

NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION

April 24, 2002, Volume 9, No.14

THE PRAGUE POST

The Prague Post, April 17, page A1

'EU says decrees not entry issue'

Before reading:

When did WWII start and how? How did it end? How was the Czech Republic liberated? What do the WWII statistics say?

In groups discuss what you know about the Beneš Decrees. If you do not know enough, find more information. In your opinion, are the Beneš Decrees as big an issue as the media and some European countries present it? Why? Why not?

Questions after reading:

1. What did Günter Verheugen say about the Beneš Decrees?
2. What does the joint statement of Prime Minister Miloš Zeman and Günter Verheugen state about the Beneš Decrees?
3. What did Prime Minister Miloš Zeman say about the European Union at a press conference?
4. What does the article say about the history of the Beneš Decrees?
5. What have the expelled and some foreign politicians called for?
6. How did the Czech officials respond?
7. What was Günter Verheugen's mission? Give as many details as you can.
8. What is the Chamber of Deputies due to discuss?
9. What is Václav Klaus' opinion?
10. What countries want to enter the EU? What is the Czech Republic's position among other candidates?

Vocabulary:

decree – dekret, rozhodnutí
accession negotiations – vstupní jednání
to seize – zabavit, znárodnit, zkonfiskovat
to pen – napsat, načrtnout
to curb – omezit, potlačit
expelled – vypovězení, vyhnání lidí
to condemn – odmítnout, odsoudit
to repeal – zrušit, prohlásit za neplatn
candid – upřímný, otevřen
marginal – nepodstatný, méně v znamn
backbencher – řadový člen parlamentu (bez funkce ve vládě nebo opozičním kabinetu)

In *The Prague Post*, dated April 24, you can read about Eduard Beneš' life in 'The hard legacy of Eduard Beneš' article written by Václav Havel.

The Prague Post, April 17, page A3

'North Bohemia school holds a sad record'

Before reading:

Do you think that it is good or bad to have many pupils in a class? What advantages does a small class have? Are there any disadvantages?

What do you know about Hřensko? Have you ever been there? What national park is close to Hřensko? Describe it.

Questions after reading:

1. What is the Hřensko Elementary School world record?
2. How many pupils attended the elementary school in Hřensko at the beginning of the school year? How many is it now? Why?
3. Is the teacher happy about the situation?
4. How did the pupils in Hřensko Elementary School feel after their school-mates had to go to the other school?
5. What is the history of the school?
6. What does the building, where the school is, look like?
7. How many computers does the school need? How many will it get from the Education Ministry?
8. Who pays for the school? Who supports the school with funding for out-of-town trips?
9. How many new students will enroll next school year?
10. Why there are not more new students?

Vocabulary:

abundant – hojný, vydatný
to sew – šít
merchant – obchodník
to heed – mít respekt
to enroll – zapsat, přijmout (do školy)

WORKSHOP

Prague Post Endowment Fund would like to invite you to the workshop "How to Effectively Teach Controversial Issues".

When? Saturday, May 4th, 2002

What time? from 12 to 3.45 p.m.

Where? ITC building, Kaprova 14, Praha 1

The Prague Post, April 24, page A3

'Café offers job training for the disabled'

Before reading:

Do you think that disabled people live in isolation? If so, why? How do non-disabled people treat them? How does society accept them? How do you see them?

How can disabled people take part in society?

Questions after reading:

1. What is the main goal and purpose of the project? Who started the project? What other projects is the organization starting?
2. Who is Jana Ungrová? What does she do?
3. How many mentally disabled people work at 'Vesmírna'?
4. What do the mentally disabled people do in 'Vesmírna'? What skills do they need to acquire?
5. Do mentally disabled people in the Czech Republic have many opportunities to get involved in society? How do they usually live?
6. Who is Jana Motylíková? What does she say about 'Vesmírna' and opportunities for the disabled?
7. What does the article say about lives of the disabled under communism and now?
8. What role do the NGOs play?
9. According to Ms. Motylíková, why is contact with the disabled important for the non-disabled? Have any unpleasant situations occurred?
10. What plans does Jana Ungrová have?

Vocabulary:

lever – páčka
gingerly – (velmi) opatrně
meager – skrovný, chudý
piddling – bezvýznamný, nepodstatný



The workshop will be held in English. It is free of charge. Teachers traveling to the workshop from outside Prague can have their travel costs reimbursed.

To register, please contact the Prague Post Endowment Fund, Štěpánská 20, Praha 1
Tel: 02/9633 4465, Fax: 02/9633 4463

E-mail: foundation2@praguepost.cz

LESSON PLAN: They live here too

What is most important in your life? What is the most precious thing in your life?

Is it your family, your friends, good health, your beliefs? Anything else?

Discuss all the above points.

Is it completely normal for everyone to enjoy good health, to have a functioning family and friends one can rely on, to have a place to live?

Think about people who cannot fully enjoy the above benefits. What has happened to them? How do they live? Do they have any opportunities to participate fully in society?

The exact number of how many disabled people live in the Czech Republic is not known. Some statistics of the Cabinet show that it may be about 10 per cent of the population.

Do disabled people have the same chances and possibilities as people without disabilities? If no, should this be changed?

PHYSICALLY DISABLED PEOPLE

Think about the things and activities you do every day.

Do you think all the activities you do every day (even the simplest ones) are easy for some physically disabled people? Think of examples.

Disabled people sometimes need help. It could be the help of a family member, a friend, a nurse, a volunteer, an interpreter for sign language (for deaf people), or of a dog, for example. These "assistants" often need special training, but each one of us can help a blind person, for example, cross a busy street. Disabled people also need some special technologies, which can make their lives easier. You can read about these technologies on the last page of *Newspapers in Education*.

Did you watch the Winter Olympic Games? Did you watch the Winter Paralympic Games? If you did not have a chance to watch the Paralympics, find information about it and share it with your class. Who was there? What do you think about the disabled people who took part at the Paralympics?

Do you know a physically disabled person in your neighborhood? What does he/she do? Does he/she have any opportunities to get involved in events that are taking place in your area?

Think about your city, town or village. Is it easy for disabled people to cross the street? What about the public transportation? Can these people get to the cinema, offices etc.? How does society treat them?

Find out if your local government or any

NGO (non-governmental organization) in your area is involved in the issue of physically disabled people. What do they do? How do they make lives of disabled people easier?

DO RESEARCH:

Using a map of your town, draw places (crossings of the roads, public buildings, public transportation stops, etc.) that are accessible to people on wheel chairs (places without barriers) and places that are hard for them.

Map places that could be dangerous for blind people (e.g. heavy traffic, pavement with many obstacles, etc.).

Think about other difficulties physically disabled people might have, and think about ways the problems could be dealt with and eventually solved.

Map places where disabled people can meet (community centers, for example) and where they can socialize with other people.

Talk to physically disabled people in your area and ask them about their needs. Show them your map and have them evaluate it. Note their comments and suggestions.

After you prepared the map with notes, offer it to your local government or an NGO. Ask them to consider the suggestions.

How did you approach your local government and NGOs?

What was a result of your meeting? Was anything done in order to improve the lives of disabled people? Let us know about your project.

MENTALLY DISABLED PEOPLE

What do you know about lives of mentally disabled people?

How does our society accept mentally disabled people? Does it treat them as equal citizens or as less important people? Is it normal to separate people? How do you treat them? Do you know how to behave towards them?

Can mentally disabled people be involved in society?

In groups discuss how mentally disabled people can take part in society and think about ways they could be integrated.

A coffee house called 'Vesmírna' has recently been opened in Prague. Mentally disabled people work there and thus they are involved in society. For more information about this integration project, read an article in *The Prague Post* newspaper published on April 24, page A3 (questions and vocabulary to this article are on the front page of *Newspapers in Education*).

ELDERLY PEOPLE

The majority of people work and contribute to themselves and society. When

people get old, their deeds and contributions to society should be recognized and appreciated.

Why do we sometimes say that old people are childish? Is it their fault? Do we appreciate them and do we try to understand them? Do we care about their time? Do they have opportunities to meet other people and socialize with them?

Have you ever heard the saying that the only just thing in this world is time? What do you think about it?

What would you like to do when you are retired? How would you want people to behave to you when you are old?

CHILDREN IN NEED

Not all children are so lucky that they have families, or functional families.

Where do these children stay? Who cares for them? How are they educated? Why do they live in children's housing? How do they enter society? Discuss these questions in pairs.

DEBATE:

There has been a recent tendency towards integrating disabled students into non-specialized schools, and not having separated schools. In groups, discuss what non-disabled students can learn from disabled students and vice versa. Would it broaden their view? Could it enrich you somehow?

In pairs, discuss the following question: What is important for disabled and elderly people? Is it

- love and respect of other people
- chances to integrate into society
- commiseration
- indifference and intolerance
- help?

Vocabulary:

commiseration – soucit

Non-disabled people can help disabled people live a dignified and full life. Not only by aiding them, but also by the attitudes towards them and by recognizing that they are equal.

Do you think that non-disabled people should help disabled people? Why? Can you assist disabled people, or people in need? In groups discuss how you (as individuals) could help.

Websites and contact information:

OKAMŽIK – občanské sdružení – Tel: 02/3337 9196

HESTIA – Národní dobrovolnické centrum – Tel.: 02/2487 2075

HELP TRANS – contact your regional office of The Red Cross

www.paraple.cz

www.ligavozeic.cz

www.ticho.cz

www.bezbarier.cz

What is life like for blind people? - INTERVIEW

Pavla Francová was born with a congenital eye disease. When she was 15 she was struck blind completely and she started using a white cane. After graduating from the Philosophical Faculty in Prague with a degree in English, she studied psychotherapy and counseling in the U.S.A. She is 30 now and teaches English and Czech to foreigners, works on textbooks for the blind, and gets involved in the activities for the visually impaired. She has an assistant who sometimes helps her with things that may be too difficult for a blind person. Pavla has many friends who help her and aid her. For example she has one friend who jogs with her regularly. We asked her what life is like for blind people in the Czech Republic.

Have the lives of blind people changed since 1989?

Yes, a lot. When I was small, for example, I was not allowed to study at normal elementary school. I had to attend a special school, and, of course, this had its advantages and disadvantages. The situation is different in these days. Blind people can choose a type of school they want to attend. It is up to the director of that school, to accept the disabled person, or not. But possibilities exist now. Many blind people work in very interesting positions and thus 'pave' the way for others. The unemployment rate among the blind is, however, the biggest problem for this minority group.

There is a very well-constructed navigational system for blind people in Prague. Specialists from around the world come to Prague to learn about this system. Blind people have a small transmitter, by which they can, for example, turn on a sound system in the underground, which can tell them which tram is coming and where it is going and so on. On the metro platforms

there are lowered lines built into the cement floors, which guide people using white canes. This system is really excellent. The thing that sometimes fails is the human factor. Unmarked excavations or parked trucks on the pavement or protruded bars in the height of a face are very dangerous for the blind. We are witnessing indifference to the needs of the blind sometimes.

What is the situation in the rest of the Czech Republic?

The idea of a system with no barriers for the blind is spreading quite quickly here, which is a very positive sign. The situation for people in wheel chairs is more complicated and a complex system which aids them is not wide spread.

What about technology and blind people?

We have come a long way. We have computer technology, which has special speech synthesizers, and which can transfer text from a monitor to a tactile display and the blind can read Braille from it. This way we can work with the Internet which opens up totally new opportunities in communication and accessing the information inaccessible to us before. Reading newspapers independently, unimaginable before, suddenly becomes possible with this great technology.

Has the behavior and attitude towards the blind changed?

Definitely. It is due to a growing consciousness and better information. An increasing number of people now know how they can help. Some are still inhibited and do not feel comfortable talking to a blind person. But generally speaking, they have realized that meeting and talking to disabled people is something completely normal. Some time ago, for example, I had problems when I wanted to swim in a swimming pool, but now people have gotten used to seeing people with a white cane

everywhere and they are not surprised.

How can I help a blind person, lets say, in the underground?

Rule number one is: ask the person if he or she needs or wants help. Then you should ask how to help, so that your aid is effective and does not hurt the disabled person. People who want to help should never lead the blind somewhere without his or her consent. It might be useful for sighted people to see blind people as individuals who just happen to be blind but who can think. Then their meeting in the street can turn into a real human encounter of two equal partners in a particular situation in which one happens to appreciate the helping hand of the other.

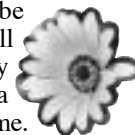
Can people get actively involved in aiding the disabled?

Help and assistance is always important. There is, for example, a civic association called OKAMŽIK (Moment) that provides the blind with personal assistance. Volunteers wanting to help the disabled can get the information at HESTIA too. And for example, The Red Cross has launched a regional HELP TRANS program for secondary school students who want to help the disabled.

(Contact info can be found on page 2)

What is your life philosophy?

I am trying to be a decent human being, continuously checking whether I am still in touch with truthfulness towards myself. I am on guard not to yield to various societal pressures about what to do and how, or to be too quick to accept praise for something undeserved or something that should be a norm for me rather than a thing to make fuss about. I wish to be trustworthy for myself as well as for others. The world is very generous to me and I've got a lot to be thankful for all the time.



STORY TIME: The Wooden Bowl

There was a celebration on the day that the old man came to live on the small farm owned by his son and his son's young wife. A fine meal was set on the table. "We hope you will be comfortable here," said the son to his father.

"As long as I have family around me," the old man said, wiping a tear from his eye, "I will be happy. Perhaps there is still enough strength in these old limbs to help a bit on your farm. I want to be useful."

"You are welcome to work as you will or rest when you want, Father," said the son. The next morning, the old man went out to the barn to feed the pigs and chickens. He scooped the chicken feed into a wooden bowl and scattered it about the yard.

Each day the old man did as much as his body would allow, and each night he sat with his son and his son's wife at dinner. He eagerly looked forward to the day when his first grandchild would be born. Finally, the child arrived. The old man

held his grandson with great tenderness.

"Be careful how you hold him," said the young wife. "Your hands are trembling." The old man had noticed it too. The pain he felt in his joints had increased each day, and now his hands were betraying him.

Then the old man's changes came quickly. By the time the small boy could sit, the old man found it harder to cast the chicken feed from the feeding bowl. His hands could not grip a pitchfork.

By the time the grandson could walk, the old man could not stride any longer into the barn. His steps were slow. His back was beginning to stoop. He worked as he could but did not accomplish much. Times were hard and the son worked from early hours to sunset along with his wife. One night after a grueling day in the fields, the son and his tired wife sat down to a hastily prepared dinner. The boy sat next to his grandpa as the wife placed a large bowl of porridge on the table.

"Times have been better," she said.

Grandpa tried to ladle some porridge. His hand shook so much that he toppled the bowl onto the dusty floor. "How clumsy!" the wife shouted.

It was more that the old man could bear. He slowly got up and left the table. His son ignored the problem and sat silently as his grumbling wife cleaned up the mess. Each day the old man's condition worsened. He began to drool. The wife sat him at a small table in the corner, away from the family as they ate.

One night the old man's trembling hand knocked his porcelain eating bowl off his little table. It crashed on the floor. The wife went out to the barn and got the wooden bowl used for chicken feed. She filled it with food and served the old man another supper. "Now here is one you won't break," she said. Her husband stared into the distance and again said nothing. *(cont. on the following page)*

One day when the young child was older and had learned to speak, his father and mother found him industriously chipping away with a stone at two chunks of wood. "What are you doing?" the boy's father asked. His son replied, "I am making you each a present!" "What could it be?" his father asked with delight. "I am making the wooden chicken-feed

bowls I will give you and Mama to eat from when you are old," said the boy. The boy's words stunned his father. The future loomed before him, and he saw himself old and forgotten. When his vision cleared, he noticed his frail father sitting alone in the corner. He gathered the old man in his arms and led him to the table and set a place for him with their best dishes. That night as the

young boy watched, his father fed the old grandpa tenderly with a silver spoon. He handed his wife a cloth napkin, and she gently wiped the old man's drooling lips. From that day on, they both treated the old man with the same kindness and respect they hoped to receive from their own son in their elderly years.

(shortened, from 'Wisdom Tales' by Heather Forest)

Technology for the disabled

For the last few decades, scientists and engineers have developed special devices for the disabled that have greatly advanced the conventional ones that already exist. Almost all of these current devices would not exist without the incorporation of computers and computer technology.

Computers for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Computer programs and devices are available that allow people to input text using Braille keys on an otherwise regular keyboard. With certain printers they can produce their work as either a Braille copy or normal ink text. If a blind person does not know Braille, helpful devices such as speech synthesizers can speak the letters, words, and sentences shown on the screen. This is particularly helpful with such things as word processors, email and the Internet.

The Internet isn't a perfect solution however. There have been some problems. Mostly with Hypertext coding, multiple page frames and bit-mapped images. These things are major hindrances for sight-impaired screen readers. The best solution for these problems has been to provide text-only versions of the same sites (or a no frames option).

Computers for the Physically Challenged

Most people with physical disabilities use canes, crutches, or braces to aid in walking. More people need wheelchairs to be mobile.

Computers are especially useful for people with physical disabilities. For example, sufferers of cerebral palsy (a condition caused by brain damage, which impairs movement and sometimes limits speech) can communicate using a computer device. One of these devices is the Alternative Communication System, which helps disabled people enter information by Morse code. One switch at the side of their head controls the dot signal, while another produces the dash signal.

The device, as well as many others, uses special hardware that allows the disabled to work. Special electrodes can pick up the small electrical signals created by the slightest movement in a muscle. These electrodes are able to detect the electrical currents generated by the moving of the muscle. The electrode connects to another device, which operates a switch that controls inputs into the computer.



A recent invention by Dean Kamen, an American inventor credited with creating the world's first portable kidney dialysis machine, may completely revolutionize the lives of the physically challenged. Most people who can't walk get around using technology which basically hasn't changed in 200 years. They're using the wheelchair.

To be fair, wheelchairs can get people around, but they don't always go the places that disabled people want them to go. Disabled people in wheelchairs are basically confined to the few smooth easy-rolling spaces that the world has. Mr. Kamen decided that the physically impaired shouldn't be limited to the smooth spaces any longer.

His new invention can take wheelchair riders to places they'd never thought imaginable on their own. This new wheelchair, which is slimmer and lighter than conventional chairs, can not only climb up and down stairs, ride on sand and other difficult terrain, but can stand up and balance the way that standing humans do. This means that people in using this chair can rise beyond their seated height and pick things up off high shelves. The freedom this device will give them is immeasurable.

The chair is full of complicated gyroscopes, electric motors and computers. Since a wheelchair is a medical device it has to go through rigorous testing. With this idea in mind, Kamen and his staff have rocked, rolled, bounced, drowned and abused this new machine to ensure that people using it will be safe.

Computers for the Hearing Impaired

A deaf person can learn to communicate in many ways. They can learn through sight what the ear cannot hear. Lip-reading, Sign Language, reading, and writing all help them to learn. A computer is a wonderful device for the hearing impaired because computer hardware and software (by their nature) commonly produces visual output. Therefore deaf or hearing impaired people can utilize the same programs that everyone else uses.

Programs have developed to offer training and practice for the hearing impaired in such things as sign language, finger spelling and even lip reading. Of course

these programs are not just limited to the deaf or hearing-impaired. Anyone can gain experience and learn from such software, especially family members and friends of the hearing impaired. All the user needs is a system with a microphone and the right software.

The use of email, messaging and chat programs are taken for granted by most, but these wonderful innovations are terrific for the hearing-impaired because they don't require hearing or speech to use them.

The future outlook for people with disabilities is excellent. Computers have and are giving the disabled a powerful tool for achieving independence in their daily lives. Not only that, but it is immensely helpful for learning new job skills. The most important effect that a computer and an Internet connection can have on the disabled is the ability to immerse themselves in a world that might otherwise be inaccessible. A disabled person using a computer has access to vast amounts of information at their fingertips.

Vocabulary:

device – zařízení, vynález
hindrance – překážka, zábrana
to impair – poškodit, oslabit
cerebral palsy – mozková obrna
to confine – omezit
rigorous – pečlivý, přísný
at one's fingertips – na dosah ruky

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