At the end of 1938, Arne Laurin (1889-1945), editor of the newspaper Prager Presse, contacted the American embassy in Prague. He offered to sell some materials by the Czechoslovak Presidents Tomáš Garigue Masaryk (1850-1937) and Edward Beneš (1884-1948) for several thousands dollars. The forthright offer to sell documents relating to the "notorious" anti-fascist politicians during the period when the war with Hitler was in the offing might have been construed as the beginning of an espionage affair. However, the documents in question were "only" manuscripts, scholarly papers and books. The offer was clearly intended for the library of an American University.

At that time, the Department of History at UC Berkeley, was one of the outstanding centers on Czechoslovak studies in the USA. Consequently, it was the University of California that received the offer from Prague. Professor Robert Joseph Kerner (1887-1956),** the author of numerous works on Czechoslovak history and a former student of Masaryk, recognized in the Laurin collection "a rare source ... of great and enduring value," "a virtually complete collection of published materials in all languages by and about Masaryk and Beneš."

In a period of several weeks private funding was obtained. The Regents of the University immediately began to arrange for the purchase of the collection. However, even the quick action on part of the University was not fast enough. On March 15, 1939, the German army occupied Czechoslovakia. In Prague, works by Masaryk and Beneš were banned and many of them gradually destroyed. The Nazis frenetically tried to remove all the remnants and symbols of Czech independence. Laurin and his wife escaped to the USA but their treasure remained in Bohemia. Miraculously, the collection survived the war. "Fifty barrels" of books stored at first in a shipping yard, then in the US consulate, and finally in a private building, eluded German attention.

After eight years in Central European hideouts, the books arrived at Berkeley in December 1946, just barely escaping another disaster. In the 1950's, the new Czech government declared all works by and about Masaryk and Beneš libri prohibiti. The books that survived the German
occupation were either destroyed or removed from public libraries. The authorities published "unknown" Masaryk papers that were to prove his participation in organizing terrorist activities in Soviet Russia. Masaryk's name even appeared in the infamous political trials of 1952. In the style of the contemporary novels by Robert Ludlum, Masaryk's liaison of WWI, Emanuel Voska, was accused of organizing a US spy network among the leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia sometimes during WWII.

In view of the fate of Masaryk's and Beneš' works at home, the primary significance of the collection at Berkeley is the preservation of the enormous literary output of both statesmen. It has been scattered in hundreds of books, pamphlets, articles, reports, speeches, and reviews. The scope of Masaryk's literary activity is apparent in the fact that his Collected Works were to be published in 30 volumes of 15,000 pages combined length. The collection contains all books published by Edward Beneš before 1937. Of the total number of 71 books and pamphlets written by Masaryk, the collection has the first editions of 55 titles. In addition to the scores of articles by Masaryk bound as separates, the collection has two journals edited by Masaryk, the Atheneum (1884-1886) and the complete series of Naše Doba (Our Times). In Naše Doba Masaryk published almost 300 essays and reviews. In addition to all the standard editions of Masaryk speeches, the collection contains rare original copies of several Masaryk discourses held in the Reichsrat, in 1907-1908, in Russia in 1917, and in Czechoslovakia in 1918-1920.

Masaryk published dozens of his articles either anonymously or under pseudonyms. In the most controversial of Masaryk's unsigned essays which appeared in 1920-1924, the author, already President of Czechoslovakia, launched a series of attacks against his political rivals. The collection has several monographs which either authenticate Masaryk's anonymous works (e.g. František-Marie Leichter's list of Masaryk monograms, analyses by Josef Werstadt) or discuss the question of Masaryk's authorship (the essays by Jiří Štěpán and Ivan Herben). The work on authentication of Masaryk unsigned literary output was short-lived. It began shortly after Masaryk's death in 1937. In 1938, the president's son, Jan Masaryk (1886-1948), succeeded in convincing interested journalists and scholars to "postpone" the publication of their new findings. The Berkeley collection offers scholars the necessary tools to resume the tasks.

The collection contains 1600 books which enable one to research the biography of Masaryk and Beneš, and the broad background of their political and literary activity. Almost all of the books are rare items. Their main topics pertain to the movement for Czechoslovak independence in Bohemia, Russia, France and particularly in the United States during WWI, the Czech military actions in Russia in 1918-1920, and the political opposition to Masaryk and Beneš in Czechoslovakia during 1920-1937. The material includes memoirs of representatives of the Czechoslovak political and cultural life and their recollections of, and polemics with both Presidents. Housed in the Main Library and partly in the Bancroft Library, the collection also contains an assemblage of some 13,000-15,000 newspaper clippings. These offer a large number of articles dealing with every possible aspect of Masaryk's and Beneš' lives.

The Masaryk-Beneš Collection also contains a few unique pieces. Edward Beneš' unpublished typescripts analyze Czechoslovak foreign policy in 1921, 1926, 1927, and 1934. Some of them are corrected in Beneš' own hand. The stenographic transcript of the proceedings of Prague judicial court of 13-14 May 1914, against the Czech politician Karel Švihla, a friend of the
Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Este, allows one to trace in detail Masaryk's participation in the trial. The typed manuscript of the minutes of Masaryk's trial of 23 May 1906, reveals an attempt on part of the Austrian authorities to discredit Masaryk in the eyes of the Czech public and to have him dismissed from his professorship at Prague University. The authorities accused Masaryk of attacks on religion in general, and on the Catholic Church in particular. Masaryk own speeches during the trial, as well as the entire lengthy proceedings, have never been published. The manuscripts, given to Arne Laurin by Masaryk defense attorney Václav Bouček in 1937, are probably the only existing record of the event.

A rare collection of Masaryk by his first love Alžběta Jelínková-Wágnerová is an example of unexplored material hidden in the assemblage of newspaper clippings. Her story of Masaryk's early amorous adventures offers no dramatically new revelations. However, the subsequent fate of Masaryk's girlfriend may illustrate some aspects of Masaryk social policy in Czechoslovakia which eventually contributed to the collapse of the democratic regime. In a 1938 interview, Alžběta Jelínková- Wágnerová ended her narrative with a succinct account of her current situation: I am old, very old. When Masaryk lived, he would never forget to send me flowers and some money on my personal anniversaries. I have three children. The oldest one is retired janitor; he himself has a hard time taking care of his wife and three children. He gives me 20 Kc a month. My second son is an invalid without any income. The third emigrated to Argentina six years ago. I wonder if he is still alive. Now, from time to time, I am in need. I do not have any subsistence.

*The Masaryk-Beneš Collection is a part of the Slavic and East European collections located on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley. Many of the items in this collection have been preserved on microfilm through a Title II-C grant from the Department of Education. A computer printout of records for titles in this collection can be consulted in the Reference Room of the Doe Library (fDB2190.A12.M38 1985).

**His papers are now available for research at the Bancroft Library.