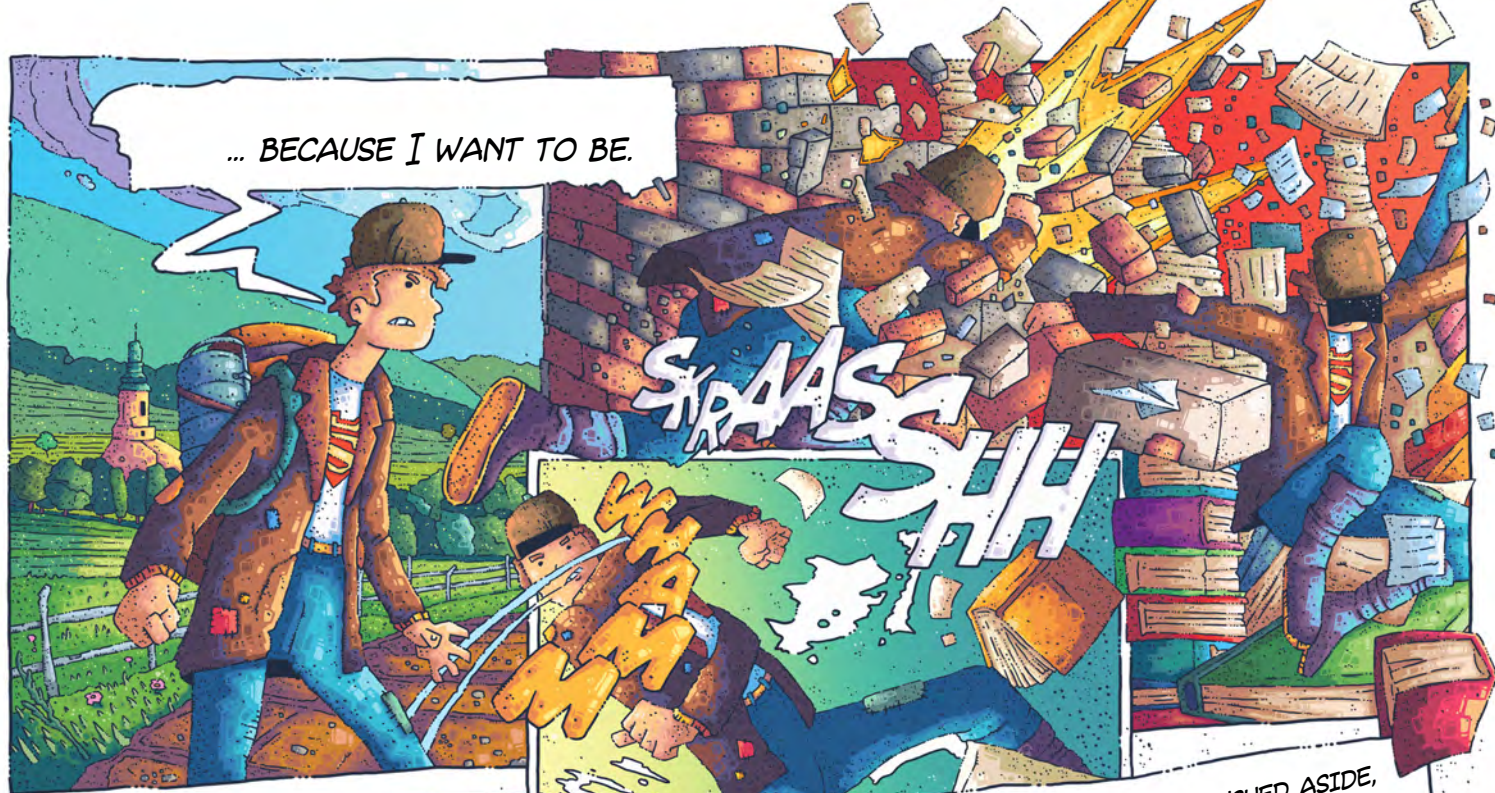
MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK

HAD A HUMBLE UPBRINGING. HE HAD ELEVEN SIBLINGS
BUT ONLY EIGHT OF THEM SURVIVED TO ADULTHOOD.

1887, KOŠARISKÁ

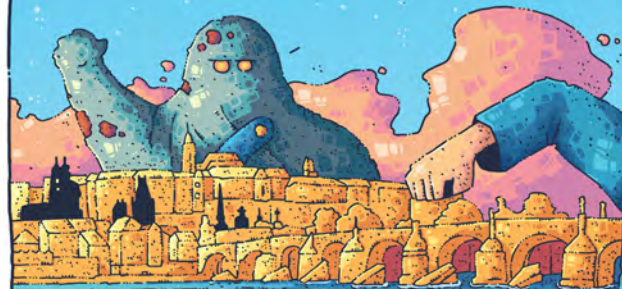


I WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, ...



OBSTACLES SHOULD BE PUSHED ASIDE,
NOT GIVEN IN TO.

AFTER SECONDARY SCHOOL, MILAN WENT TO
PRAGUE TO STUDY CIVIL ENGINEERING.



SHOULD OUR DEMOCRACY HAVE
SHORTCOMINGS,

IT WAS HERE, ON THE BANKS
OF THE RIVER VLTAVA, THAT
THE FUTURE OF THE TALENTED
SLOVAK WAS DECIDED. ŠTEFÁNIK
JOINED THE PATRIOTIC
ASSOCIATION DETVAN,
OBTAINED A SCHOLARSHIP
AND BECAME A FOLLOWER
OF TOMÁŠ GARRIGUE MASARYK...



THEN IT IS THESE SHORTCOMINGS
WHICH OUGHT TO BE REMOVED
AND NOT DEMOCRACY ITSELF.

WON OVER BY MASARYK'S IDEALS, ŠTEFÁNIK WANTED
TO GO INTO POLITICS.

HE JOINED THE DETVAN ASSOCIATION IN PRAGUE, WHERE HE MET OTHER PEOPLE WHO ARE IMPORTANT TO OUR SLOVAKIAN HISTORY.



YOU CAN'T STAY PASSIVE AND EXPECT OTHERS TO BE YOUR SAVIORS. THIS MESSIANISM IS EXACTLY WHAT RUSSOPHILE NAIVETY EXPECTS. IT IS FOR US SLOVAKS TO TAKE CHARGE OF OUR OWN DESTINY AND HAPPINESS.



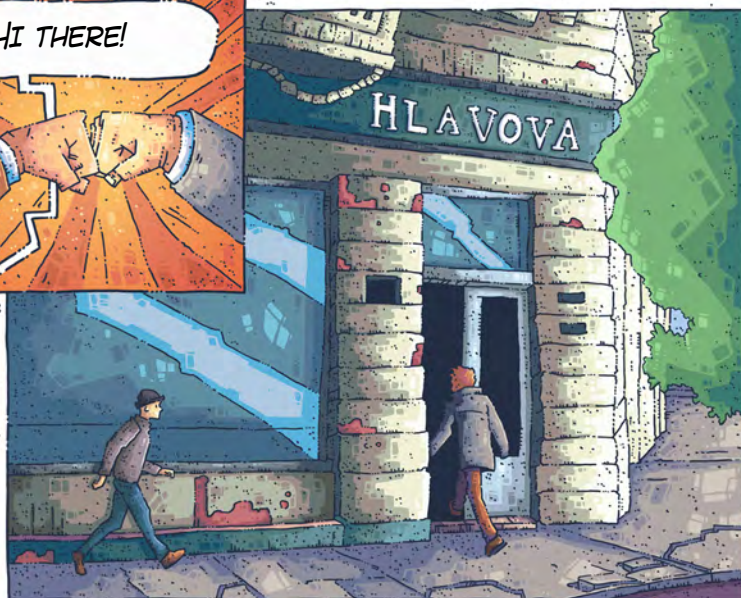
VAVRO ŠROBÁR WAS THE DETVAN ASSOCIATION LEADER AND IT WAS FROM HIM THAT ŠTEFÁNIK LEARNT TO APPRECIATE DEMOCRACY.



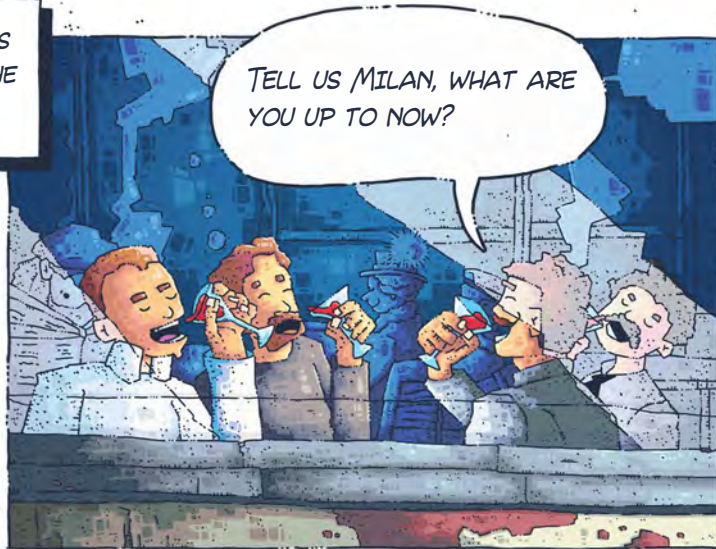
ON THE 15TH OCTOBER 1898, FOR THE FIRST TIME, ŠTEFÁNIK TOOK PART IN A DETVAN MEETING HELD AT HLAVOVKA CAFÉ – HLAVOVA KAVÁRNA.



HI THERE!



IT WAS THERE THAT HE MET JOZEF GREGOR TAJOVSKÝ AND HIS DEAR FRIENDS ŽIGO ZIGMUNDÍK AND JÁN PROCHÁZKA, FOR THE FIRST TIME.

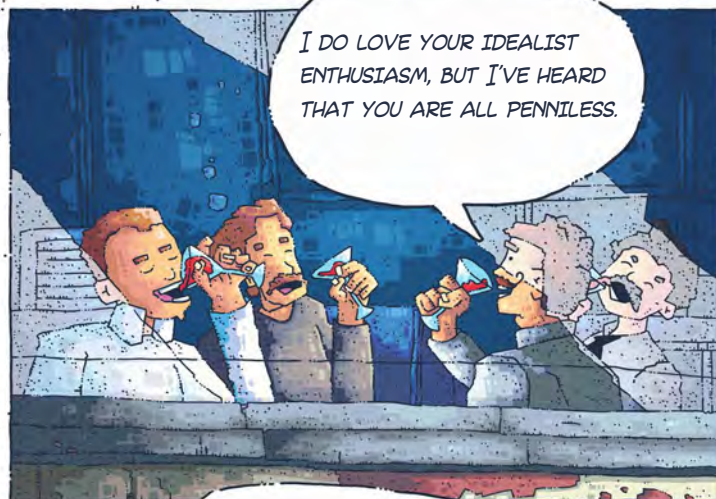


TELL US MILAN, WHAT ARE YOU UP TO NOW?

I'VE STARTED CONTRIBUTING TO THE MAGAZINE HLAS. NATIONALISTS TEND TO BLAME ME FOR WRITING FOR THE LIBERALS, BUT I'D BE GOING AGAINST MYSELF IF I WERE TO SELL OUT ON MY OWN VALUES.



I DO LOVE YOUR IDEALIST ENTHUSIASM, BUT I'VE HEARD THAT YOU ARE ALL PENNILESS.



TOO TRUE, AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE PAYING FOR THE LAST ROUND, MY FRIEND!

DEAR CUSTOMERS, WE'RE CLOSING!

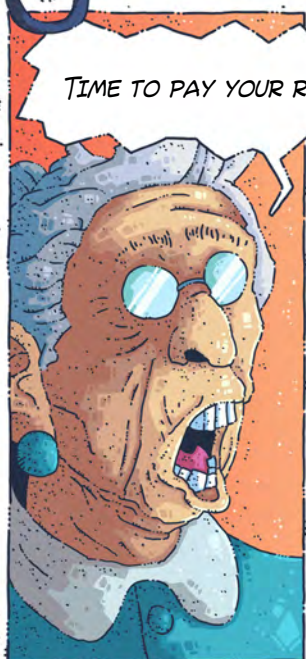


ONLY ONE WEEK HAS GONE BY SINCE PAY DAY AND I'M ALREADY BROKE.





WHILE A STUDENT IN PRAGUE, ŠTEFÁNIK LIVED ON A SMALL BUDGET, SOMETIMES HAVING NOTHING TO EAT FOR DAYS WHICH MADE HIM FALL ILL.

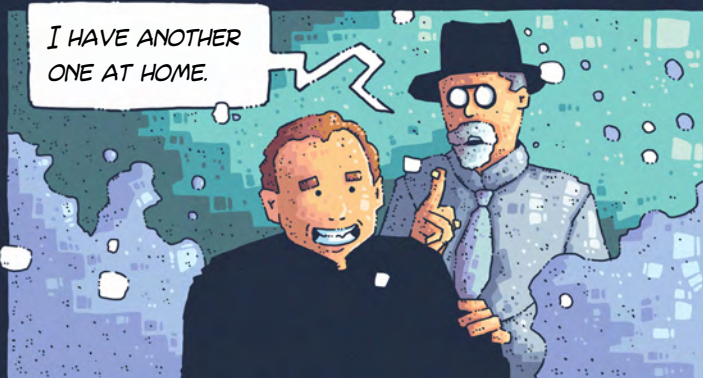


SOMETIMES HE'D HAD ENOUGH. HE TOOK REFUGE IN HIS FRIENDS AND WINE BARS.



ONE PARTICULARLY HARSH WINTER, HE VERY NEARLY DIED OF COLD, SHIVERING WITH OTHER STUDENTS IN FRONT OF A SMALL BAR.





ŠTEFÁNIK WAS MORE AND MORE FASCINATED BY MASARYK. HE ADMIRED HIS PERSONALITY AND PRINCIPLES.

IN SPITE OF THAT, HE FOUGHT FOR HILSNER'S CASE TO BE INVESTIGATED FAIRLY.

HOWEVER, THOSE VERY PRINCIPLES WERE, MORE THAN ONCE, THE CAUSE OF PROBLEMS FOR MASARYK.

THIS STORY IS A REMINDER THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO BE ON THE SIDE OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE, WHATEVER THE PASSIONS GOVERNING THE PREVAILING SCHOOL OF THOUGHT.

ALREADY IN 1889 MASARYK HAD HAD TO BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE PUBLIC'S ANGER AFTER HAVING DEFENDED LEOPOLD HILSNER WRONGLY ACCUSED OF MURDERING YOUNG ANEŽKA HRŮZOVÁ, WHO WAS ONLY 19 YEARS OLD AT THE TIME. HILSNER'S CASE WAS CONNECTED WITH SOME OF THE WORST ANTI-JEWISH DEMONSTRATIONS IN CZECH COUNTRIES.

ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS MASARYK OPENLY EXPRESSED HIS OPINIONS, IN PARTICULAR HE FOUGHT AGAINST THE IDEA THAT THEY WERE FACING A RITUAL MURDER. HE WAS DETERMINED THAT THE TRUTH BE UNCOVERED, AS A RESULT OF WHICH HE WAS EXPOSED TO ANGER AND HATE.

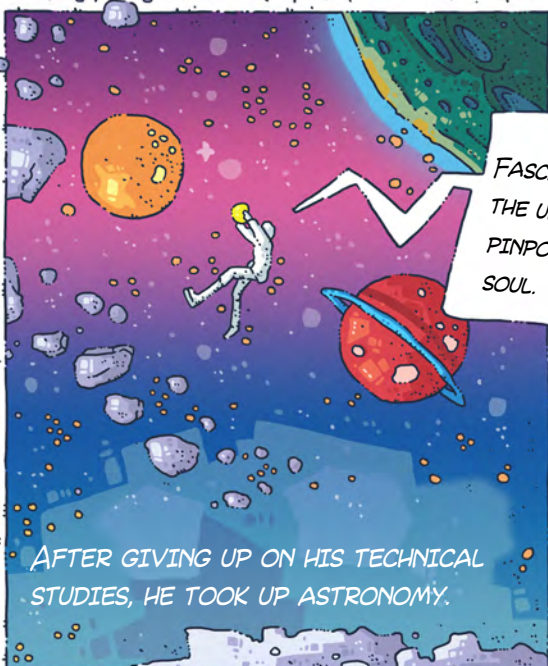
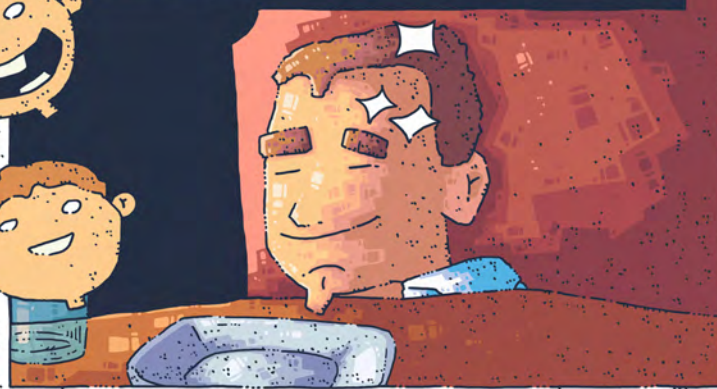




DURING HIS STUDIES IN PRAGUE, ŠTEFÁNIK ALSO BEGAN TO QUESTION HIS FAITH. ACCORDING TO SOME HISTORIANS THESE CHANGES WERE BROUGHT ABOUT UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF MASARYK'S TALKS AND LECTURES. MASARYK WAS A MAN OF DEEP FAITH, BUT HE STRONGLY BELIEVED IN HUMANS, MORAL ACTIONS AND LOVE, HE WAS OPPOSED TO DOGMATISM AND OBSCURANTISM.

STUDYING PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCES ONLY HELPED STRENGTHEN HIS SECULAR VIEW OF THE WORLD.

PRAGUE AND STUDIES CHANGED ŠTEFÁNIK. HIS PARENTS WERE NOT IMPRESSED BY THESE CHANGES WHICH SEEMED TO THEM TO BE LARGELY INCOMPREHENSIBLE; IT SADDENED THEM, ESPECIALLY HIS FATHER, AND CONFLICTS BECAME UNAVOIDABLE.



FASCINATED, I DIVE RIGHT INTO THE UNIVERSE AND TRY TO PINPOINT THE COORDINATES OF MY SOUL.

AFTER GIVING UP ON HIS TECHNICAL STUDIES, HE TOOK UP ASTRONOMY.



IT'S THANKS TO HIS PROFESSION, WHICH WAS AT THAT TIME FAIRLY UNCOMMON, THAT HE TRAVELLED ALL OVER THE WORLD.

THE 28TH OF NOVEMBER, 1904

HIS DREAM OF OBSERVING STARS BROUGHT ŠTEFÁNIK TO PARIS.

HERE, IN MY COUNTRY, I LOVE EVERYTHING BUT IF I WANT TO FULFIL MY DREAMS, I HAVE TO GO IN SEARCH OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

MIAOW.



JANSSEN HIRED ŠTEFÁNIK AS ASSISTANT. ŠTEFÁNIK MOVED INTO THE OBSERVATORY ITSELF, AND WAS ACCEPTED AS A MEMBER OF JANSSEN'S FAMILY.

ASTRONOMY IS A MEASURE OF OUR CULTURE: THE BETTER EDUCATED OUR PEOPLE BECOME AND THE MORE MATURE THEY WILL BE.

ŠTEFÁNIK BECAME SKILLED IN METEOROLOGY AS WELL AS IN OTHER SCIENCES.

AN ASTRONOMER SHOULD BE AWARE OF METEOROLOGICAL EVENTS. HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO PLAN OBSERVATIONS IF HE WEREN'T IN A POSITION TO FORESEE THE STATE OF THE SKY DURING AN ECLIPSE.

ŠTEFÁNIK WAS THE FIRST SLOVAK TO CLIMB MONT BLANC (4810 M). HIS WORK, HIS SKILLS AND HIS CHARISMA WON THE TRUST AND SUPPORT OF JANSSEN WHO DECIDED IN 1905 THAT ŠTEFÁNIK WAS TO BECOME PART OF A SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION TO EUROPE'S HIGHEST PEAK.



BEFORE THE CLIMB, ŠTEFÁNIK AND MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION WENT THROUGH THE VILLAGE OF CHAMOMIX.

HI, HI.



GENTLEMEN! I AM NOT AT ALL SURE YOU PICKED AN IDEAL DAY FOR THE CLIMB.

THIS IS NOT A GOOD TIME FOR CLIMBING MONT BLANC. IT WAS ATTEMPTED ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO BY AN ENGLISH EXPEDITION. TO TELL THE TRUTH THEY WERE ONLY TOO PLEASED TO HAVE COME BACK ALIVE IN SPITE OF HAVING HAD TO LEAVE EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT BEHIND.



NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THOSE WHO ARE DETERMINED AND WHO PERSEVERE. YOUR NAPOLEON USED TO SAY THAT.



YOUNG MAN, YOU'RE NOT FRENCH, ARE YOU?



I'M SLOVAK.



SLOVAK? WHICH REPUBLIC DO THESE PEOPLE BELONG TO?

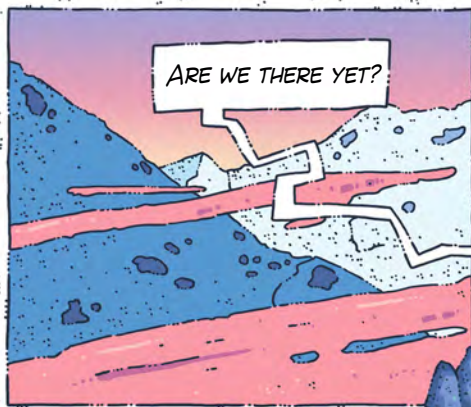


SADLY, OUR REPUBLIC IS BUT A DREAM FOR THE TIME BEING. OUR PEOPLE ARE NOW PART OF HUNGARY BUT I HOPE THAT THIS WILL NOT ALWAYS BE THE CASE.

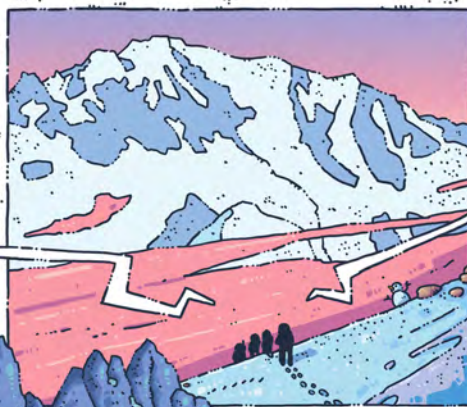


GOOD LUCK AND SAY HELLO TO YOUR COUNTRYMEN, TELLING THEM THAT I'M ROOTING FOR THEM. WE TOO WENT THROUGH ALL SORTS OF PROBLEMS, BUT IF YOU FIGHT FOR A JUST CAUSE THEN YOU ALWAYS WIN IN THE END!

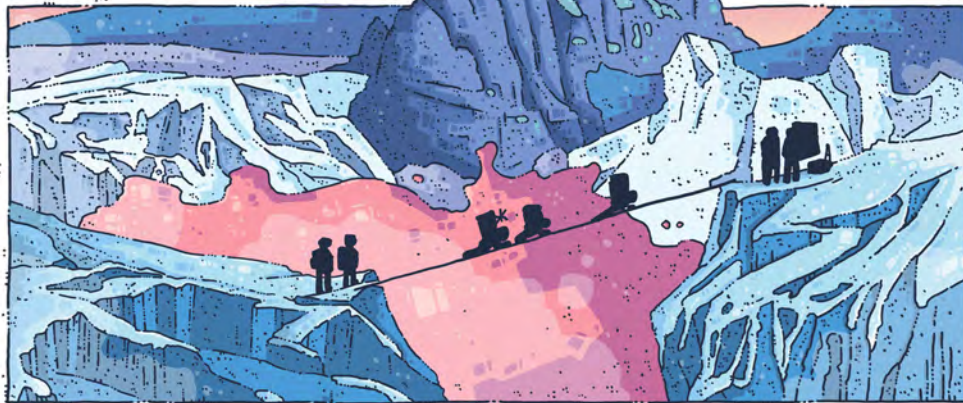




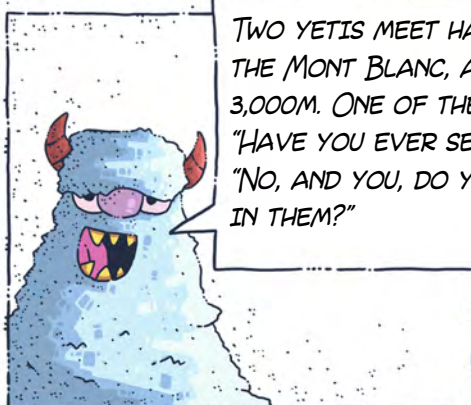
ARE WE THERE YET?



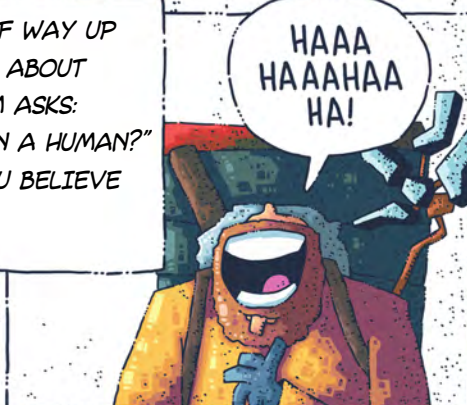
YOU KNOW
WHAT?
NOT YET.



MILOCHAU, WOULD YOU HAPPEN
TO KNOW A GOOD JOKE?



TWO YETIS MEET HALF WAY UP
THE MONT BLANC, AT ABOUT
3,000M. ONE OF THEM ASKS:
"HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A HUMAN?"
"NO, AND YOU, DO YOU BELIEVE
IN THEM?"



HAAA
HAAAAHAA
HA!



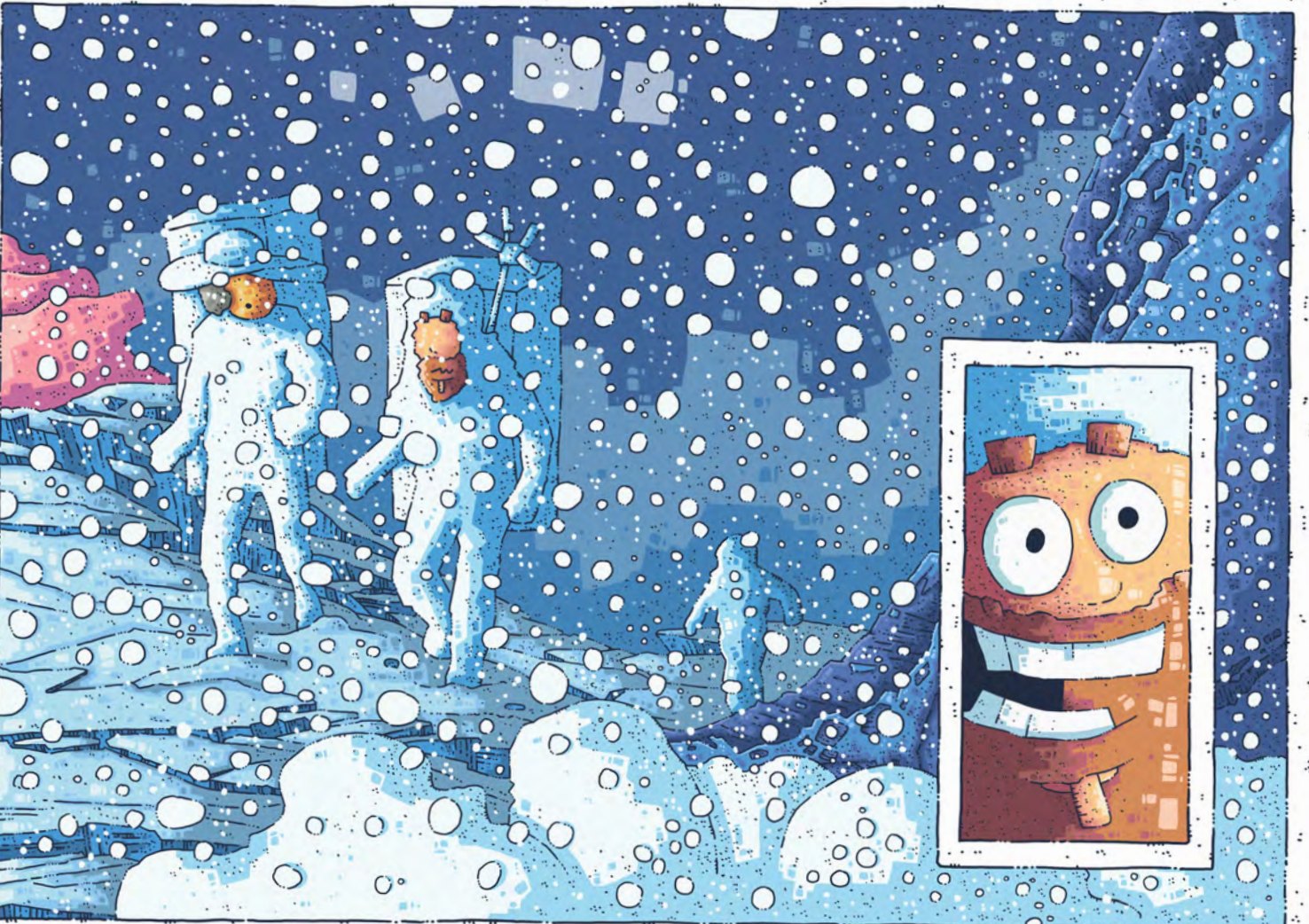
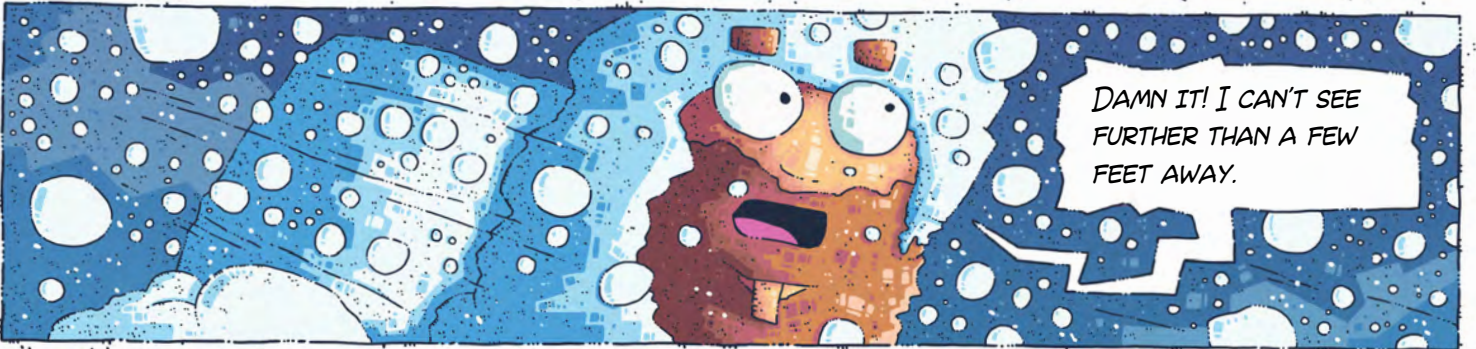
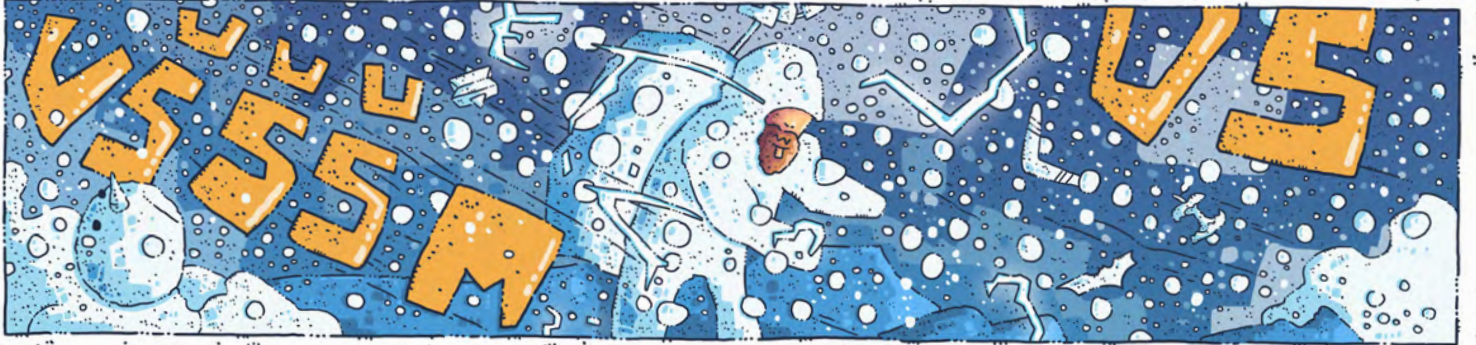
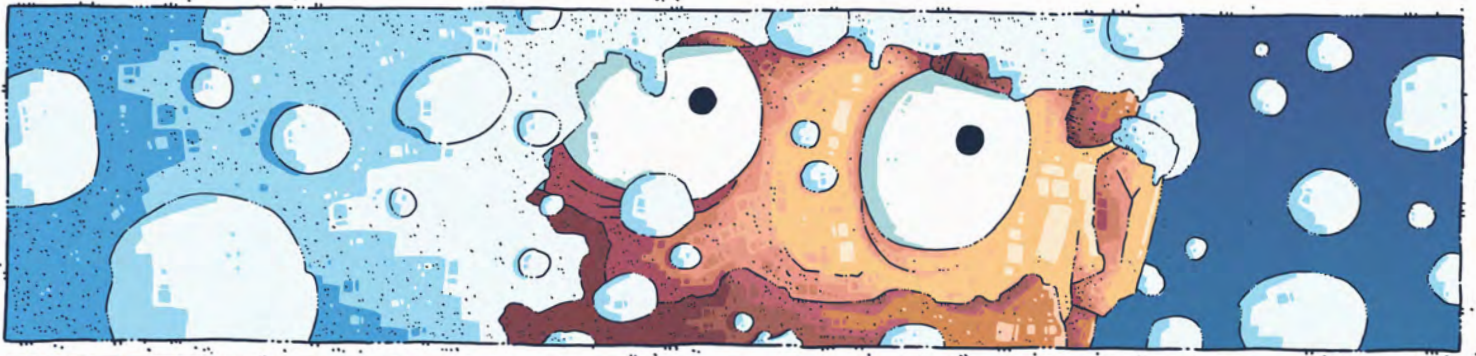
AAAAH, MR. YETI!

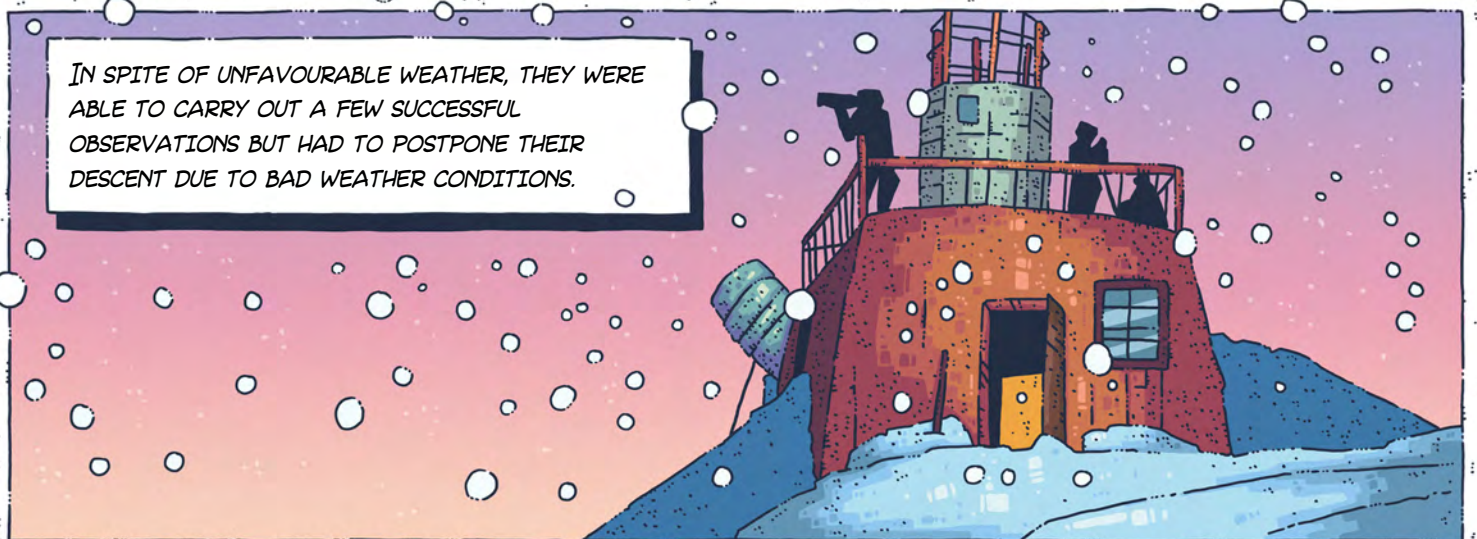
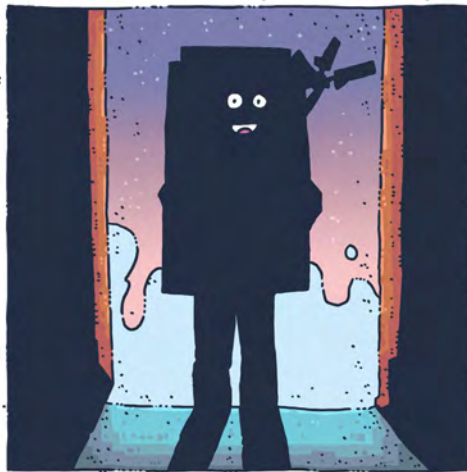


GOOD AFTERNOON, MR YETI. PLEASE,
IS THIS THE WAY TO THE TOP OF THE
MOUNTAIN?



YES, JUST MAKE SURE YOU TURN LEFT AT
THE FROZEN HILL ON THE NORTHWEST AND
THEN TAKE A SHARP TURN TO THE
SOUTHEAST, AFTER THAT YOU'LL CLIMB
ACROSS SUPER SLIPPERY ROCKS. FROM
THERE, YOU SHOULD ALREADY BE ABLE TO
CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THE OBSERVATORY.





IN SPITE OF UNFAVOURABLE WEATHER, THEY WERE
ABLE TO CARRY OUT A FEW SUCCESSFUL
OBSERVATIONS BUT HAD TO POSTPONE THEIR
DESCENT DUE TO BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS.

FOR THREE LONG DAYS, THEY COULDN'T LEAVE THEIR REFUGE AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN. THEY WERE TRAPPED AND THE PORTERS COULDN'T BRING ANY SUPPLIES. IN SPITE OF HUNGER AND EXHAUSTION OUR HEROES DID NOT GIVE IN TO DESPAIR.

FINALLY, THE WEATHER CALMED DOWN AND THE EXPEDITION WAS ABLE TO RETURN TO THE VALLEY.



UP THERE, EACH MOMENT WAS FRAUGHT WITH DANGER. HUNGER, FREEZING COLD, AVALANCHES, FOG, ROUGH TERRAIN TOGETHER WITH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL EXHAUSTION. IN SPITE OF IT ALL, THE EXPEDITION PROVED TO BE A SUCCESS. EXHAUSTED, ŠTEFÁNIK AND HIS COMPANIONS HAD FOUND THEIR WAY BACK TO CIVILISATION AFTER 18 DAYS HAVING BROKEN THE PREVIOUS RECORD.

ŠTEFÁNIK'S MENTOR,
JANSSEN, DIED ON THE 23RD
OF DECEMBER, 1907.

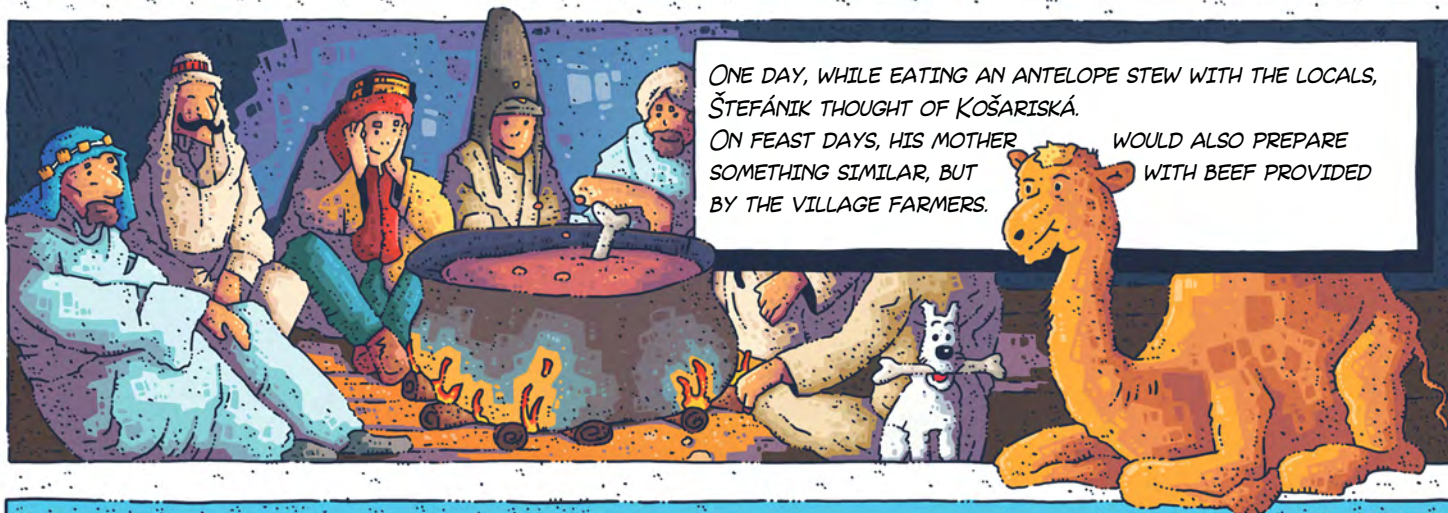
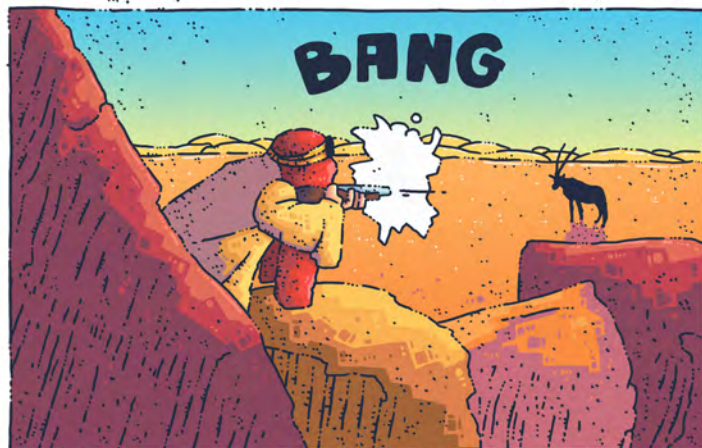
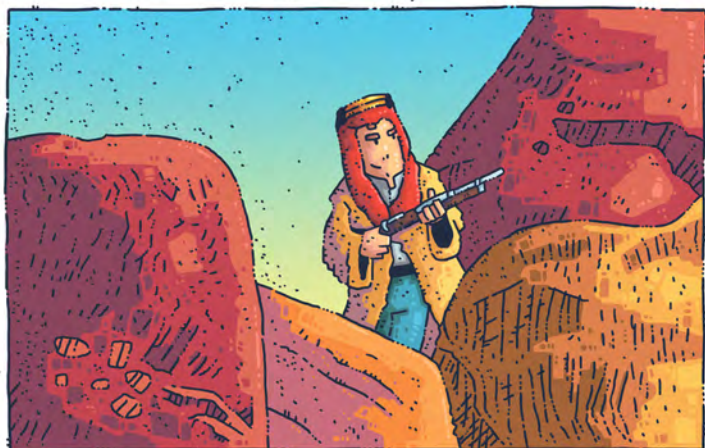
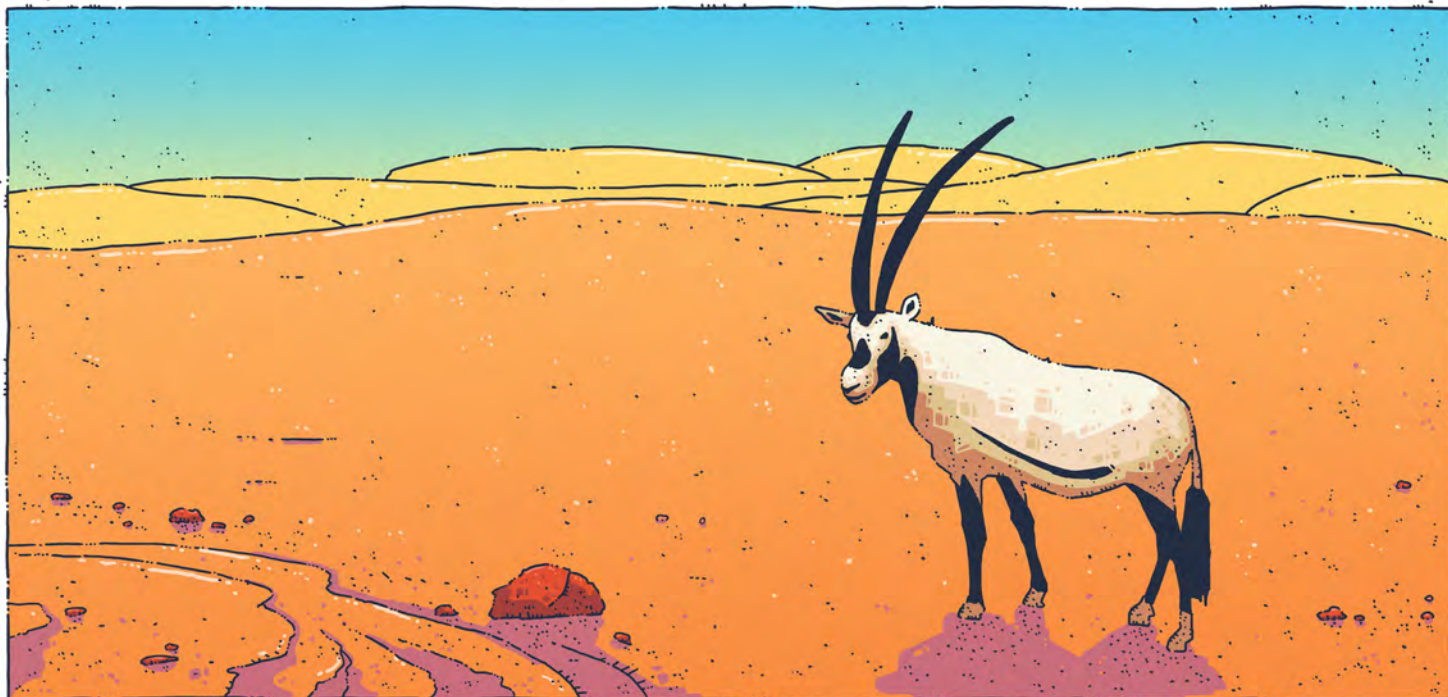
THANK YOU
FOR EVERYTHING.

IN 1909, ŠTEFÁNIK SETS
OFF FOR ALGERIA AND
TUNISIA.

WHILE ON HIS EXPEDITIONS IN THE DESERT,
HE KEPT AN EYE OUT FOR A PLACE WHICH
WOULD BE SUITABLE FOR AN OBSERVATORY.

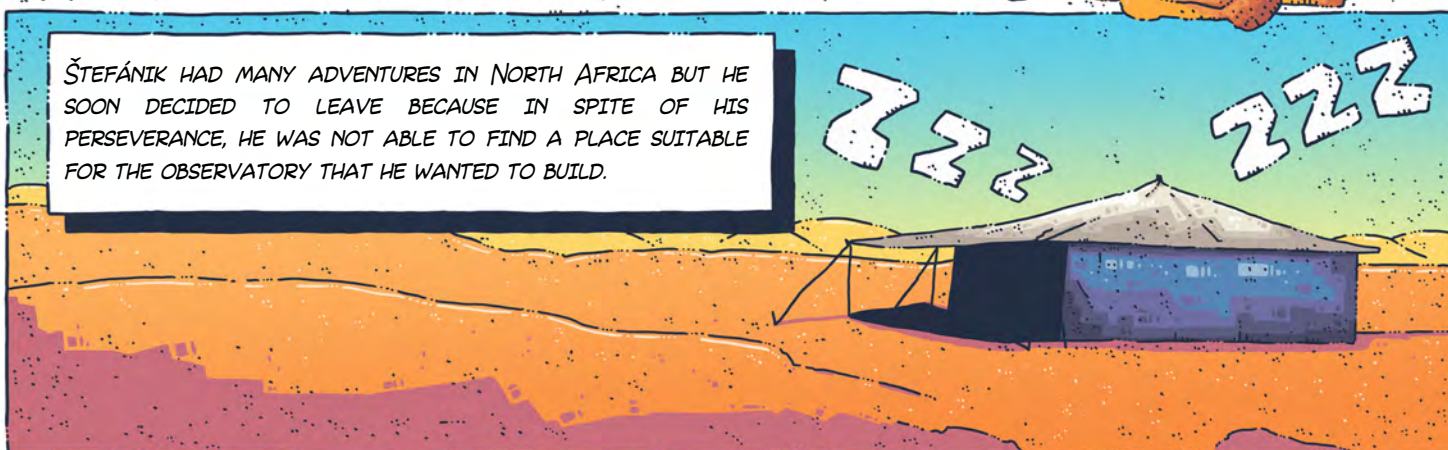
HE MET THE LOCAL INHABITANTS: NOMADS AND
ARABS AND BECAME FAMILIAR WITH THEIR WAY
OF LIFE AND AND THEIR CUSTOMS.

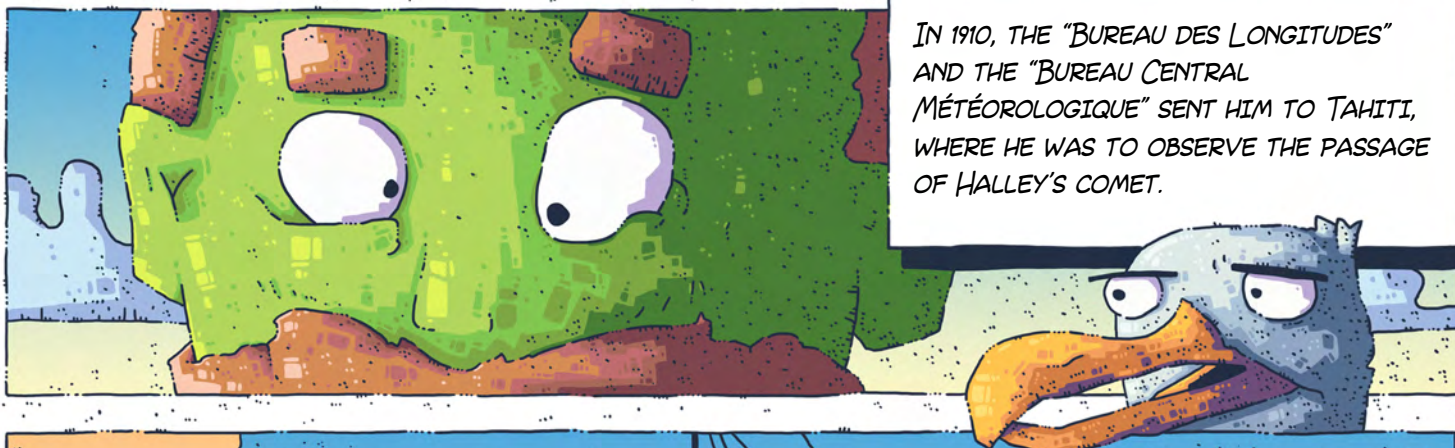
EVEN IF OUR BACKGROUNDS, OUR
SKIN COLOUR AND OUR BELIEFS
ARE DIFFERENT, INSIDE WE ARE
ALL HUMAN BEINGS, WE ARE
BROTHERS AND EQUAL.



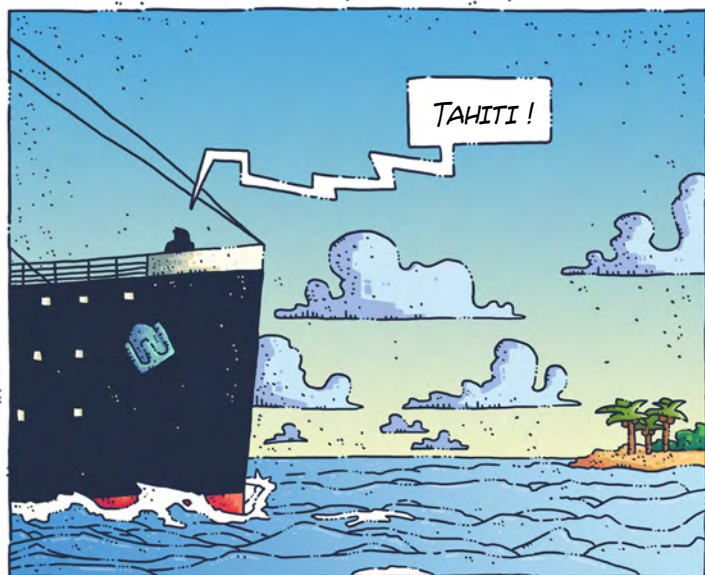
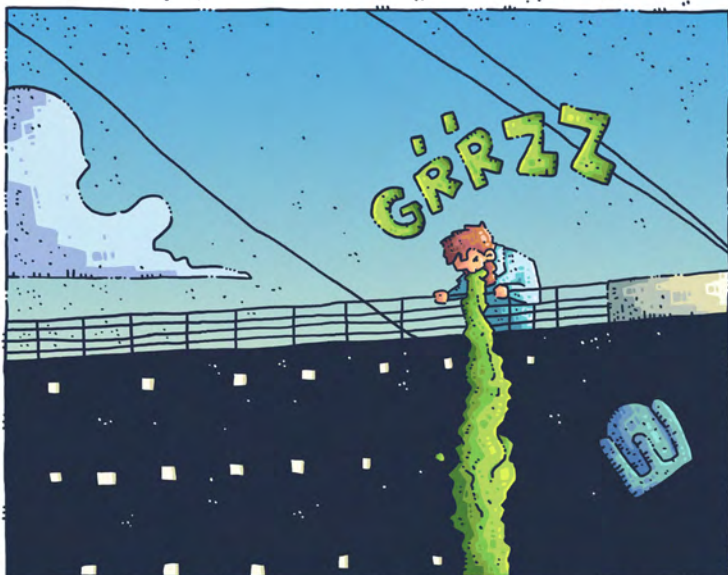
ONE DAY, WHILE EATING AN ANTELOPE STEW WITH THE LOCALS, ŠTEFÁNIK THOUGHT OF KOŠARISKÁ. ON FEAST DAYS, HIS MOTHER WOULD ALSO PREPARE SOMETHING SIMILAR, BUT WITH BEEF PROVIDED BY THE VILLAGE FARMERS.

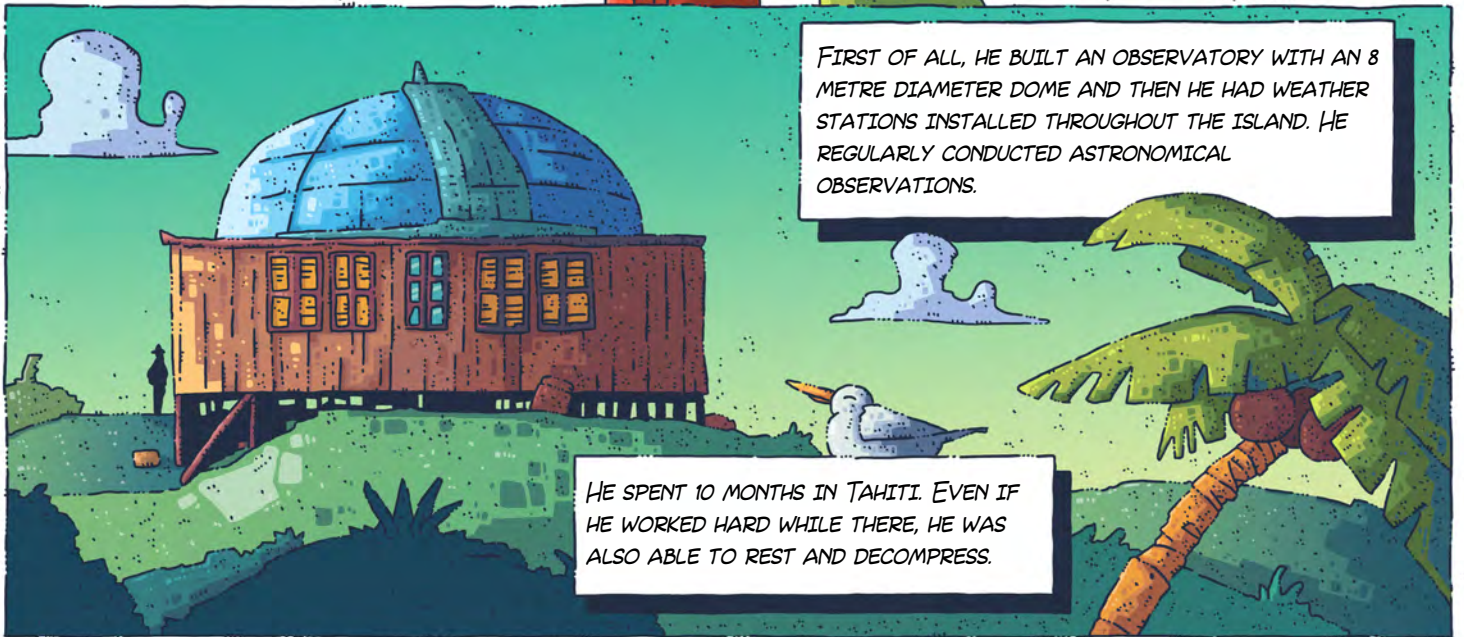
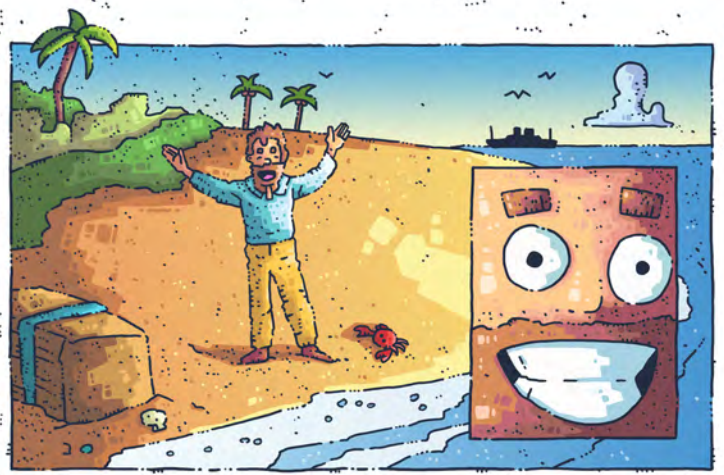
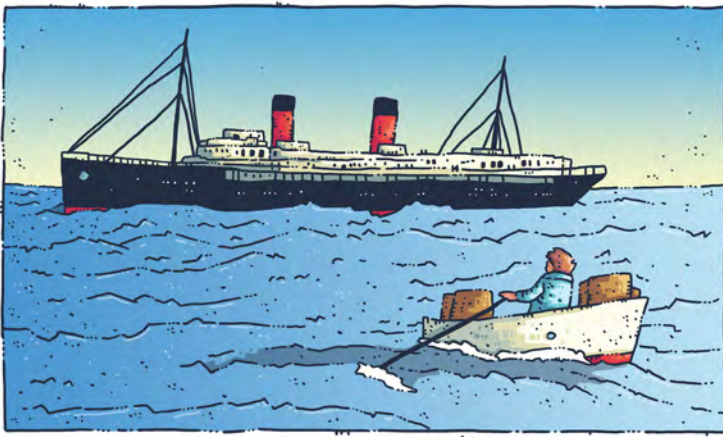
ŠTEFÁNIK HAD MANY ADVENTURES IN NORTH AFRICA BUT HE SOON DECIDED TO LEAVE BECAUSE IN SPITE OF HIS PERSEVERANCE, HE WAS NOT ABLE TO FIND A PLACE SUITABLE FOR THE OBSERVATORY THAT HE WANTED TO BUILD.



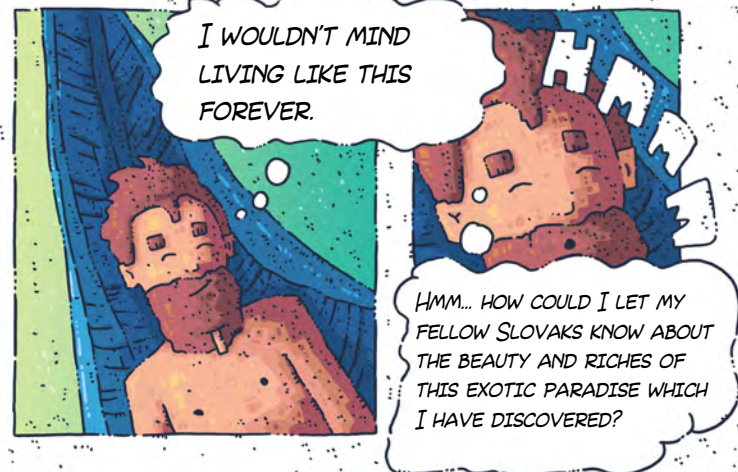


IN 1910, THE "BUREAU DES LONGITUDES"
AND THE "BUREAU CENTRAL
MÉTÉOROLOGIQUE" SENT HIM TO TAHITI,
WHERE HE WAS TO OBSERVE THE PASSAGE
OF HALLEY'S COMET.

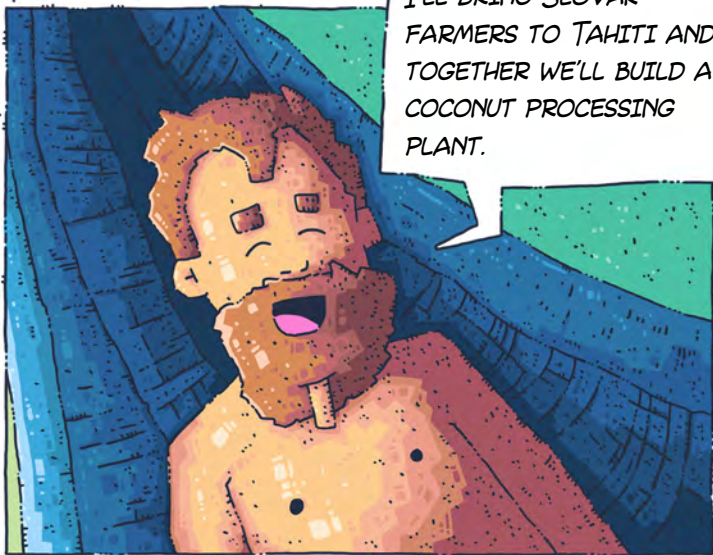




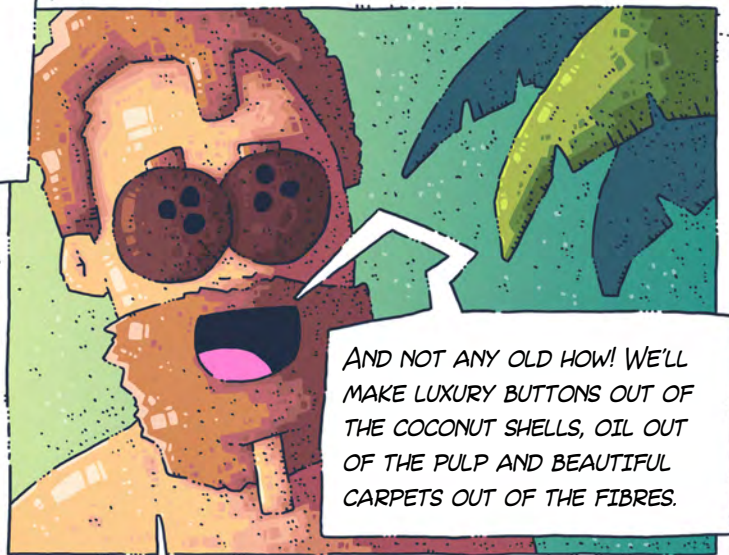
HE SPENT 10 MONTHS IN TAHITI. EVEN IF HE WORKED HARD WHILE THERE, HE WAS ALSO ABLE TO REST AND DECOMPRESS.



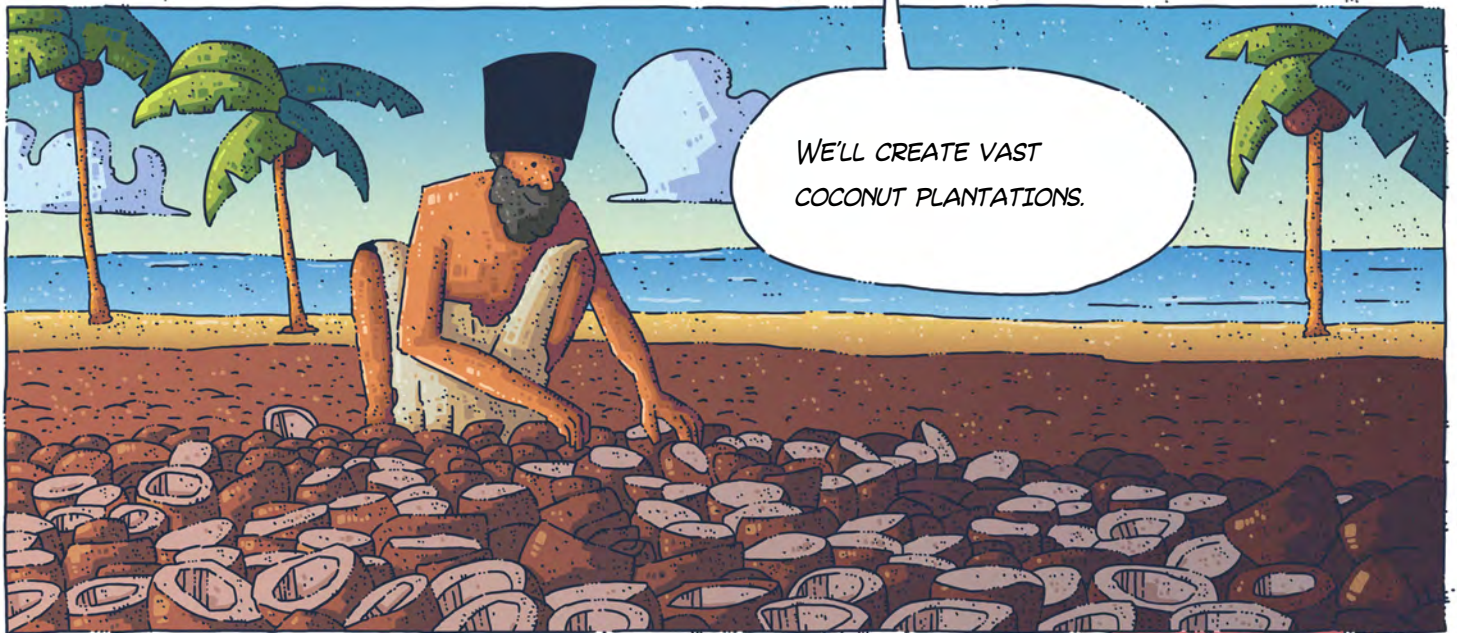
HMM... HOW COULD I LET MY FELLOW SLOVAKS KNOW ABOUT THE BEAUTY AND RICHES OF THIS EXOTIC PARADISE WHICH I HAVE DISCOVERED?



I'LL BRING SLOVAK FARMERS TO TAHITI AND TOGETHER WE'LL BUILD A COCONUT PROCESSING PLANT.



AND NOT ANY OLD HOW! WE'LL MAKE LUXURY BUTTONS OUT OF THE COCONUT SHELLS, OIL OUT OF THE PULP AND BEAUTIFUL CARPETS OUT OF THE FIBRES.



WE'LL CREATE VAST COCONUT PLANTATIONS.

The New Times.

HE ADVERTISED IN AN AMERICAN NEWSPAPER CALLING FOR EXILED SLOVAKS DISAPPOINTED WITH THE UNITED STATES, TO COME TO TAHITI TO BUILD THEIR NEW PARADISE TOGETHER.

HIS PROJECT FAILED. IN THE END HIS ADVERTISEMENT WAS NOT ANSWERED AND HE HIMSELF LEFT THE ISLAND AFTER 10 MONTHS.



ON HIS RETURN TO EUROPE, ŠTEFÁNIK WENT TO MOROCCO WHERE HE CONCENTRATED ON BUILDING AN OBSERVATORY.



IT WAS THERE THAT NEWS OF WORLD WAR I MOBILIZATION REACHED HIM.



WHILE STILL IN MOROCCO, HE WAS AWARDED THE CROSS OF THE CHEVALIER DE LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE TO FRANCE IN TAHITI AND THE EQUATOR. THIS DISTINCTION WAS PERSONALLY HANDED OVER BY GENERAL LYAUTEY WHICH WAS A GREAT HONOUR AND SOURCE OF IMMENSE SATISFACTION FOR ŠTEFÁNIK.



HE RECEIVED THIS AWARD FOR SERVICES RENDERED TO THE MERCHANT FLEET AND FOR BUILDING THE TAHITI OBSERVATORY AT HIS OWN EXPENSE. AND IF THAT WERE NOT ENOUGH, HE HAD ALSO SET UP AN ENTIRE METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE IN THE FRENCH OCEANIA ISLANDS.



IN SPITE OF MOBILISATION, ON HIS RETURN TO EUROPE, ŠTEFÁNIK WENT STRAIGHT TO HOSPITAL WHERE HE RECEIVED TREATMENT FOR HIS CHRONIC STOMACH PAINS.



WAR HAD BEEN RAGING THROUGHOUT THE MONTHS DURING WHICH HE WAS RECEIVING TREATMENT. ŠTEFÁNIK FULLY INTENDED TO INTEGRATE THE FRENCH ARMY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT HE LACKED BOTH STRENGTH AND HEALTH WHICH HE COMPENSATED FOR BY HIS COURAGE AND WILL POWER.



BEFORE HEADING FOR THE FRONT LINES, ŠTEFÁNIK HAD TO HAVE A CHECK-UP.

YOU'RE TOO UNDERWEIGHT TO BE ABLE TO CARRY A GUN!

THOSE SCARS ON YOUR STOMACH DON'T LOOK GOOD, YOU CAN'T JOIN THE ARMY IN SUCH A STATE OF HEALTH!



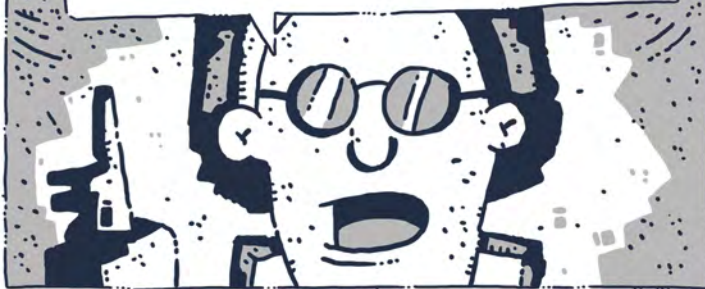
AS A RESULT OF EXHAUSTION, YOU HAVE PYLORIC STENOSIS, A NARROWING OF THE SPHINCTER LEADING FROM THE STOMACH TO THE SMALL INTESTINE. YOU CAN'T GO TO WORK LIKE THIS AND YOU CERTAINLY CAN'T GO AND FIGHT ON THE FRONT LINES.



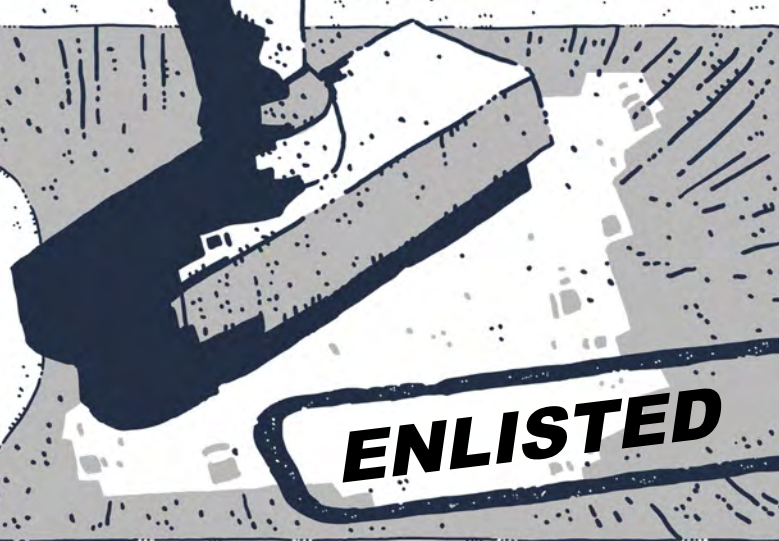
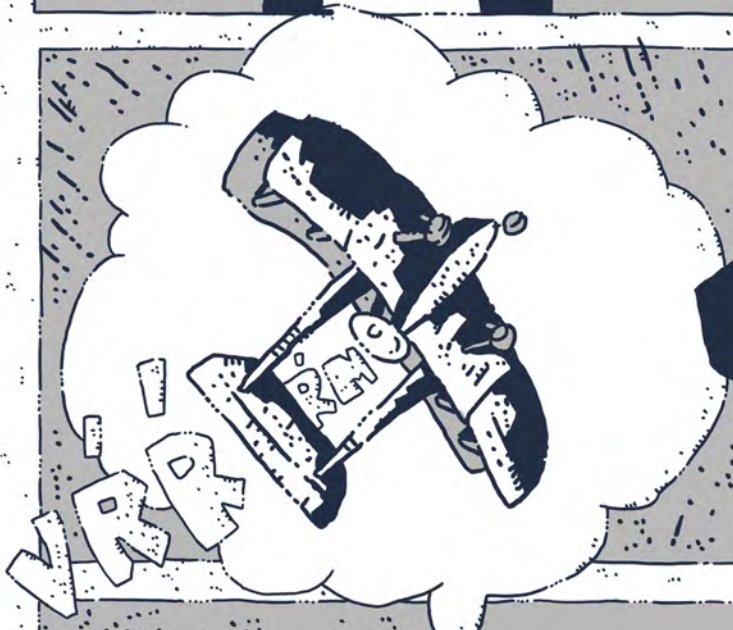
I WILL FOLLOW A COURSE OF TREATMENT AND BEING A SOLDIER WILL HELP ME GROW STRONGER.



THAT'S ABSURD! IF YOU WANT TO STAY ALIVE, YOU SHOULD TAKE OPIUM FOR YOUR PAIN AND APPLY MEDICAL OINTMENTS FOR YOUR CHRONIC ILLNESS.



I'LL TAKE BETTER CARE OF MYSELF AND MAKE SURE THAT I BECOME HEALTHY AGAIN.



ŠTEFÁNIK DIDN'T WANT TO FIGHT AS FOOT SOLDIER IN THE FRONT LINES. HE ENVISAGED FLYING OVER THE WAR ZONES AND SO HE DECIDED TO ENROL IN A PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM AND TO JOIN THE AIR FORCE.

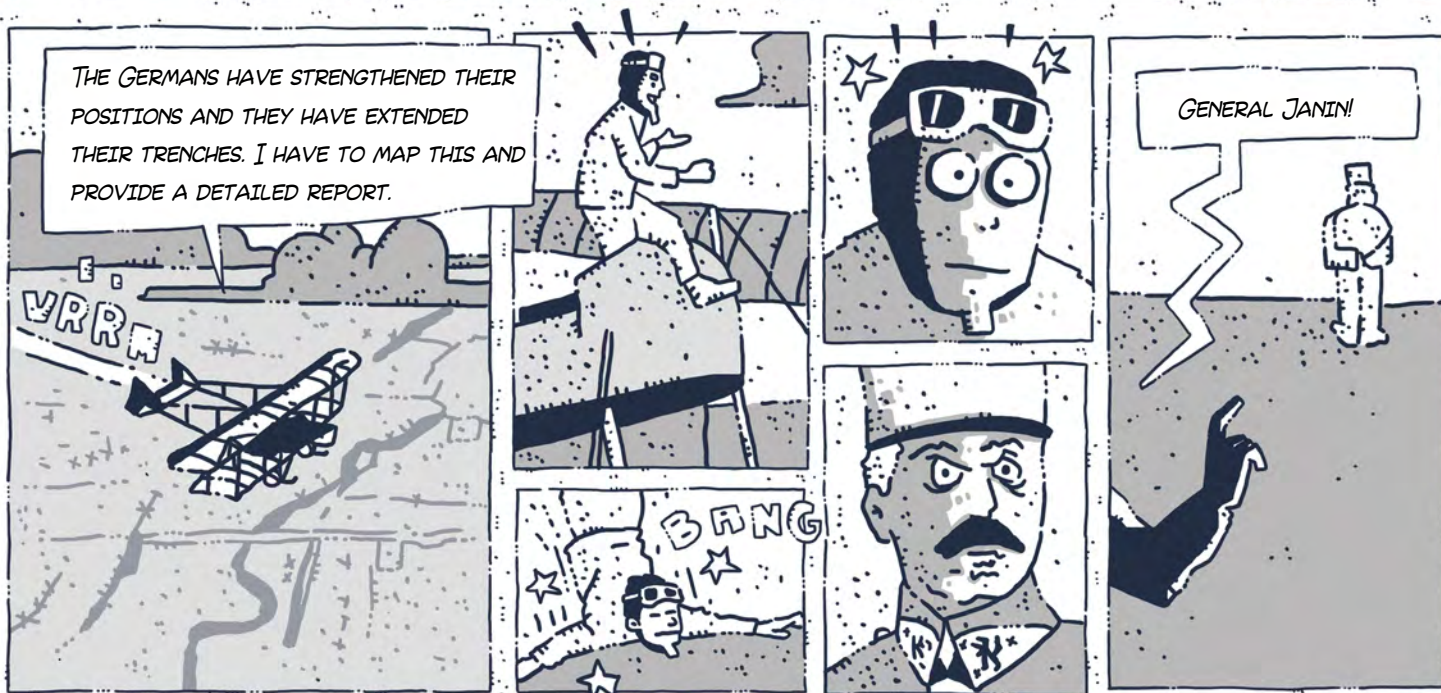
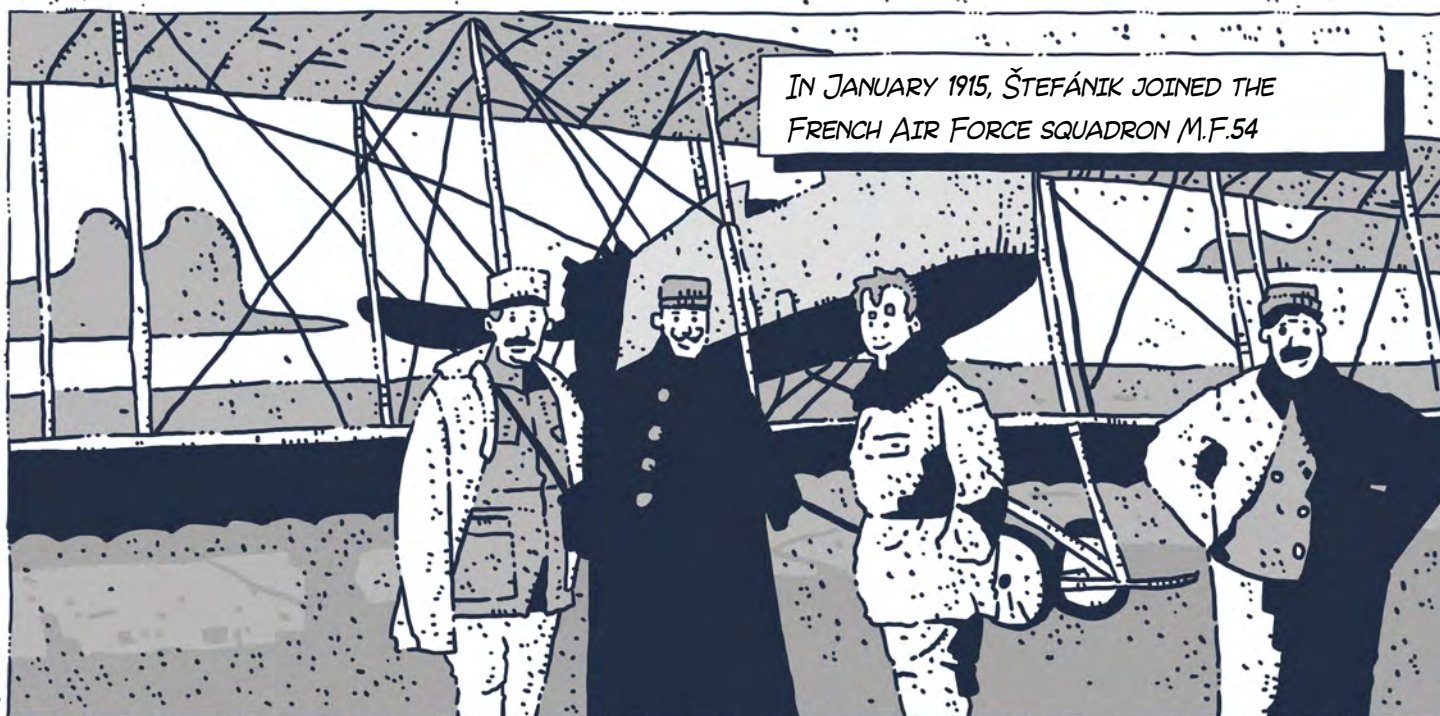
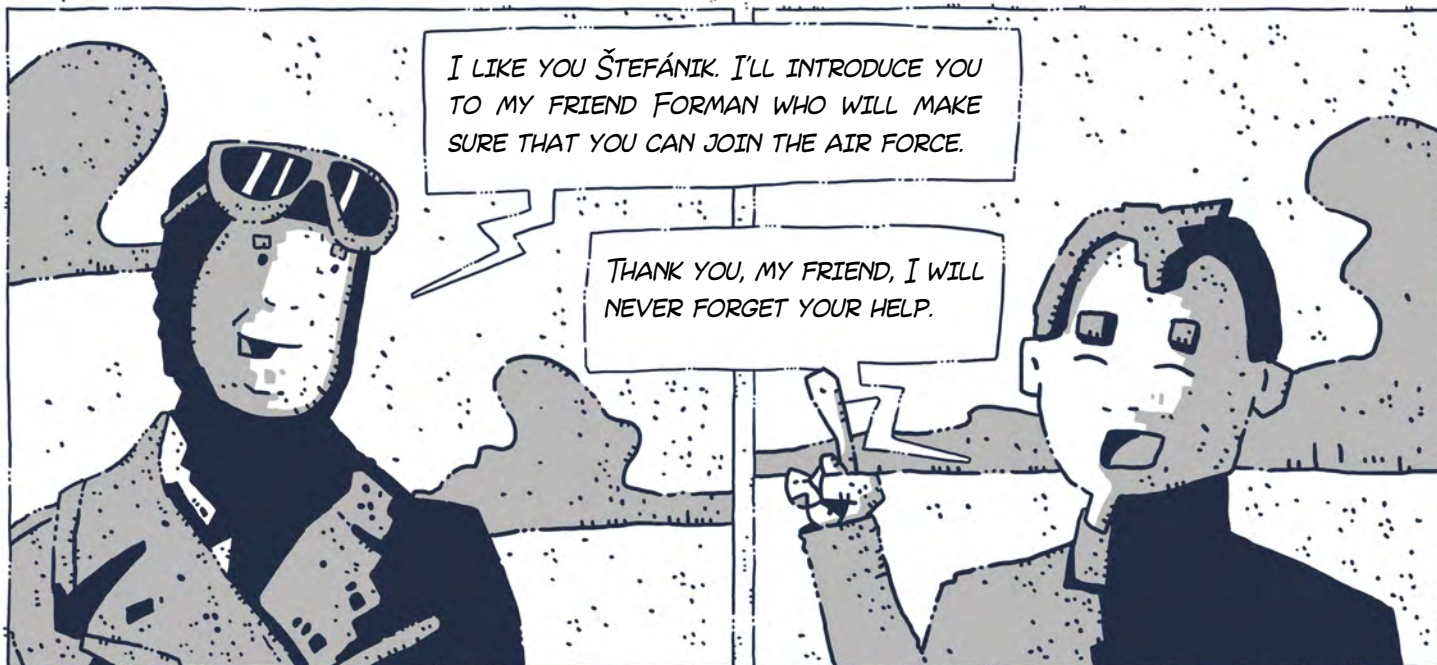


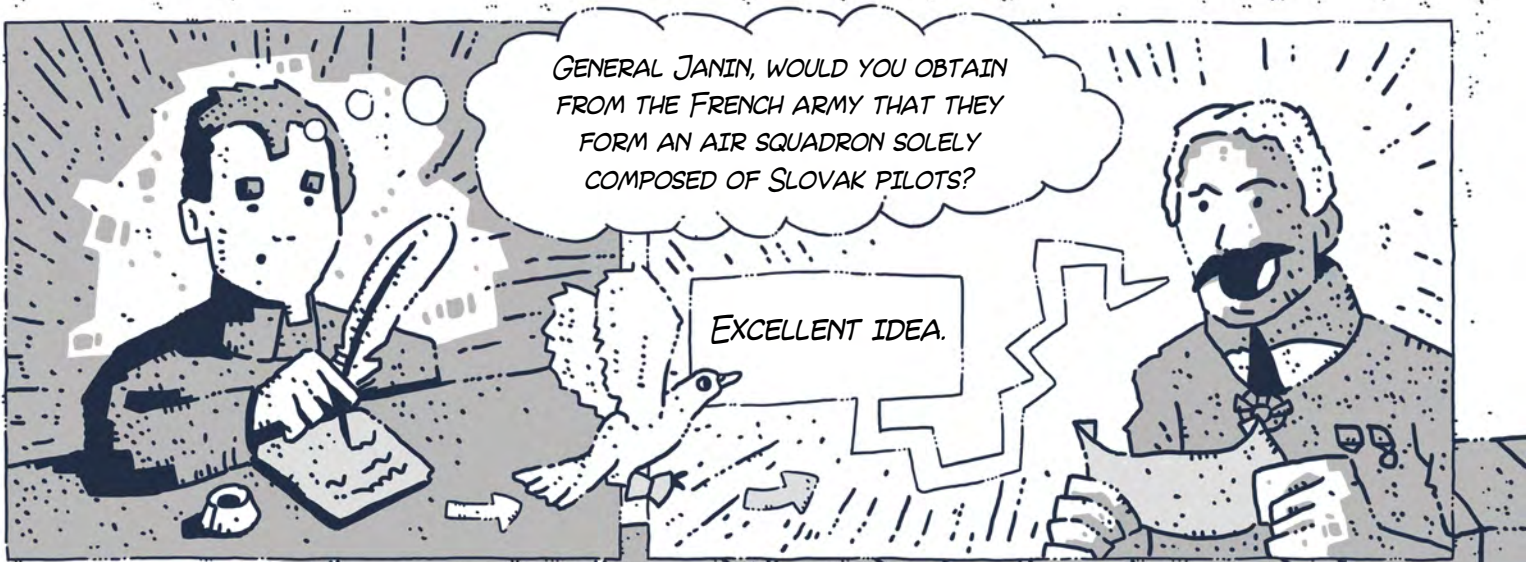
BUT BEFORE BEING ABLE TO DO THIS, HE FOUND HIMSELF HAVING TO FIGHT IN THE TRENCHES WHERE HE LIVED THROUGH A BRUTAL GERMAN OFFENSIVE.



SO AS TO BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE HIS WISH TO FLY, HE STARTED LOOKING FOR CONTACTS AND ALLIES WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO HELP HIM. IN SO DOING, IN 1914 HE MET PAUL RAPHAEL AND TOLD HIM ABOUT HOW HE HAD WATCHED THE FIRST CROSS-CHANNEL FLIGHT.







GENERAL JANIN, WOULD YOU OBTAIN FROM THE FRENCH ARMY THAT THEY FORM AN AIR SQUADRON SOLELY COMPOSED OF SLOVAK PILOTS?

EXCELLENT IDEA.

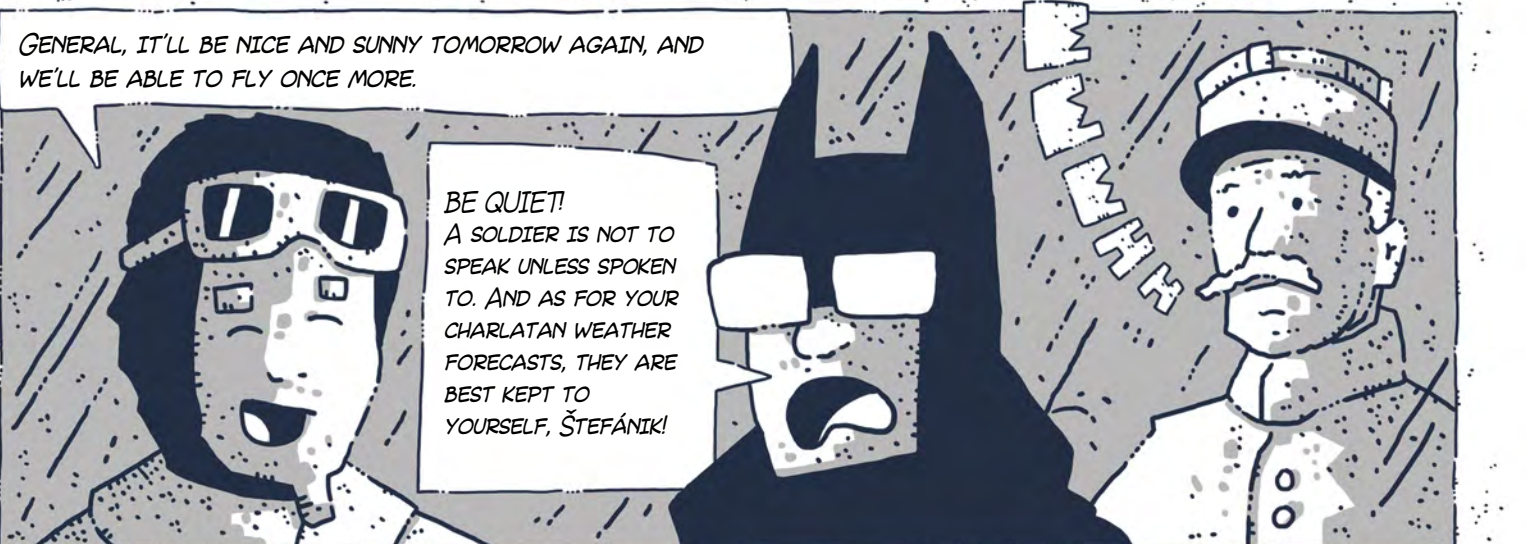


THAT IS HOW ŠTEFÁNIK FORMED THE BASIS ABROAD OF FUTURE SLOVAK NATIONAL UNITS WHICH WOULD GIVE RISE TO THE FUTURE CZECHOSLOVAK LEGIONS.



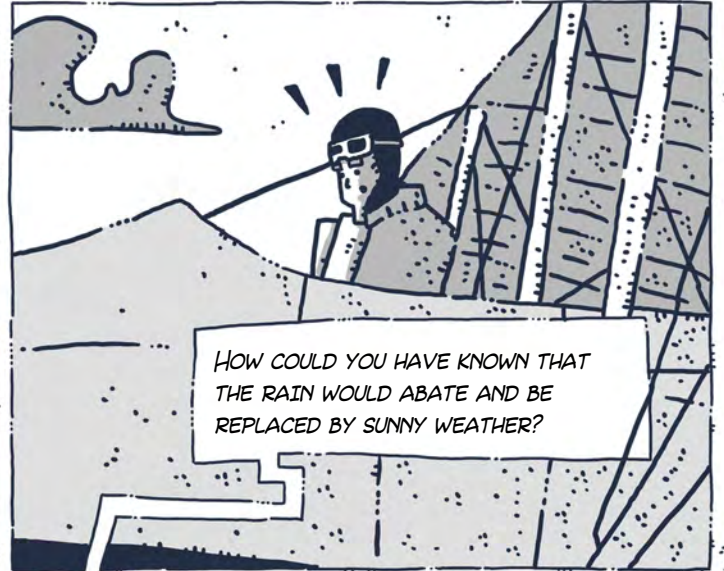
GENERAL JANIN, OUR PLANES CAN'T TAKE OFF BECAUSE OF THE HEAVY RAINFALL. EXPLORATION FLIGHTS ARE THEREFORE CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. WE CANNOT CONTINUE OUR OFFENSIVE. IF ONLY WE KNEW WHEN THE WEATHER WOULD BE IN OUR FAVOUR...

THAT'S NOT GOOD. WE'RE LOSING TIME AND, MEANWHILE, THE GERMANS ARE STRENGTHENING THEIR POSITIONS.



GENERAL, IT'LL BE NICE AND SUNNY TOMORROW AGAIN, AND WE'LL BE ABLE TO FLY ONCE MORE.

BE QUIET!
A SOLDIER IS NOT TO SPEAK UNLESS SPOKEN TO. AND AS FOR YOUR CHARLATAN WEATHER FORECASTS, THEY ARE BEST KEPT TO YOURSELF, ŠTEFÁNIK!



HOW COULD YOU HAVE KNOWN THAT THE RAIN WOULD ABATE AND BE REPLACED BY SUNNY WEATHER?

IN FRANCE, I STUDIED ASTRONOMY AND BECAME FAMILIAR WITH ITS SECRETS. OBSERVING THE NIGHT SKY WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT A KNOWLEDGE OF METEOROLOGY. I HAVE THIS KNOWLEDGE, AND IT IS BECAUSE OF THIS THAT I AM ABLE TO PROVIDE WEATHER FORECASTS.



SO, YOU'RE NOT A CHARLATAN AFTER ALL, YOU'RE A SCIENTIST!



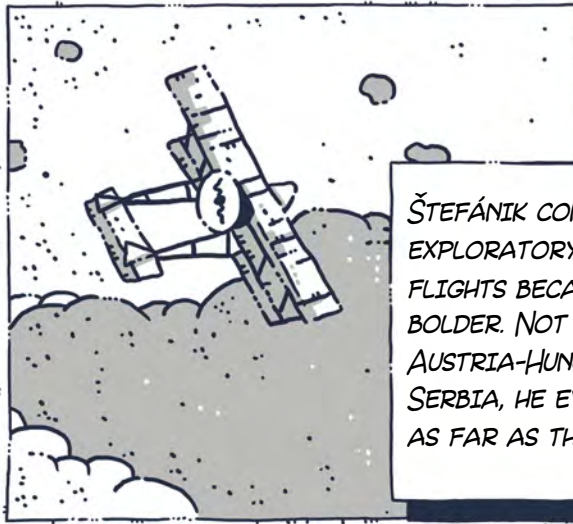
LISTEN TO ME ŠTEFÁNIK, BEING ABLE TO FORECAST WEATHER CONDITIONS COULD HELP SAVE THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS AND WOULD PROVIDE US WITH A TACTICAL ADVANTAGE. I'VE EXPERIENCED TOO MANY BATTLES WHERE THE DECISIVE FACTOR WAS THE WEATHER. A SOLDIER STUCK IN MUD IS AN EASY TARGET, LET ALONE WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY WHEN OUR PLANES COULDN'T EVEN TAKE OFF...



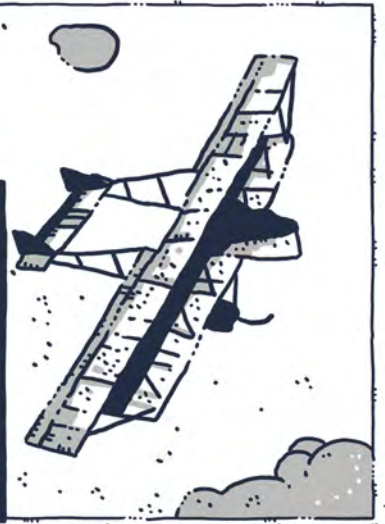
YOU'RE RIGHT SIR. ALLOW ME TO SHARE MY KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHER SOLDIERS AND TOGETHER WE'LL CREATE A METEOROLOGICAL UNIT AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE WEATHER WILL BE AVAILABLE NOT ONLY TO THE AIR FORCE, BUT TO THE ENTIRE ARMY.



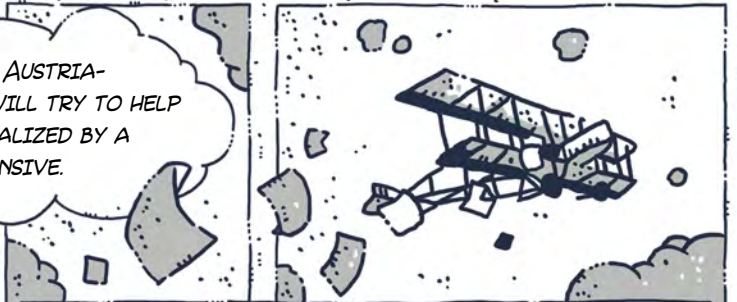
THANKS TO THIS CONVERSATION, ŠTEFÁNIK
CREATED THE FIRST ARMY METEOROLOGICAL
SERVICE. THIS EVENT WAS A TURNING POINT
IN THE MODERNIZATION OF THE FRENCH
ARMY FOR WHICH A GREAT DEAL OF
GRATITUDE WAS SHOWN TO ŠTEFÁNIK.



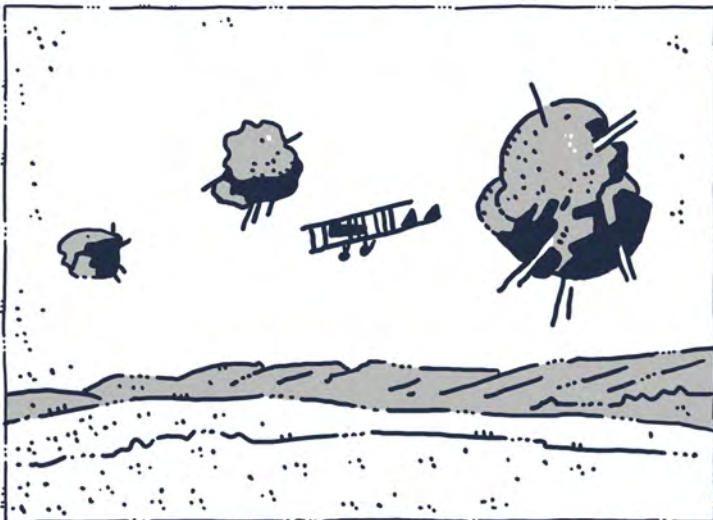
ŠTEFÁNIK CONTINUED WITH EXPLORATORY FLIGHTS. HIS FLIGHTS BECAME LONGER AND BOLDER. NOT LONG AFTER AUSTRIA-HUNGARY ATTACKED SERBIA, HE EVEN VENTURED AS FAR AS THE BALKANS.



I'LL MAP THE POSITIONS OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARIAN SOLDIERS AND WILL TRY TO HELP THE SERBS WHO ARE DEMORALIZED BY A PARTICULARLY FIERCE OFFENSIVE.



HE WAS ALSO AWARE THAT THAT ARMY INCLUDED MANY OF HIS COUNTRYMEN, WHOM HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO ENROL IN THE FIGHT FOR AN INDEPENDENT STATE. THAT'S WHY DURING HIS FLIGHTS, HE DROPPED LEAFLETS ENCOURAGING CZECHS AND SLOVAKS TO LEAVE THE AUSTRIA-HUNGARIAN ARMY AND JOIN THE FRENCH AND ITALIAN UNITS.

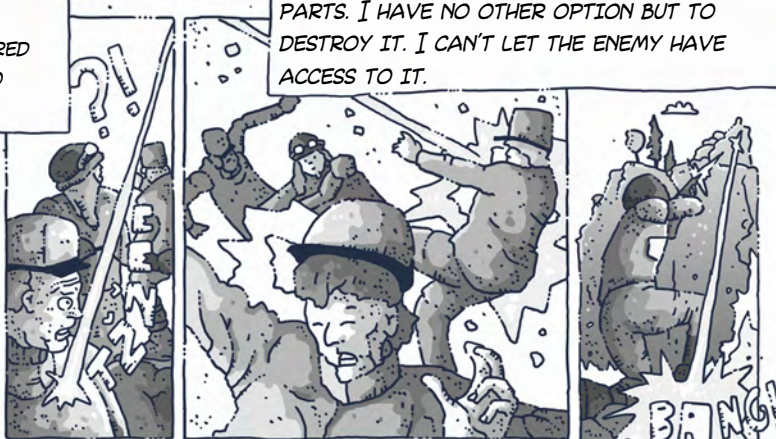




THE 6TH OF NOVEMBER, 1915,
SERBIA, ALEKSANDROVAC

OUR MEN FOUGHT BRAVELY BUT THE
ENEMY ATTACKED IN GREATER
NUMBERS. WE WERE OUTNUMBERED
BY THREE TO ONE. WE HAVE TO
RETREAT.

I CAN'T REPAIR MY PLANE WITHOUT SPARE
PARTS. I HAVE NO OTHER OPTION BUT TO
DESTROY IT. I CAN'T LET THE ENEMY HAVE
ACCESS TO IT.



MY FUTURE WILL EITHER
BE GREAT OR WILL BE
NON-EXISTENT.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE
FOR THOSE WHO ARE
DETERMINED AND WHO
PERSEVERE.

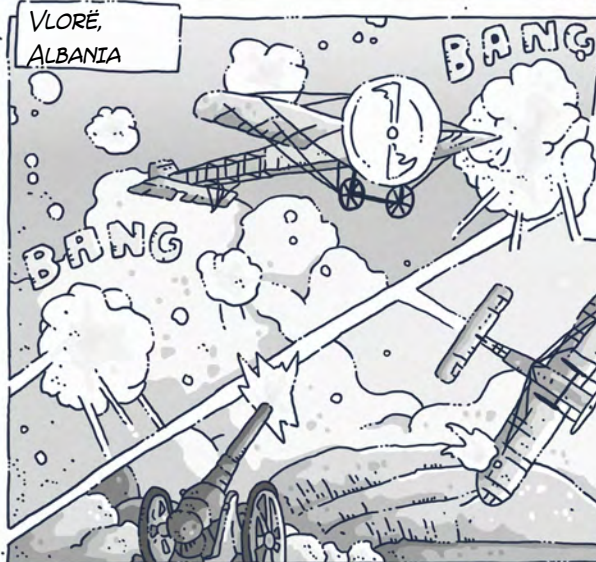
GRRRRR



MILAN, WE'RE LOST!

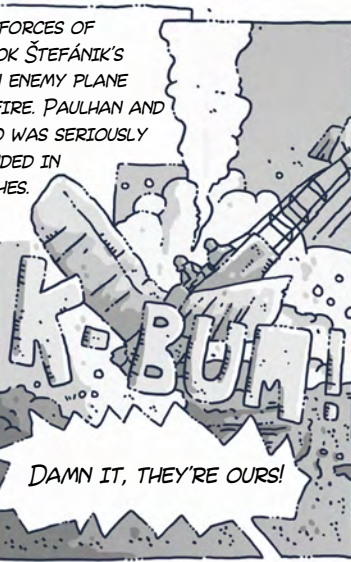


CAPT. PAULHAN, FOLLOW THE STARS.
THEY WILL SHOW US THE WAY.



VLORE,
ALBANIA

AIR DEFENCE FORCES OF
VLORE MISTOOK ŠTEFÁNIK'S
PLANE FOR AN ENEMY PLANE
AND OPENED FIRE. PAULHAN AND
ŠTEFÁNIK WHO WAS SERIOUSLY
WOUNDED, LANDED IN
NEARBY MARSHES.

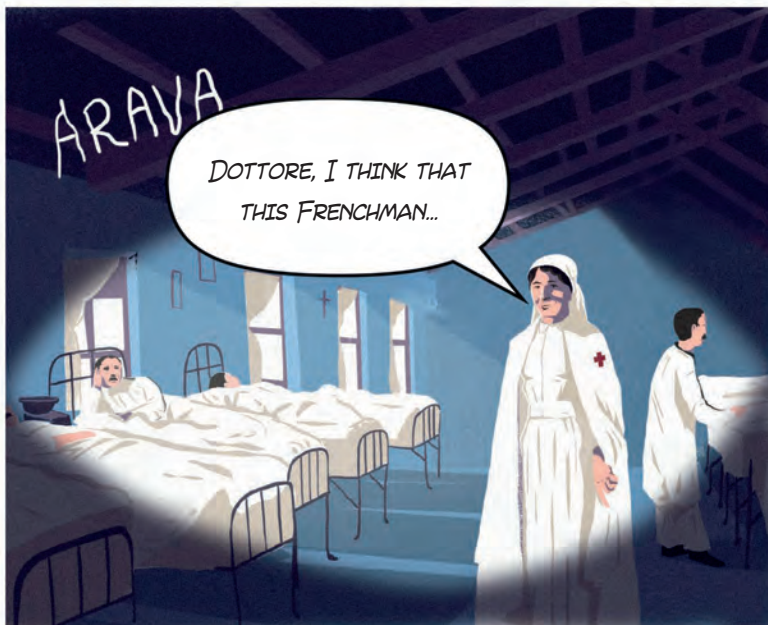


DAMN IT, THEY'RE OURS!



II

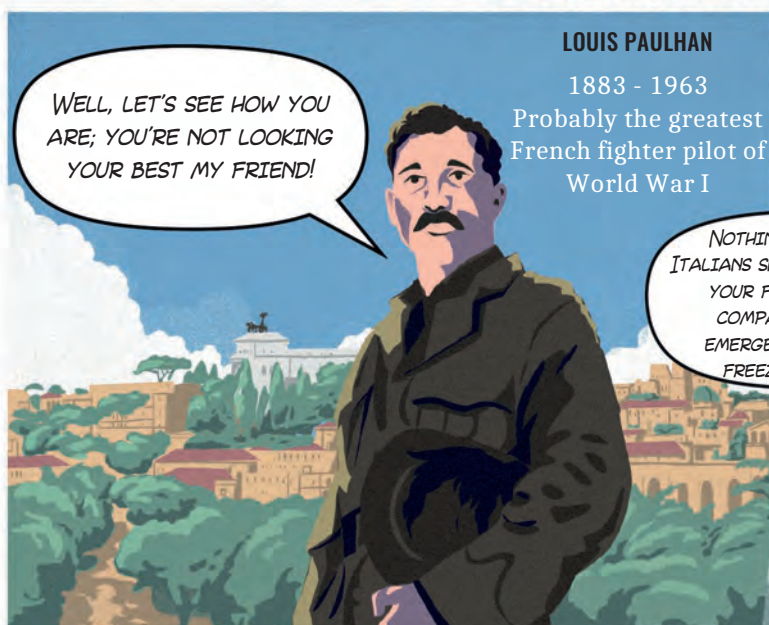
“My whole life lies ahead of me, not survival.”





AND WHAT
HAPPENED
EXACTLY, SISTER?

YOU'LL SOON FIND
OUT, SIGNOR
ŠTEFÁNIK.



LOUIS PAULHAN

1883 - 1963

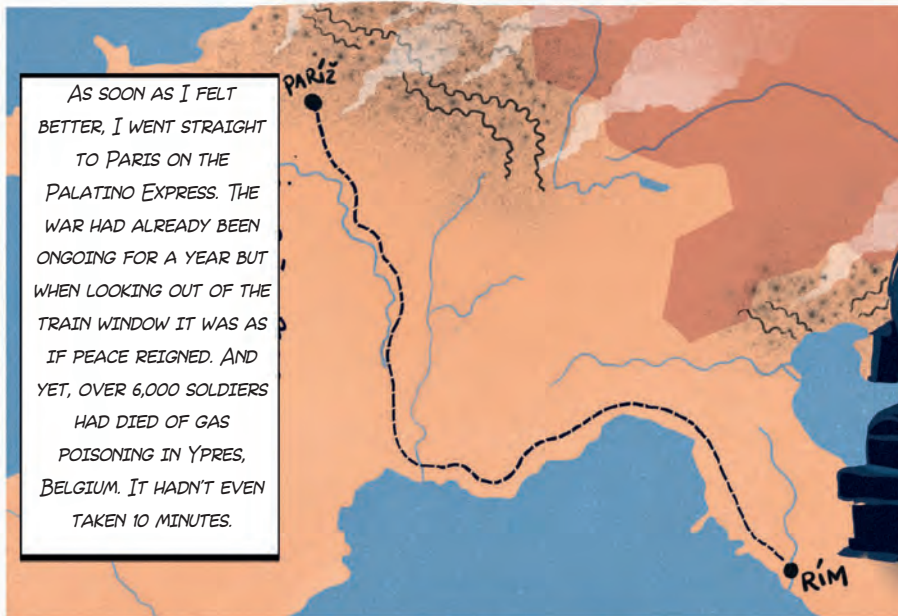
Probably the greatest
French fighter pilot of
World War I

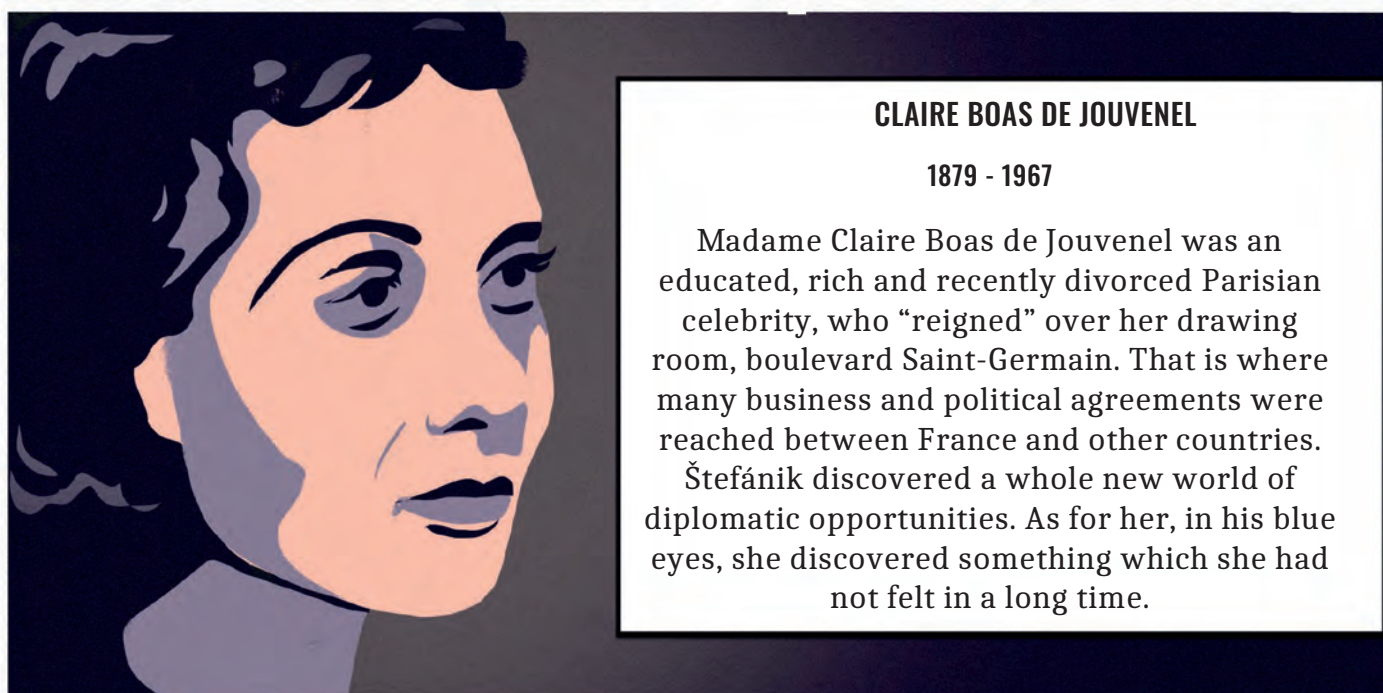
WELL, LET'S SEE HOW YOU
ARE; YOU'RE NOT LOOKING
YOUR BEST MY FRIEND!

NOTHING, NEITHER THE
ITALIANS SHOOTING AT US, NOR
YOUR FAINTING, COULD
COMPARE WITH THAT
EMERGENCY LANDING IN
FREEZING MARSHES.



YOU SHOULD THANK MADAME
DE JOUVENEL'S CONTACTS FOR
YOUR SPEEDY RECOVERY. YOU
MUST HAVE LEFT QUITE AN
IMPRESSION LAST YEAR IN
PARIS. HERE'S A LETTER WITH
HER SEAL.







Štefánik, a citizen of the world on principle, formed powerful alliances which allowed the creation of Czechoslovakia. His choice of values is part and parcel of our history. It was a case of creating an interconnected and open world where everyone - in those days Štefánik, today each one of us - would be able to fulfil his dreams and bring his projects to life.

ŠTEFÁNIK KNEW HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS TO BRING ABOUT INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES AND TO BUILD TRUST BETWEEN NATIONS SHARING SIMILAR VALUES: SUCH AS DEMOCRACY, LIBERALISM, HUMAN RIGHTS, ETC.

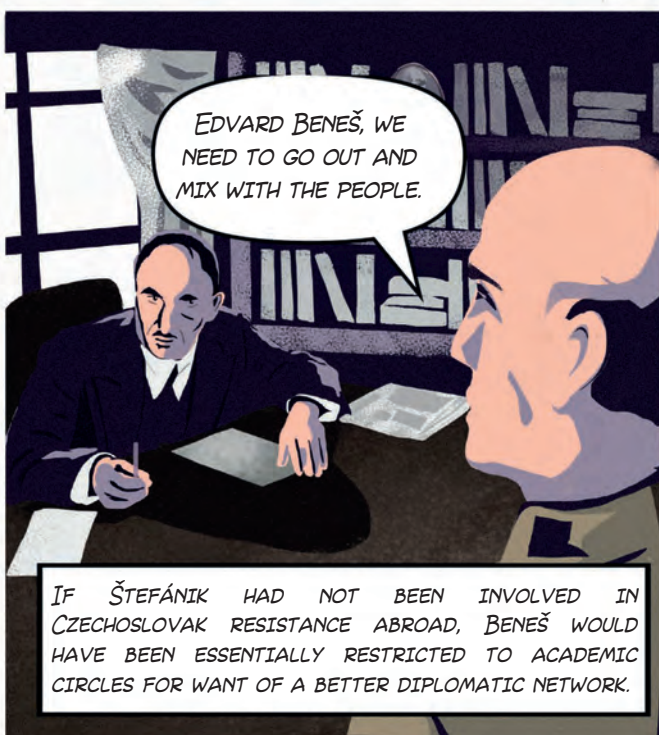


BACK TO ROME

SIGNOR ŠTEFÁNIK, I AM IMPRESSED BY THE CERTAINTY WITH WHICH YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR STATE CZECHOSLOVAKIA, AS IF IT EXISTED ALREADY. YET HABSBURG HASN'T EVEN REMOTELY AGREED YET.



EDVARD BENEŠ, WE NEED TO GO OUT AND MIX WITH THE PEOPLE.

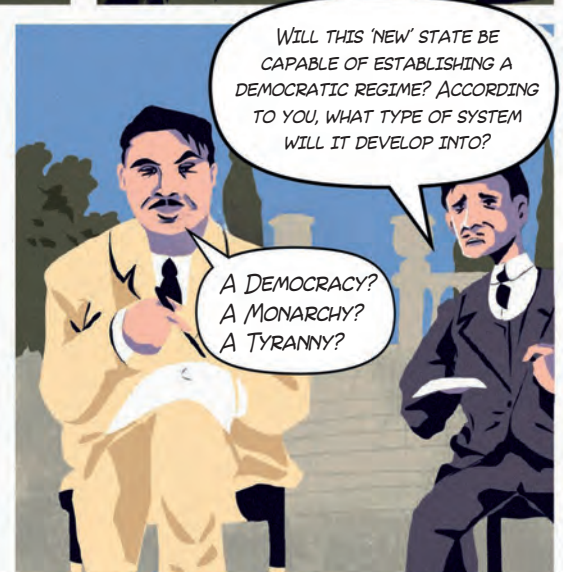
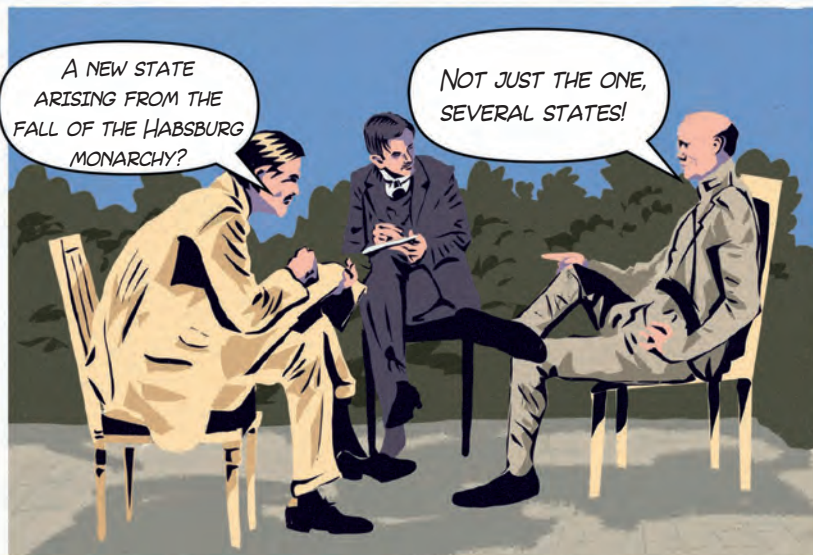


IF ŠTEFÁNIK HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN CZECHOSLOVAK RESISTANCE ABROAD, BENEŠ WOULD HAVE BEEN ESSENTIALLY RESTRICTED TO ACADEMIC CIRCLES FOR WANT OF A BETTER DIPLOMATIC NETWORK.

WITHOUT THESE CONTACTS, HE WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ROUSE THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL WILL WHICH LED TO THE BIRTH OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA.



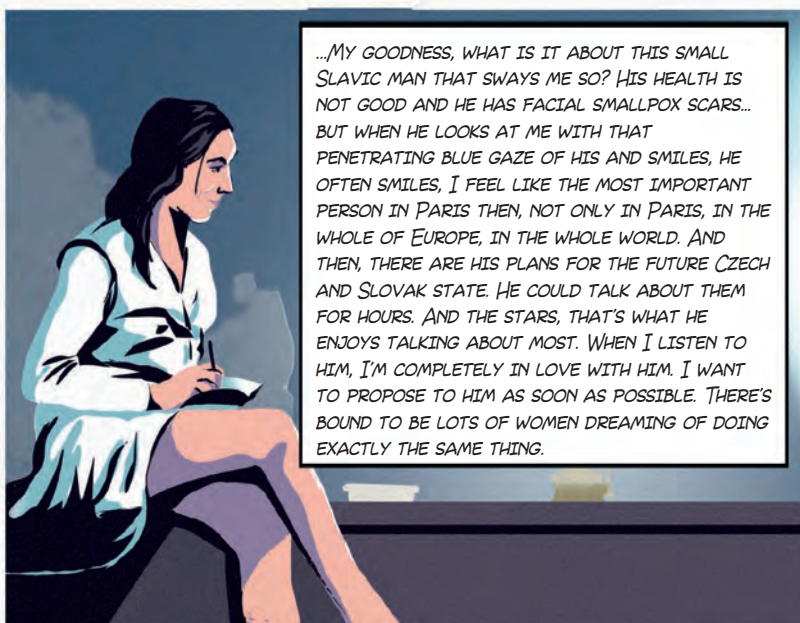
SIR, DO YOU KNOW PROFESSOR MASARYK?





HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF GETTING MARRIED, ŠTEFÁNIK?

LET'S NOT GET AHEAD OF OURSELVES, DEAR LOUISE...



...MY GOODNESS, WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS SMALL SLAVIC MAN THAT SWAYS ME SO? HIS HEALTH IS NOT GOOD AND HE HAS FACIAL SMALLPOX SCARS... BUT WHEN HE LOOKS AT ME WITH THAT PENETRATING BLUE GAZE OF HIS AND SMILES, HE OFTEN SMILES, I FEEL LIKE THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN PARIS THEN, NOT ONLY IN PARIS, IN THE WHOLE OF EUROPE, IN THE WHOLE WORLD. AND THEN, THERE ARE HIS PLANS FOR THE FUTURE CZECH AND SLOVAK STATE. HE COULD TALK ABOUT THEM FOR HOURS. AND THE STARS, THAT'S WHAT HE ENJOYS TALKING ABOUT MOST. WHEN I LISTEN TO HIM, I'M COMPLETELY IN LOVE WITH HIM. I WANT TO PROPOSE TO HIM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THERE'S BOUND TO BE LOTS OF WOMEN DREAMING OF DOING EXACTLY THE SAME THING.



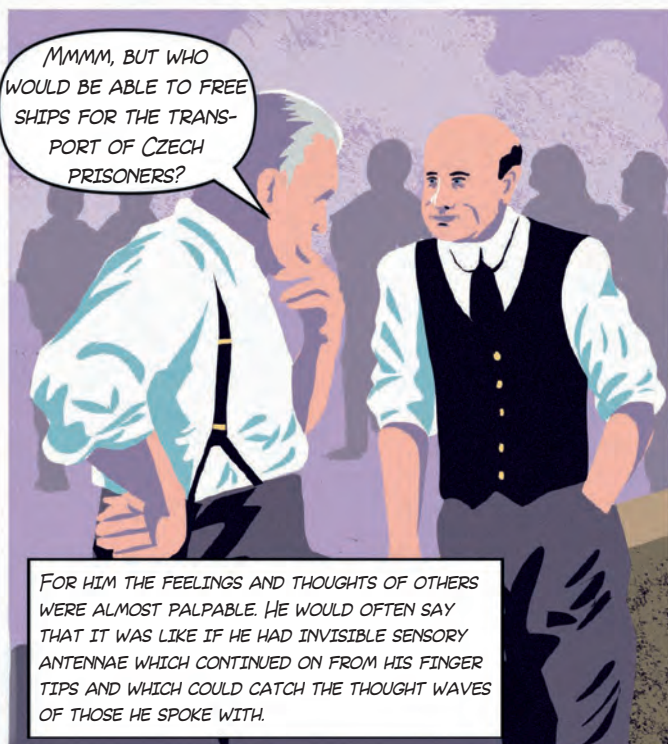
ŠTEFÁNIK: NA VÝCHODE VÝHRA

NAVY PUNISHES PLAN FOR CONSTRUCTION OF RUSSIAN VESSELS
Heaviest Trading in 8 Years
Markets Stock Market Spurt
Štefánik's Plans for Czechoslovakia
Kto sú Bolševici?



OH, ŠTEFÁNIK WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY MANIPULATOR, IN A POSITIVE SENSE THAT IS. WHEN HE TALKED WITH PEOPLE, IT WAS AS IF HE COULD READ THEIR MINDS.

GENERAL
MAURICE JANIN



MMMM, BUT WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO FREE SHIPS FOR THE TRANSPORT OF CZECH PRISONERS?

FOR HIM THE FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS OF OTHERS WERE ALMOST PALPABLE. HE WOULD OFTEN SAY THAT IT WAS LIKE IF HE HAD INVISIBLE SENSORY ANTENNAE WHICH CONTINUED ON FROM HIS FINGER TIPS AND WHICH COULD CATCH THE THOUGHT WAVES OF THOSE HE SPOKE WITH.



I SEE YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THIS VENTURE....

LET'S TRY ANOTHER WAY.



I AM SURE THAT FOR AN IMPORTANT STEEL ENGINEER SUCH AS YOURSELF, INVESTMENTS HAVE NO SECRETS FOR YOU....

TELL ME, WHERE SHOULD YOU INVEST YOUR RESOURCES IF YOU WERE A YOUNG STATE WITH A GOOD INDUSTRIAL BASE AND A WILLINGNESS TO CATCH UP WITH WESTERN DEMOCRACIES?



JOSEF DÜRICH

1847 - 1927

Josef Dürich (1847 - 1927) was one of the central members of the Czechoslovak national council, which was responsible for resistance abroad. In summer 1916, he had gone to Russia with Štefánik to negotiate the creation of Czechoslovak legions. But Dürich was known to be a Russophile and to admire the Tsardom of Russia. "His" Czechoslovakia was to be a kingdom ruled from Petersburg. Members of the Czechoslovak board knew that Russia was not an ideal State and that links with it could at best be friendly. As former students of western universities and institutions, the predominantly catholic population of the Habsburg monarchy was much closer to the ideals of the West than to those of the East.



Štefánik
SIBÍRSKA MISIA

SIBERIA MISSION

CZECHOSLOVAK LEGIONS WERE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF FOREIGN RESISTANCE DURING WORLD WAR I, AND IT WAS THIS WHICH WAS TO BE AT THE ROOT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT STATE FOR CZECHS AND SLOVAKS. MASARYK HIMSELF SAID THAT WITHOUT THE LEGIONNAIRES, THERE WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN A CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

THE BIGGEST CZECHOSLOVAK LEGION SAW THE LIGHT OF DAY IN RUSSIA. BEFORE WORLD WAR I, SEVERAL TENS OF THOUSANDS OF CZECHS AND SLOVAKS LIVED THERE.

ON THE 28TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1914, A CZECH MILITARY UNIT WAS CREATED, THE SOLDIERS BEING ENROLLED BY SOLEMN OATH. LATER, THIS DATE WAS TO BECOME KNOWN AS THE DAY ON WHICH THE CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY CAME INTO BEING. THE ROLE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK TROOPS WAS ESSENTIALLY TO SPY AND, FROM BEHIND THE FRONT LINES, TO RECRUIT AUSTRIA-HUNGARIAN DESERTERS INTO THE CZECH AND SLOVAK ARMY.

IMMIGRANTS WHO HAD SETTLED IN AMERICA CAME TOGETHER TO CREATE THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT FOREIGN GROUP OF CZECHS AND SLOVAKS. DURING THE WAR, APPROXIMATELY 30,000 NATIVE CZECHS AND SLOVAKS SERVED IN THE AMERICAN ARMY; AT FIRST, THERE WERE BETWEEN TWO AND THREE THOUSAND VOLUNTEERS. AFTERWARDS, THESE WERE JOINED BY 4,000 CZECH AND SLOVAK PRISONERS RELEASED BY ALLIED SERBIA. AS THE WAR PROGRESSED SO THE NUMBERS INCREASED PROGRESSIVELY TO REACH 10,000.

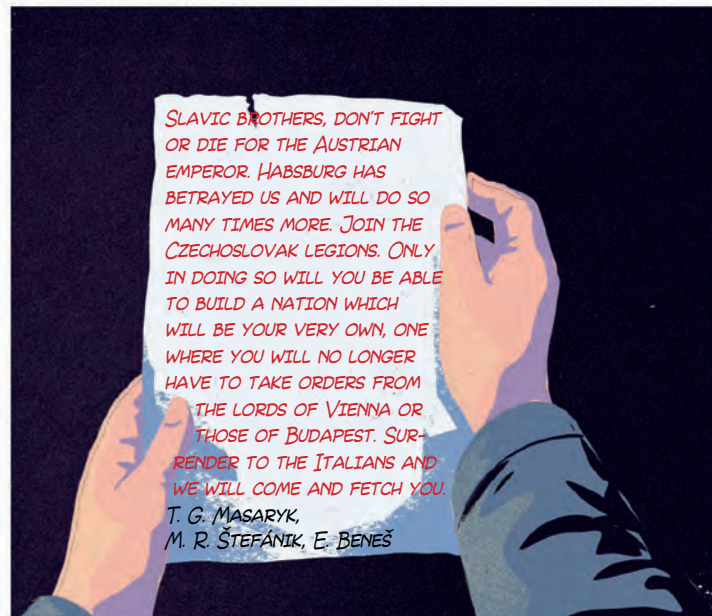
ON THE 31ST OF AUGUST, 1914, THE NAZDAR UNIT WAS CREATED WITHIN THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION, BRINGING TOGETHER CZECH COMBATANTS. THE CZECH AND SLOVAK LEGIONNAIRES WERE SENT TO THE WESTERN FRONT. IN 1918, THE CZECHOSLOVAK BRIGADE WAS CREATED IN FRANCE WHICH THEN WENT TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN SPRING 1919. IT INCLUDED APPROXIMATELY 9,600 SOLDIERS.

UNITS MADE UP OF CZECH AND SLOVAK VOLUNTEERS ALSO AROSE IN ITALY, AS EARLY AS 1917, AS SPY SECTIONS. NEARLY 20,000 SOLDIERS WERE PART OF THESE UNITS. FOLLOWING ARMISTICE, STILL MORE WERE CREATED UNDER THE NAME OF NATIONAL DEFENCE BATTALIONS. GROUPING TOGETHER PRISONERS OF WAR, THEY INCLUDED APPROXIMATELY 60,000 SOLDIERS.

THE HEROISM OF THE LEGIONS AND THEIR FIGHT FOR FREEDOM HAVE BECOME LEGENDARY. ONE NAME ONLY BRINGS THEM TOGETHER IRRESPECTIVE OF THE CONTINENTS, THE NAME OF GENERAL MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK.



I'VE FLOWN COUNTLESS HOURS OVER THE AUSTRIAN LINES. I WASN'T ONLY LOOKING FOR TARGETS, HANGARS AND LANDING STRIPS, BUT I WAS ALSO SCATTERING LEAFLETS ENCOURAGING SLAVIC SOLDIERS TO BECOME DESERTERS AND SWITCH TO THE ITALIAN SIDE. I HAD TO BE SEEN IN A FAVOURABLE LIGHT BY ROME, OTHER THAN IN THE DRAWING ROOMS.



IN ITALY, WHICH HAS ONLY RECENTLY JOINED THE WAR - IN MAY 1915 - WE HAVE SEVERAL THOUSAND MEN HELD IN CAMPS FROM PADOUA TO SALERNO, WHO ARE FIT FOR ARMY COMBAT.



PASSO VAL MAGGIORE
ITALIAN FRONT

IN RUSSIA, HUNDREDS EVEN THOUSANDS OF OUR MEN WHO HAD BEEN LIVING THERE BEFORE THE WAR, ARE NOW FIGHTING FOR THE TSAR. CZECHS AND SLOVAKS HAVE THEIR OWN REGIMENTS THERE, WITH NUMBERS GROWING DAILY AS THEIR COUNTRYMEN LEAVE THE RANKS OF THE AUSTRIANS.



SOMEWHERE IN RUSSIA

CZECH AND SLOVAK PRISONERS WILL HAVE TO BE MOVED ALONG THIS TRACK.



HOW DO YOU INTEND TO CONVINCE THE RUSSIANS TO RETURN OUR GUYS?



EDVARD, DON'T FORGET THAT I REPRESENT THE FRENCH ARMY. I THINK THAT THE SPOKESMAN OF A STRONG ALLY IS MORE LIKELY TO BE LISTENED TO THAN THAT OF A FRIENDLY BUT STILL NON-EXISTENT STATE.





YOUR RADIANCE

RUSSIAN TSAR

NICOLAS II



YOUR COUNTRYMEN HAVE BEEN ADMIRABLE IN THIS BATTLE AGAINST MY COUSIN.* AS TO THE PRISONERS... I'LL TRY TO THINK OF A WAY TO SATISFY THE DEMANDS OF OUR FRENCH FRIENDS.

GERMAN EMPEROR

* WILHELM II



... WE HAVE DRUNK A LOT OF VODKA AND EATEN INCREDIBLE AMOUNTS OF BORSCHT...

BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT I HAVE MANAGED TO RALLY THE RUSSIANS TO OUR CAUSE. GENERAL JANIN, LEADER OF THE FRENCH MILITARY MISSION HERE IN RUSSIA, HAS BEEN A GREAT HELP. SOLDIERS FROM THE CZECH REGIMENTS WILL JOIN THE LEGIONS, BUT IT'S BEEN A NIGHTMARE CONVINCING THEM TO STOP LISTENING TO DÜRICH. OUR OWN LANGUAGE WASN'T EVEN USED AT THE CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONAL COUNCIL WHICH HE HAD FOUNDED HERE. HE IS CONVINCED THAT IT IS RUSSIA WHO WILL HELP US THE MOST. I DOUBT IT; SOMETHING TERRIBLE IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN HERE.

MILAN



CZECHOSLOVAKIA, A PROVINCE OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE? AN AUTOCRACY? HAVEN'T ALL THOSE CENTURIES SPENT UNDER VIENNESE RULE BEEN ENOUGH FOR YOU?

WASN'T IT YOUR OWN ŠTŮR HIMSELF, TOGETHER WITH HIS COMPANIONS, WHO WANTED TO FIND SHELTER BY THE "GREAT RUSSIAN OAK"?



THE KINGDOM OF ROMANIA WENT TO WAR AGAINST AUSTRIA AND GERMANY AND MY FRENCH CHIEF OF STAFF SENT ME TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THEIR ARMY. I WAS TO SET UP A WEATHER STATION FOR THEM. BESIDES, I WAS ALSO AWARE THAT SOME THOUSANDS OF CZECH AND FRENCH SOLDIERS WERE HELD CAPTIVE TOGETHER THERE.



I AM CONVINCED THAT THE RUSSIANS KEEP TRACK OF MY EVERY MOVEMENT.



GENERAL BERTHELOT, HE WHO KNOWS THE WEATHER FORECAST HAS ACCESS TO VERY VALUABLE INFORMATION. AND IN THIS WAR AS WELL IN ALL THOSE TO COME, INFORMATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL OF ALL WEAPONS.



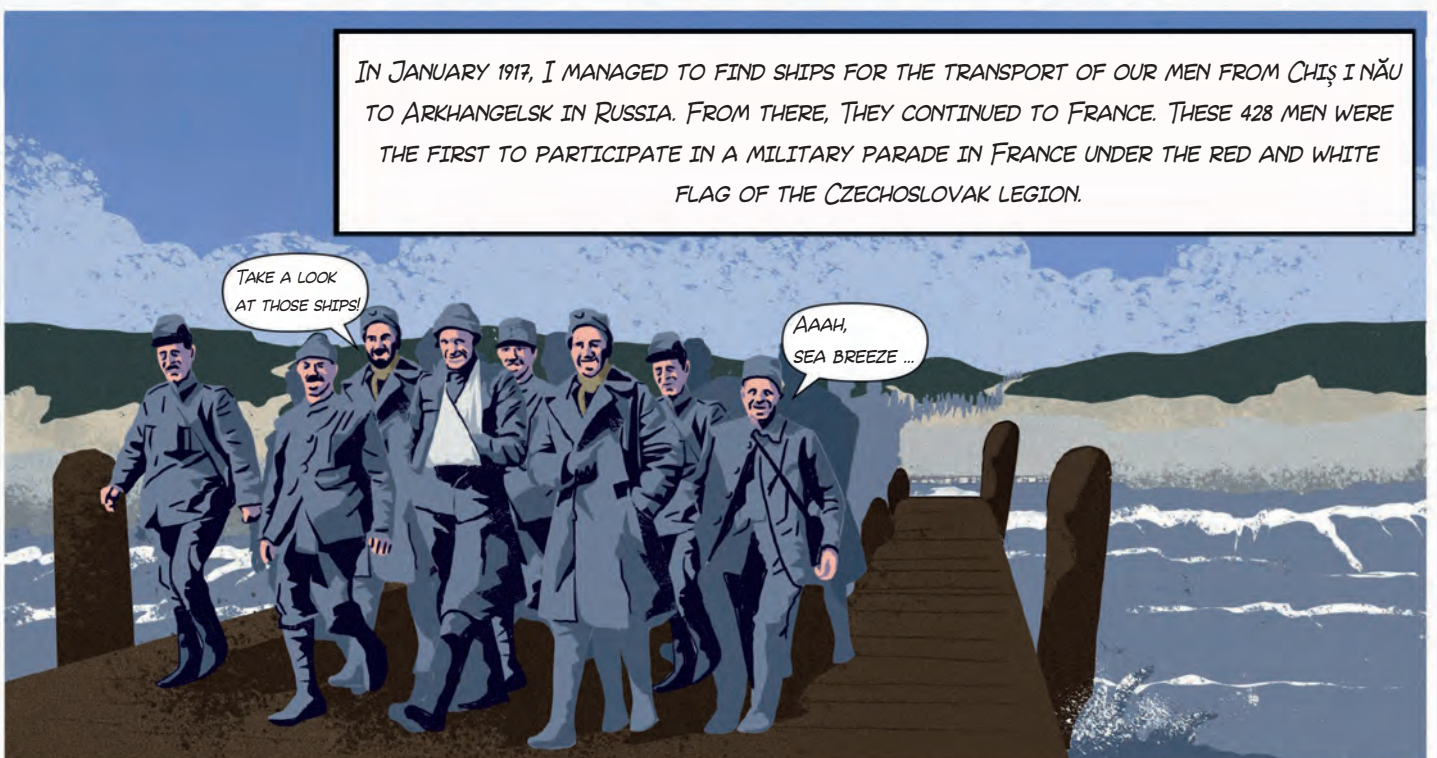
NEWS FROM THESSALONIKI AND BELGRADE WILL GET HERE FASTER THAN ANY MACHINE FROM THE EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA.



GENERAL, IT IS MORE THAN TIME FOR ME TO START ON THE SECOND PART OF MY MISSION; INSPECTION OF THE CAMPS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PRISONERS WHO ARE HELD THERE.

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT LIEUTENANT, JUST SHOW THE LADS HOW TO USE YOUR METEOTHINGY AND THEN WE'LL GET ON WITH IT.





WHILE MASARYK WAS ON HIS WAY BACK TO RUSSIA, I HEADED FOR THE UNITED STATES. THIS FREE COUNTRY WAS TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE FIGHTING THAT WAS GOING ON IN SOMME OR IN GORIZIA FOR THEM TO BE IN THE LEAST BIT INTERESTED IN THE WAR IN EUROPE.



BUT APPROXIMATELY 400,000 SLOVAKS AND 200,000 CZECHS WERE ALREADY LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES. IN CLEVELAND, SLOVAK WAS THE SECOND MOST SPOKEN LANGUAGE, RIGHT AFTER ENGLISH.



THINGS DIDN'T EXACTLY GO AS PLANNED. ALTHOUGH I HAD SET UP A RECRUITMENT OFFICE IN NEW YORK, A TRAINING CAMP IN CONNECTICUT AND ORGANIZED A REUNION OF MY COUNTRYMEN IN CHICAGO, PEOPLE HERE DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO RISK THEIR LIVES IN FAR-AWAY EUROPE. EVEN THOUGH THE UNITED STATES WASN'T AT WAR, THEY WERE NOT FAVOURABLE TO GERMANY.



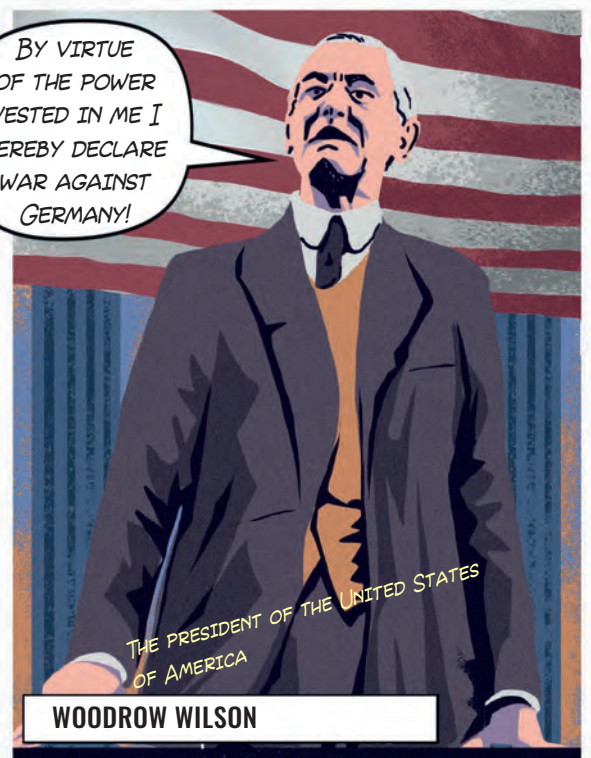
IN 1915, A GERMAN SUBMARINE TORPEDOED THE CRUISE LINER LUSITANIA RESULTING IN 1,200 VICTIMS, MOST OF WHOM WERE CIVILIANS. THE AMERICANS VIVIDLY REMEMBERED THIS TERRIFYING DAY, ESPECIALLY SINCE EVERY DAY THEY WOULD READ ABOUT OTHER BOATS BEING SUNK BY GERMANS IN THE ATLANTIC.

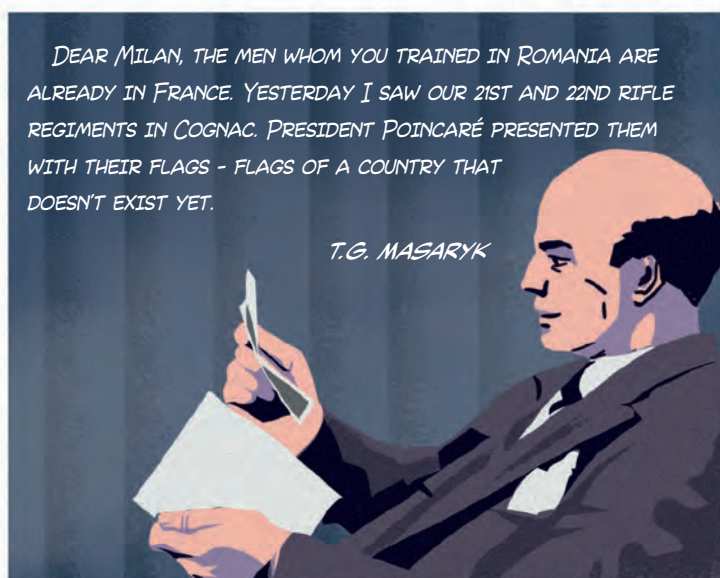


BY VIRTUE OF THE POWER VESTED IN ME I HEREBY DECLARE WAR AGAINST GERMANY!

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WOODROW WILSON



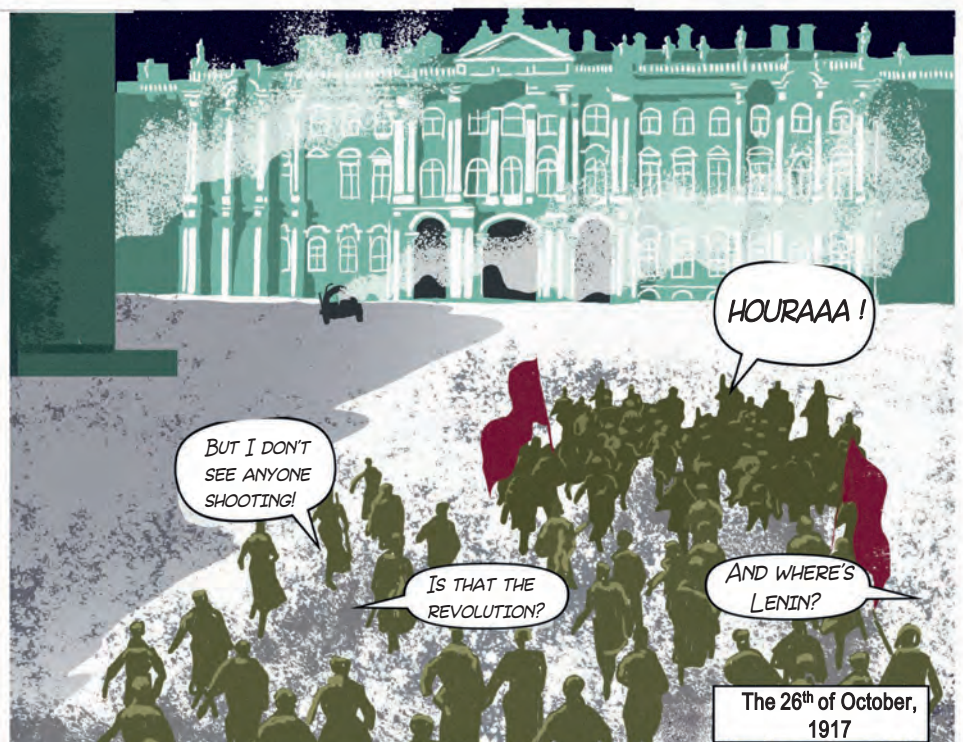


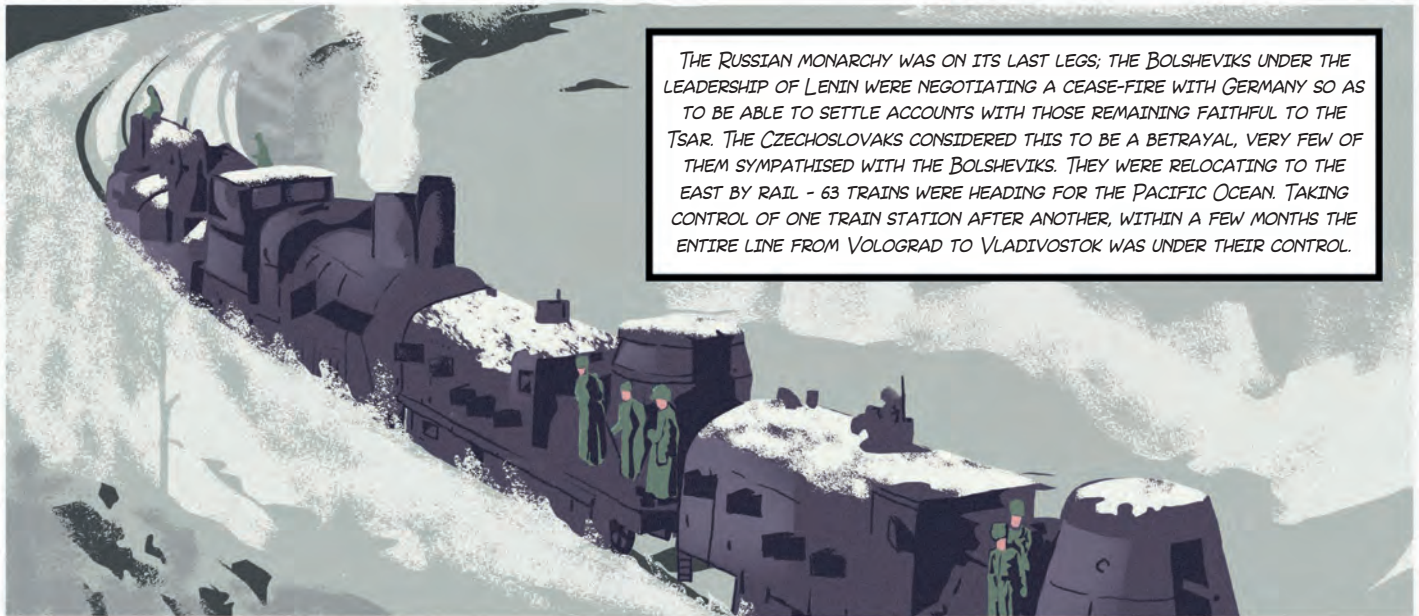


AND AGAIN, END OF 1917, I NEGOTIATED IN ROME THE SAME AS I HAD DONE BEFORE IN ROMANIA, RUSSIA AND FRANCE, IN OTHER WORDS THE CREATION OF BATTALIONS WITH CZECH AND SLOVAK PRISONERS OF WAR. AND IT WORKED. IN SPRING, FOLLOWING THE CONGRESS OF OPPRESSED NATIONS, OUR MEN PROUDLY PARADED THROUGH THE STREETS OF ROME. NOW, THEY ARE PART OF THE ITALIAN ARMY, BUT UNDER MY COMMAND.



FROM FEBRUARY 1917 ONWARDS, THE SITUATION IN RUSSIA WAS GETTING RAPIDLY WORSE. THE RUSSIAN MEN NO LONGER EVEN KNEW WHY THEY WERE FIGHTING. THEY REBELLED AND RETREATED FROM THEIR POSITIONS. THE COUNTRY WAS DIVIDED. THE BOLSHEVIKS PUT TOGETHER THEIR RED ARMY MADE UP OF WORKMEN, DESERTERS AND THE POOR. TO THE WEST, THEY FACED THE COMMUNISTS, TO THE EAST THERE WAS ONLY UNENDING SIBERIAN STEPPES. THE ONLY WAY TO GO HOME WAS TO GO TO VLADIVOSTOK BY RAIL.





THE RUSSIAN MONARCHY WAS ON ITS LAST LEGS; THE BOLSHEVIKS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF LENIN WERE NEGOTIATING A CEASE-FIRE WITH GERMANY SO AS TO BE ABLE TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH THOSE REMAINING FAITHFUL TO THE TSAR. THE CZECHOSLOVAKS CONSIDERED THIS TO BE A BETRAYAL, VERY FEW OF THEM SYMPATHISED WITH THE BOLSHEVIKS. THEY WERE RELOCATING TO THE EAST BY RAIL - 63 TRAINS WERE HEADING FOR THE PACIFIC OCEAN. TAKING CONTROL OF ONE TRAIN STATION AFTER ANOTHER, WITHIN A FEW MONTHS THE ENTIRE LINE FROM VOLOGRAD TO VLADIVOSTOK WAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL.

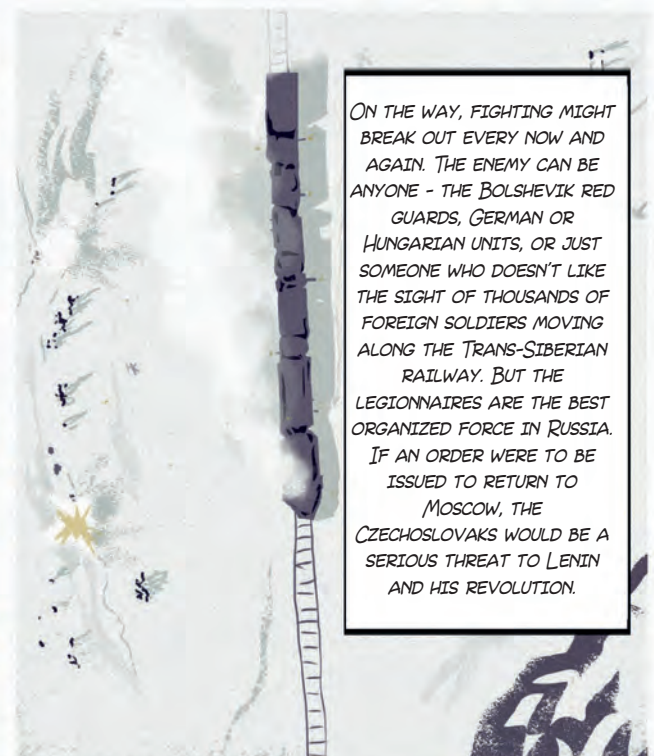


MMMM... THESE PLAINS GO ON FOREVER...

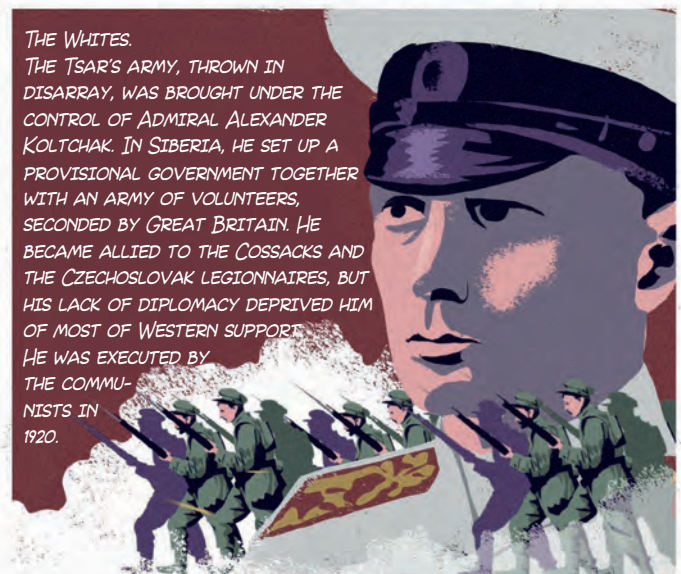
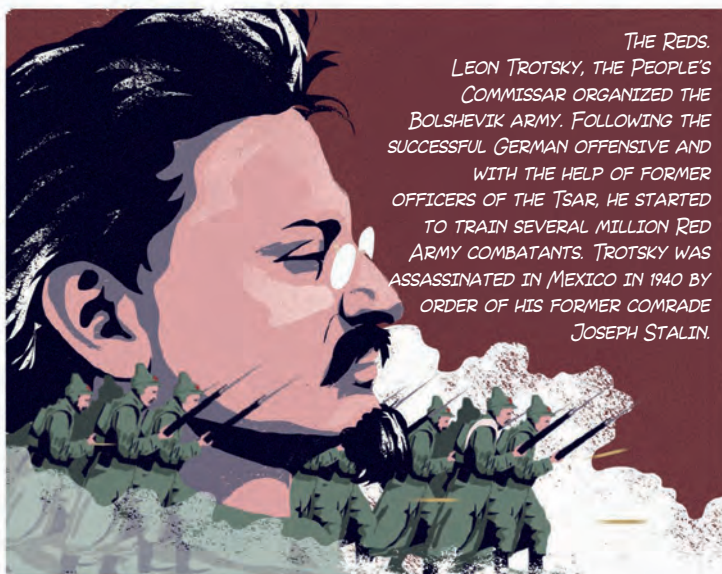
YES, WE'RE AT LEAST A MILLION MILES AWAY FROM YOUR CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS.

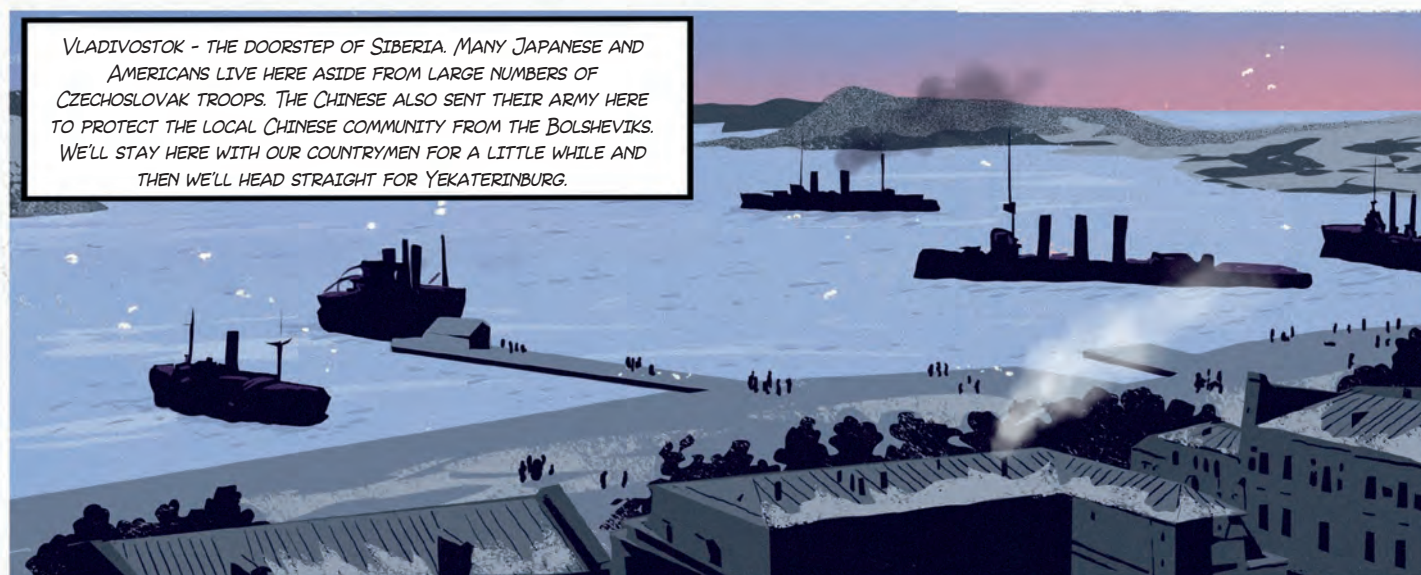


PUK
PUK
PUK



ON THE WAY, FIGHTING MIGHT BREAK OUT EVERY NOW AND AGAIN. THE ENEMY CAN BE ANYONE - THE BOLSHEVIK RED GUARDS, GERMAN OR HUNGARIAN UNITS, OR JUST SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LIKE THE SIGHT OF THOUSANDS OF FOREIGN SOLDIERS MOVING ALONG THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY. BUT THE LEGIONNAIRES ARE THE BEST ORGANIZED FORCE IN RUSSIA. IF AN ORDER WERE TO BE ISSUED TO RETURN TO MOSCOW, THE CZECHOSLOVAKS WOULD BE A SERIOUS THREAT TO LENIN AND HIS REVOLUTION.







CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S INDEPENDENCE WAS DECLARED ON THE 28TH OF OCTOBER, 1918, TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR. TOMÁŠ GARRIGUE MASARYK WAS CHOSEN AS PRESIDENT. ŠTEFÁNIK WAS "ONLY" APPOINTED MINISTER OF DEFENCE.



IN ANY CASE, VERY SOON WE'LL HAVE NO NEED OF A MINISTER OF DEFENCE.

HE'S GOING TO GET MARRIED, SETTLE DOWN AND RETURN TO HIS STARS.



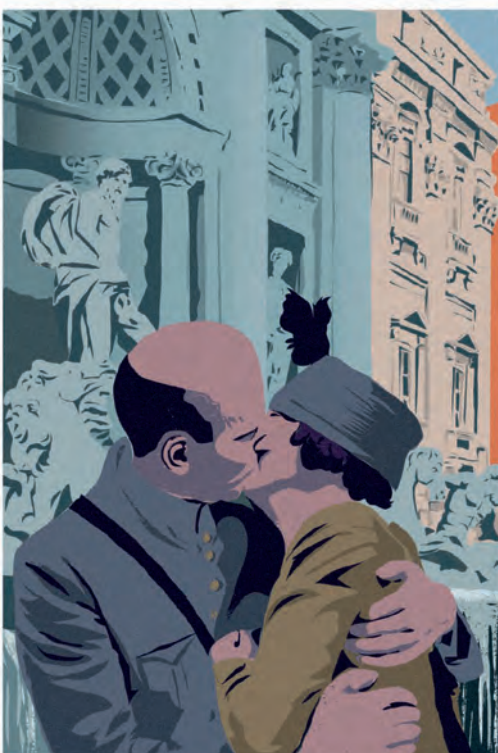
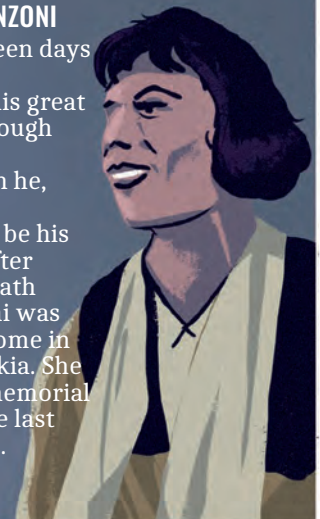
OUR MEN ARE CAUSING HAVOC BETWEEN THE ITALIANS AND THE FRENCH. I HAVE TO GO THERE IMMEDIATELY.

I WOULD RATHER HAVE YOU HERE IN ROME.



GIULIANA BENZONI

only had fifteen days in Štefánik's company. This great woman, although fifteen years younger than he, was no less deserving to be his wife. Even after Štefánik's death Lady Benzoni was always welcome in Czechoslovakia. She visited the memorial in Bradlo one last time in 1968.

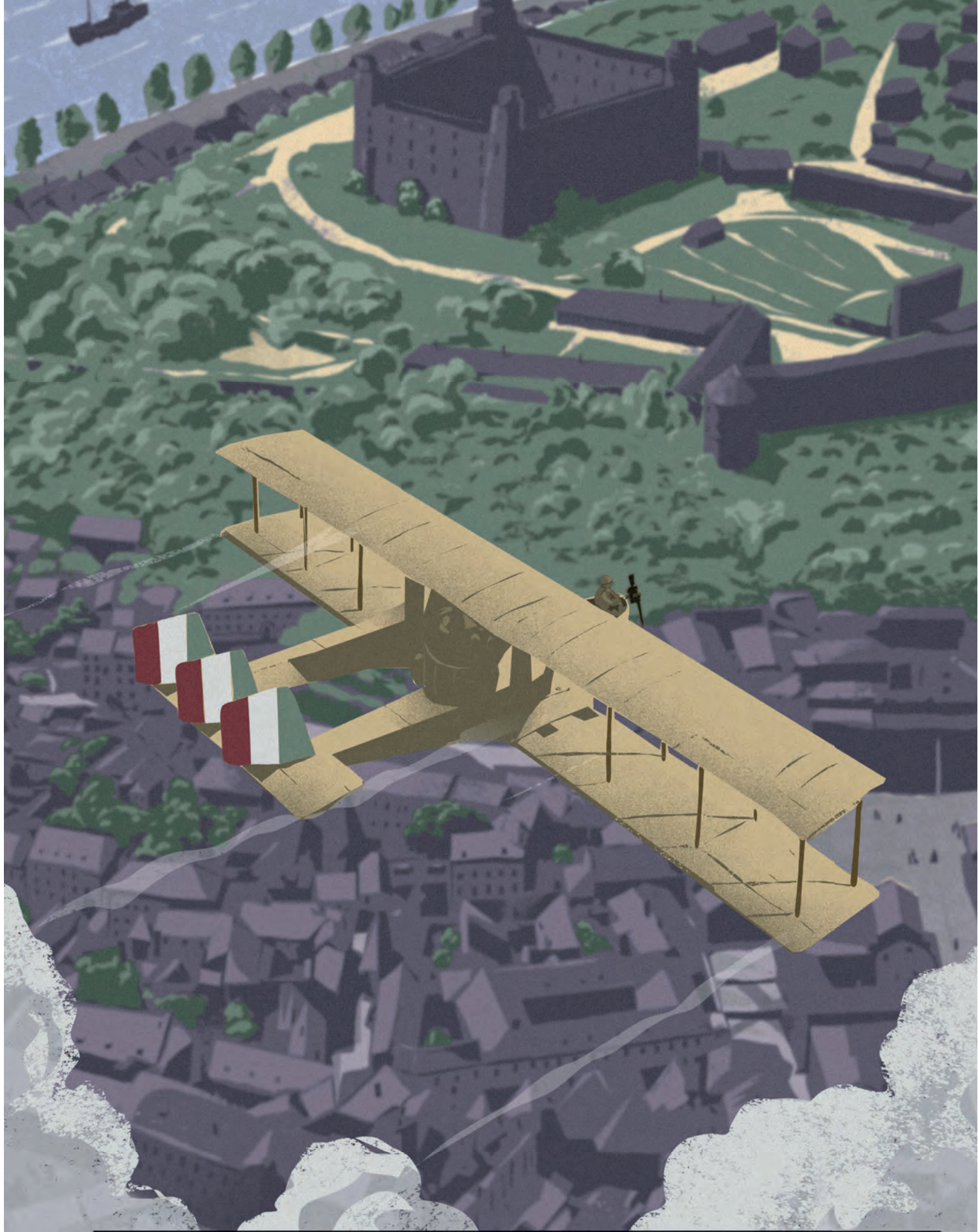


MY DEAR, MY DEAREST! FAREWELL! OH, WHAT A DREADFUL WORD, TEARING US APART! THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I COME TO CURSE DESTINY, WHICH TIRELESSLY PUTS OUR LOVE TO TEST, OUR LOVE WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN BOTH LOYAL AND HONEST. FAREWELL! BUT, I WILL BE BACK. I'LL COME BACK TO STAY - I HOPE, - AND FROM THEN ON WILL REMAIN AT YOUR SIDE, MY DEAREST LOVE. THE ENGINE IS HUMMING. WE MUST LEAVE. LEAVE, ALWAYS LEAVE... FAREWELL! MY VISION IS BECOMING BLURRED, MY HEART IS WORRIED, BUT FOR THIS ONCE I'LL FORGIVE IT THIS ALL TOO HUMAN WEAKNESS. AM I NO LONGER ABLE TO MOVE AWAY FROM YOU, GIULIANA, TO SEE MY FAMILY AND MY NATION AGAIN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS? I'LL SEE MY NATION AGAIN. I HAVE ONE. WHAT HAPPINESS, WHAT NOSTALGIA. THE PLANE IS CALLING FOR MY ATTENTION. FAREWELL GIULIANA! FAREWELL, BUT DON'T BE SAD. VERY SOON, WAY ABOVE MOUNTAIN PEAKS AND CLOUDS, KISSED BY VIRGIN RAYS OF SUN AMONGST MISCHIEVOUS WAVES OF BLUE, MY SOUL WILL FIND PEACE AGAIN AND MY LIPS WILL AGAIN LOYALLY WHISPER TO YOU: GOODBYE GIULIANA! SEE YOU SOON, MY BELOVED! MILAN

LAST LETTER TO GIULIANA BEFORE THE FATAL FLIGHT TO BRATISLAVA:



THE 4TH OF MAY, 1919, CAMPOFORMIDO AIRPORT



ŠTEFÁNIK STEERED THE PLANE FROM THE FIRING POSITION. THE ENGINE MADE SO MUCH NOISE THAT THEY COULDN'T HEAR EACH OTHER AND HAD TO COMMUNICATE BY WRITING DOWN WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY ON PIECES OF PAPER. THE LAST OF THESE NOTES HAD BEEN WRITTEN BY ŠTEFÁNIK HIMSELF: "ATTENZIONE SIGNORE! WE'RE FLYING OVER BRATISLAVA. WE WILL BE LANDING IN A FEW MINUTES."

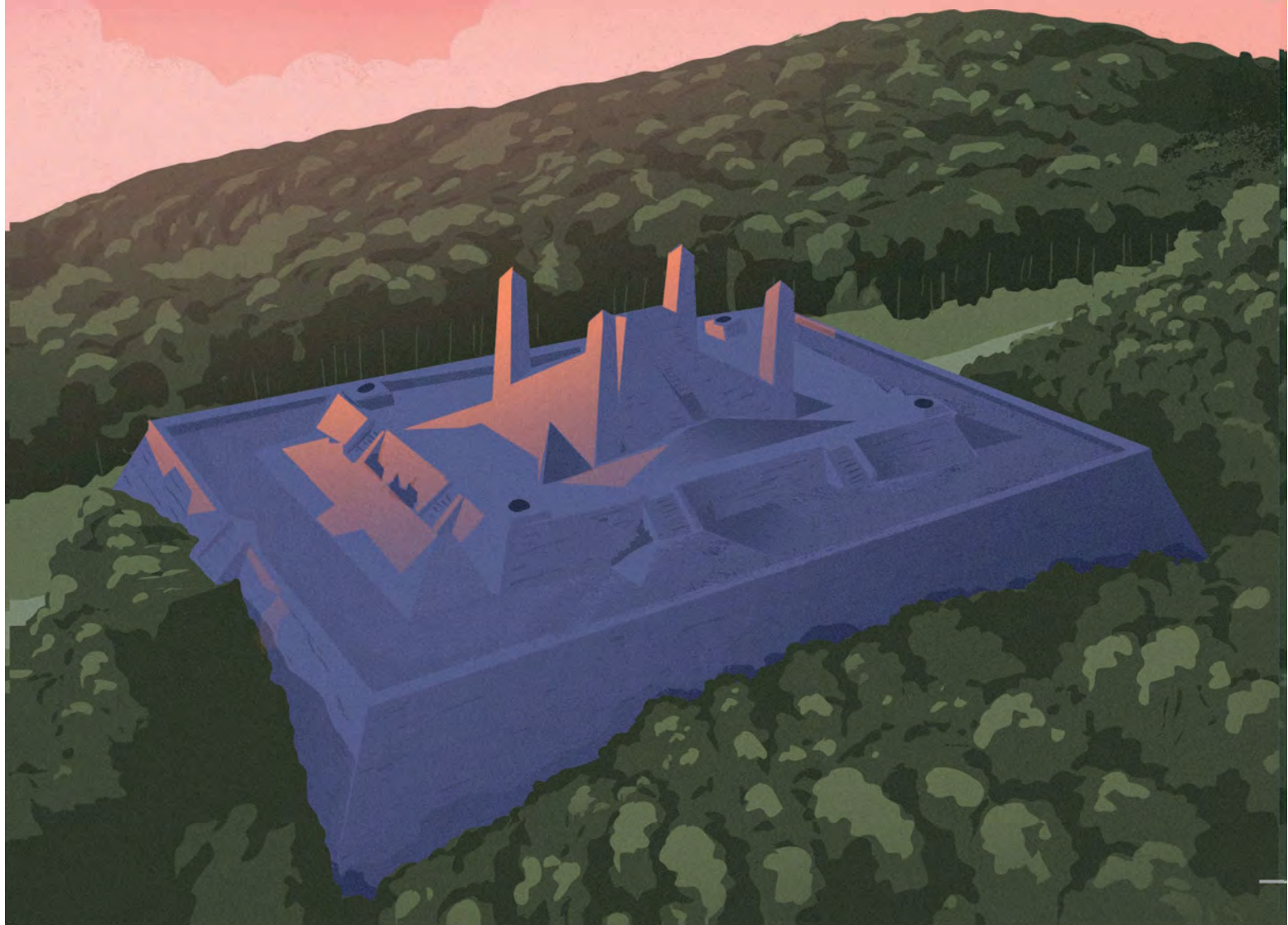
BUT ŠTEFÁNIK'S LAST TRIP TO HIS COUNTRY ENDED IN TRAGEDY. A SUDDEN BURST OF WIND CAUSED THE PLANE TO CRASH. THERE WERE NO SURVIVORS.

HIS LOVED ONES REMEMBERED HIS LAST WISHES "WERE I TO DIE, I WOULD LIKE TO BE LAID TO REST IN SLOVAK TERRITORY".

MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK WAS BURIED IN SLOVAKIA WITH GREAT POMP AND CEREMONY.

TO FINANCE THE MEMORIAL MONUMENT A NATIONWIDE CROWDFUNDING WAS ANNOUNCED. TWO MILLION CROWNS* WERE RAISED. THE MEMORIAL WAS OFFICIALLY INAUGURATED ON THE 23RD OF SEPTEMBER, 1928.

*THE CURRENCY AT THE TIME





“Štefánik was convinced that democracy, which he defended so vigorously, could not be enforced ‘with words but by finding solutions to problems’, and in particular by ‘keeping our passions in check’. We are indebted to European history. It is our duty to maintain and develop our democracy. Although they try to use his name, Štefánik was completely opposed to the speeches of the populists and extremists who only spread hostility and discord”.

(Christophe Léonzi, former French ambassador in Slovakia)

Annexes

Here are some of Štefánik's ideas and views, which were never put in practice or which were never truly understood by his contemporaries. He was a man of many talents but several of his opinions were not accepted by the politicians of the time.

MANY NEW STATES WERE FORMED FOLLOWING THE FALL OF THE AUSTRIA-HUNGARIAN MONARCHY. ACCORDING TO MASARYK AND BENEŠ, A REPUBLIC IS THE MOST APPROPRIATE POLITICAL MODEL.

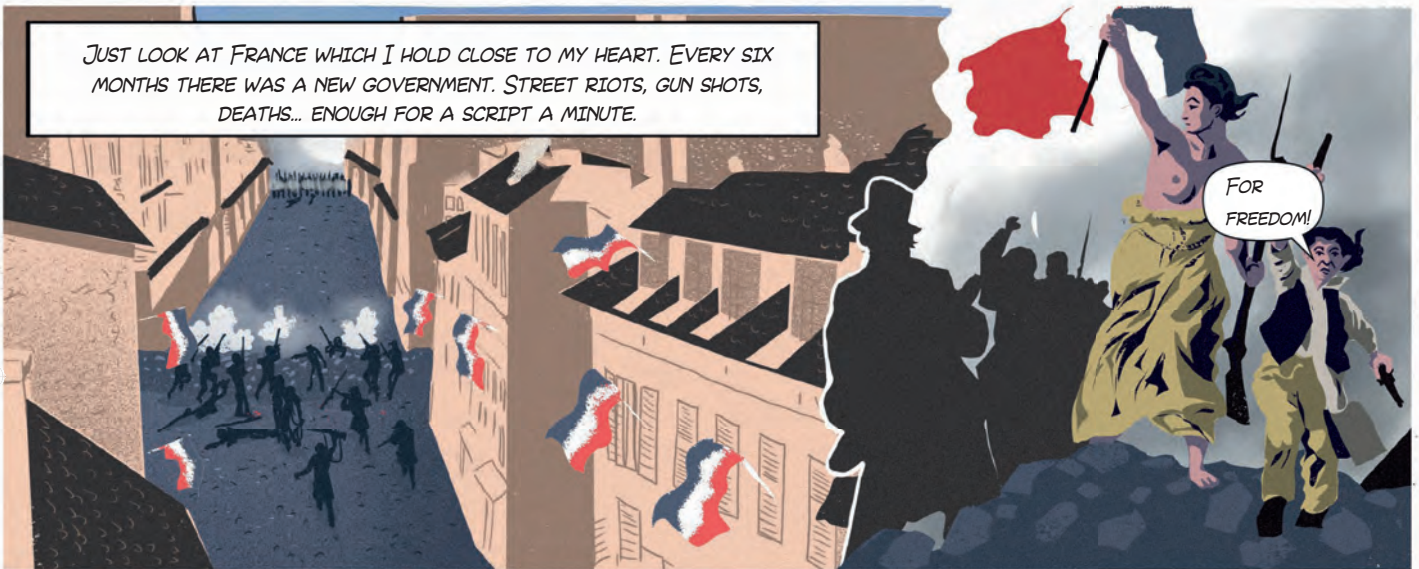


MY EXPERIENCE ABROAD, HAS TAUGHT ME THAT IT IS ALSO THE MOST UNSTABLE...



WOMEN AND MONARCHY

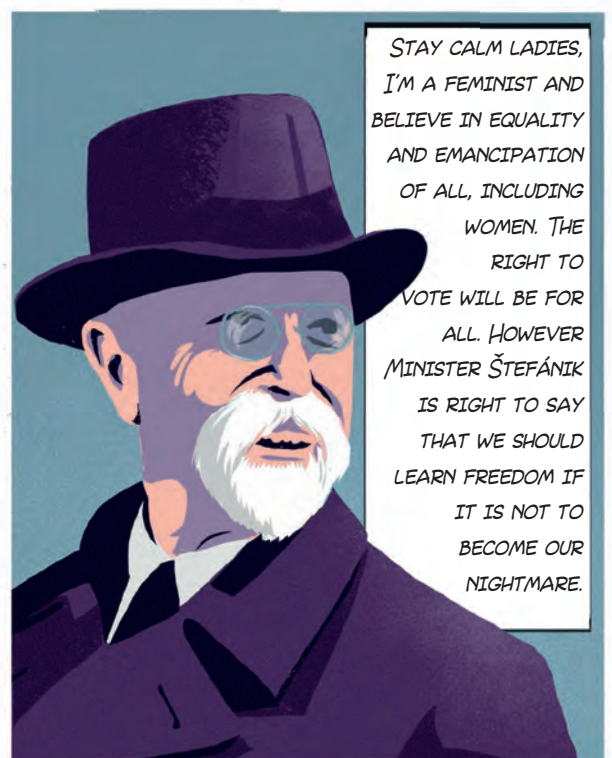
JUST LOOK AT FRANCE WHICH I HOLD CLOSE TO MY HEART. EVERY SIX MONTHS THERE WAS A NEW GOVERNMENT. STREET RIOTS, GUN SHOTS, DEATHS... ENOUGH FOR A SCRIPT A MINUTE.



TO BE ABLE TO SURVIVE, A SMALL AND YOUNG COUNTRY NEEDS A KING! NOT ANYBODY, BUT A TRUE MONARCH WHO WOULD BE RESPECTED ACROSS EUROPE.



A UNITED ROYAL FAMILY WOULD ENSURE INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE WE HAVE A LIBERAL DEMOCRACY. TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE MUST EDUCATE THE PEOPLE.





About the project

EduLand was created with the support of the Erasmus+ programme. The platform offers free multimedia resources, fun activities and an engaging comic strip for learning while having fun.

A journey through languages and history

Would you like to learn the basics of English, French or Slovak? Would you like to learn more about the history of Central Europe or the construction of the European Union?

EduLand offers free, fun and easy-to-access content.

Partners involved in the project



Inalco

Created in 1795, the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (Inalco) is the only public institution of higher education and research in the world to offer such a rich range of training in languages and civilizations, recognized both in France and internationally. From bachelor's degrees to doctorates and institutional diplomas, Inalco's offer is characterized by its great diversity, with over 100 languages and civilizations taught and several professional courses.

Inalco teaches and conducts research on the languages of Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Oceania, Africa and the peoples of America, as well as on the geography, history, institutions and political, economic and social life of the countries concerned.

The Slovak Studies section offers courses in Slovak language, literature, culture and history.

E@I (Edukácia@Internet)



E@I is an international organisation dedicated to promoting intercultural education, language learning and digital innovation. Through multilingual educational projects, it facilitates cooperation and communication around the world, drawing on new technologies and online learning methods.

The organisation has created, either alone or in partnership, several highly successful language learning websites and applications. It all started with the website www.lernu.net for Esperanto. Other websites were then created, supported by the Erasmus+ cooperation programme:

www.slovake.eu for Slovak, www.deutsch.info for German, www.russky.info for Russian, www.polski.info for Polish, www.lingvo.info on EU languages, and the highly entertaining www.vortoj.net – learning vocabulary in a language on a dance mat.

In addition to its online projects, E@I also organises several educational events, such as: ‘Polyglot Gathering’ (the largest gathering of polyglots in the world), ‘LingvaFest’ (the first and so far only language festival in Slovakia) and ‘Universala Kongreso de Esperanto’ for the UEA (World Esperanto Association).

Ivan Horváth High School



Founded in 1966 in Bratislava, Ivan Horváth High School is an iconic institution that combines tradition and modernity. Initially a modest school on the outskirts of the city, it is now recognised as one of the most prestigious high schools in Slovakia, particularly for its advanced language classes.

Supported by an exceptional teaching staff and a dynamic community, the school stands out for its academic results, which exceed the national average, as well as its involvement in artistic, sporting and debating competitions. Its brilliant and creative students excel at university and beyond, perpetuating the visionary spirit of Slovak figures such as Milan Rastislav Štefánik.



The Adventures of Milan Rastislav Štefánik

Author © Tomáš Kriššák

Illustrations © Eniac (Tomáš Cíger), Frenky (František Hříbal)

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THE ADVENTURES OF MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK

HE WAS A SCIENTIST, A SOLDIER AND A DREAMER. BORN IN 1880 IN A SMALL SLOVAKIAN VILLAGE, MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK GREW UP WITH A CONSUMING PASSION TO UNRAVEL THE MYSTERIES OF THE SKY. HE BECAME AN ASTRONOMER, TRAVELLING THE WORLD TO OBSERVE ECLIPSES AND COLLABORATING WITH SOME OF THE GREATEST SCIENTISTS IN PARIS. HE WAS CONSTANTLY PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF KNOWLEDGE.

HOWEVER, IN 1914, EUROPE WAS ENGULFED IN WAR. A PATRIOT AT HEART, ŠTEFÁNIK DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION. ENLISTING IN THE FRENCH ARMY, HE BECAME A GENERAL AND USED HIS DIPLOMATIC GENIUS TO CONVINCE THE ALLIES TO SUPPORT THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CZECHS AND SLOVAKS. TOGETHER WITH MASARYK AND BENEŠ, HE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN ESTABLISHING CZECHOSLOVAKIA AS A FREE AND UNITED STATE IN 1918.

A FEARLESS PILOT AND DARING STRATEGIST, HE EMBODIED THE HOPES OF A GENERATION SEEKING FREEDOM. HIS TRAGIC DEATH IN A PLANE CRASH IN 1919 ONLY SERVED TO REINFORCE HIS LEGEND AS A MAN WHO DARED TO BELIEVE IN A BETTER WORLD AND FOUGHT TO BUILD IT.

THIS IS THE TRUE STORY OF A HERO WHO LEFT HIS MARK ON HISTORY.



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