

# Dr. Václav Vojtěch - the first Czech in Antarctica

## *The purpose of the exhibit:*

The purpose of this exhibit is to document from the beginning the postal correspondence of the first Czechoslovak participant in the polar Antarctic expedition. Starting from his departure to Antarctica and his very important first steps as a participant of the First Byrd Antarctic Expedition 1928-30. I wanted to show with this exhibit that despite the adversity and the first rejection by R. E. Byrd, Vojtěch did not let himself be discouraged and finally took part in this expedition. His desire was so great that he rose through a stoker, steward and sailor to the position of musher. Unfortunately, this expedition did not allow him to explore the Antarctic region as he would have liked.

## *Historical background of the exhibit:*

The mysterious "Terra australis incognita", or "Unknown Southern Land", has attracted sailors and explorers since ancient times. They had been tentatively approaching this continent for hundreds of years by exploring areas around Antarctica, but it was not until the early 19th century that sailors were able to get close enough to actually discover it. Then expeditions began explorations. First around and off the coast of Antarctica, and then they went inland to better understand the weather and living conditions in Antarctica. It was exciting and often dangerous for scientists and explorers to make new geographical explorations. Gradually, they learnt more and more about the area, until the conquest of the South Pole, which completed the greatest goal of polar expeditions in the early 20th century. Our polar explorers were only pioneers in this respect, but their diligence and extraordinary interest in the area brought them not only success but also the admiration of other expedition members.

## *Significance of the exhibit:*

This exhibit summarizes the course of activities of the first Czechoslovak polar explorer in Antarctica. Related to this there is its postal documentation, which have been preserved in only a few pieces and is now almost unavailable.

## *Extraordinary exhibit items:*

The material from Dr. Václav Vojtěch, who was a participant in the First Byrd Antarctic Expedition, contains a large part of the items that represent most of the gems in Czechoslovak polar postal history.

## *Personal research and used literature:*

The focus of my own research is primarily on determining and confirming the date of mail sent in the Antarctic region from the individual dispatch sections listed on the correspondence, as well as whether the postal rate is appropriate for the period and area. The information is mainly derived from foreign literature, journals with polar themes published by polar clubs in England, USA, Czech Republic, etc. Another equally important aspect is the cooperation with domestic polar collectors. Among the books I have used I would mention for example:

*Topičem, námořníkem a psovodem za jižním polárním kruhem* - Dr. Václav Vojtěch

*Bílá pevnina (Hledání posledního světadílu)* - Stanislav Bárta

## *Map of Antarctica and some stations located on it*



## *Plan of the Exhibit:*

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<i>Vojtěch and his correspondence from the expedition</i>	p. 2
<i>Departure and first return from Antarctica</i>	p. 3-4
<i>Second return from Antarctica</i>	p. 5-6
<i>Dog training in New Zealand</i>	p. 7-8
<i>The first flight over the South Pole</i>	p. 9-10
<i>Finally with dogs in Antarctica</i>	p. 11-12
<i>Return to civilization</i>	p. 13-14
<i>Across the USA to the C.R. and his tragic death</i>	p. 15-16

## *Publishing activity:*

As part of his own publishing activities, the author publishes articles in polar journals at home and abroad. He also published articles in a philatelic magazine and catalog of the National Exhibition of Postage Stamps Liberec 2019 and others publications.

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