

CZECHOSLOVAKIA FOUNDING FATHERS: MILAN RASTISLAV ŠTEFÁNIK

BY SUSAN J. MARTIN

reluctantphilatelist@gmail.com

Milan Rastislav Štefánik (July 21, 1880 – May 4, 1919) was a Slovak astronomer, aviator, military general, and statesman. One of the three founding fathers of Czechoslovakia, he signed the declaration of independence from the Austro-Hungary Empire in October 1918 and served as the first Minister of War.

Figure 1



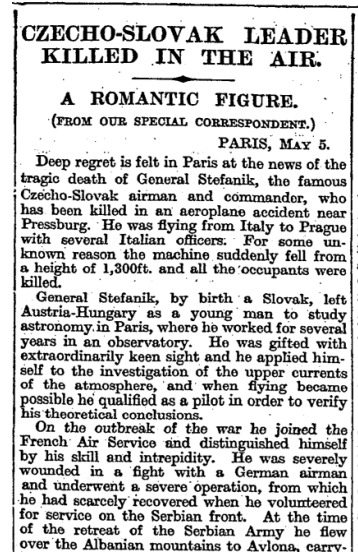
Štefánik trained as an astronomer and worked for the Paris-Meudon Observatory. His work earned him the Prix Jules Janssen in 1907.

Figure 2



During World War I, he joined the French Army and trained as an aviator. During this time, his work and connections with the French proved invaluable during the discussions of independence.

Figure 4



Milan Rastislav Štefánik is buried on Bradlo Hill in Brezová pod Bradlom and is remembered and honored today.

Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 3



On October 18, 1918, he, along with **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk** and **Edvard Beneš**, signed the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence, also known as the “Washington Declaration” formally uniting the Bohemian, Moravian, and Slovakian people and lands.

Figure 7



Figure 1 Prix Janssen. Image by Hirle. September 2016. Used under CC BY-SA 4.0 license.

Figure 2 Gen. M.R. Štefánik's Hat. Image by Kiwiev. January 2014. Used under CCo 1.0 license. Artifact located in the Slovak National Museum.

Figure 3 October 1919 map of the Czechoslovak Republic. In the public domain.

Figure 4 Czecho-Slovak Leader Killed In The Air. *The Times*, 6 May 1919, p. 11.

Figure 5 General M.R. Štefánik. Issued 5 Feb. 1946. 20-Koruna. Purple Brown. SG CZ 462a. Engraved by Jindra Schmidt.

Figure 6 Aviator statue at Štefánik's Observatory on Petrin Hill, Prague, Czech Republic. Photograph by Lubomir.ludvik and used under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.

Figure 7 Centenary of death of Milan Štefánik (1880-1919). Souvenir sheet. Issued 3 May 2019. Multicolor. Scott's SK 818.