

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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NEWSLETTER

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Plans for Fall Gala Set Civil Society Vision Award to be Presented to Mayor Richard Daley



Mayor Richard Daley: Photo Credit: www.fame-chicago.com

AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek has announced that the organization will be hosting its annual award gala in the international city of Chicago. To be held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel on November 10, 2009, the Gala will celebrate 20 years of Czech freedom, democracy, and economic prosperity, plus the reconstruction of the Woodrow Wilson Monument in Prague's central city.

The gala event will highlight the extraordinary personal partnership between Woodrow Wilson and Tomáš G. Masaryk that resulted in the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1919. In those early days, Masaryk spent time in both Washington and Chicago, teaching at the University of Chicago and advocating for Czech independence before finally proclaiming Czech Independence in Philadelphia.

All proceeds from the gala dinner will go toward rebuilding, from scratch, the Woodrow Wilson Monument in Prague, destroyed by the Nazis in 1941. The Wilson Monument was, and again will be, a magnificent symbol of the rich moral and material ties the United States has with the Czech lands and its peoples.

At the dinner, AFoCR will present the 2009 Civil Society Vision Award to Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago. Since the Velvet Revolution in 1989, Mayor Daley has initiated close links between the city of Chicago and the Czech Republic. These encompass culture, trade, investment, people-to-people exchanges, and the sister cities relationship between Prague and Chicago. Mayor Daley, along with Lord Mayor of Prague Pavel Bem, co-chaired the successful "Prague Days in Chicago" in June 2007 organized by the Mayor's Office, the Chicago Sister Cities International Program, the City of Prague, and the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chicago. In a culminating ceremony in Dvorak Park, Mayor Daley

rededicated Cermak Road, the main street of the historically Czech suburbs of Cicero and Berwyn, in honor of Chicago's 35th mayor, Czech-born Anton Cermak. In 2008, Chicago again celebrated its Czech heritage with Czecho de Mayo, a commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the historic visit by Czechoslovak Liberator Tomáš G. Masaryk.

Chicago and the Czech lands share a long history of friendship and cooperation. Since the mid-1850's, Chicago's Czech community has contributed greatly to the educational, economic, and cultural fabric of this diverse city. In just two decades since shedding its totalitarian shackles, the Czech Republic has remade itself into a free, democratic, modern, and prosperous member of the western family of nations. One of its best friends along this path has been Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and at the November 10th gala, the American Friends of the Czech Republic will duly recognize him for helping to bring even closer together the American and Czech peoples.

EVENT AND TICKET DETAILS



**2009 AFoCR Award Gala
Chicago
November 10, 2009
Ritz-Carlton Hotel
Honoree
Mayor Richard M. Daley**

The Gala will be held at the elegant Ritz-Carlton Chicago Hotel, 160 E. Pearson St., Chicago, IL 60611, on Tuesday, November 10, 2009. The gala will begin with a cocktail reception at 6:00 PM with dinner following at 7:00 PM. Individual ticket prices start at \$500 per person. Tables can be purchased at four levels: \$5k, \$10k, \$25k, and \$50k. Please call PJH and Associates at **312-553-2000** to purchase tickets for the event. Rooms will be provided at the Ritz at a discounted rate for overnight accommodations. Please call **312 266-1000** or **800 621-6906** for reservations, and mention the event name for a special rate.



Downtown Chicago, site of November Gala

The Czech Presidency of the EU: Grace under Pressure

by Thomas A. Dine,
President,
American Friends
of the Czech Republic



Dear American Friends of the Czech Republic,

The six-month Czech presidency of the European Union was filled with controversy. Many serious and contentious issues came to the fore; it is not too soon to look back and begin evaluating this short yet important time in the history of the EU and the Czech Republic.

Most analysts give the Czech Republic high marks for leading the essential international body through a very difficult period. With assumption of the gavel from the French on January 1, 2009, serious and challenging continental and global issues dominated the agenda, the most critical being the dramatic economic turn-down that negatively and directly affected each member's financial and economic state of affairs. Measures to prevent distortion of Europe's single market and its single currency were passed, and measures were taken to prevent protectionist proposals becoming the policy of member countries. In pushing these measures, the Czech Republic remained true to its own motto, a "Europe without Barriers!" Despite this rigorous work, three countries, Ireland, Latvia, and Hungary, remain financially set back on their heels.

Two military conflicts consumed the Czech presidency. First was the harsh aftermath of Russia's volatile and violent military attack on Georgia in August 2008 that set a precedent and continues to threaten the European continent today. The Czechs led the EU in working to sustain Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity through the first half of 2009. EU-Georgian relations, especially via the Eastern Partnership Initiative, became more firm, but Russian soldiers remain on alert inside South Ossetia and Abkhazia, parts of the Georgian Republic. Ukraine in particular continues to feel the cold chill of Russian threats.

Because of the ongoing Georgian crisis and the mid-winter shutdown by Russia of its gas pipeline to Ukraine and various European contractors owing to payments disputes and hardball politics, six EU neighbors (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) signed up in May as part of the Southern Corridor Summit aimed at strengthening Europe's energy independence by diversifying both sources and transit routes of vital imports.

The second military conflict was the Gaza War that broke out between Israel and Hamas in early January. Again the EU tried to mediate between two quarreling parties, searching to find the best route to a cease-fire and freeing up humanitarian corridors. All this occurred despite the lack of consensus and different voices heard among individual European countries, most loudly

from the French. During the devastating winter earthquake in Italy, the EU under the Czech presidency worked closely with the Italian government and local agencies to bring as much aid and comfort to those harmed at ground zero.

While addressing these serious issues and the challenges they posed to EU leadership, the Czechs shepherded the multilateral body with professional competence and a sense of European teamwork among individual countries. The Czechs received praise for running and managing the presidency efficiently, chairing more than 3,000 meetings and moderating discussions fairly. This was demonstrated most clearly at the successful EU-US Summit in Prague in April. Myriad heads of state participated, including President Barack Obama. Owing to Czech leadership, for instance, a common framework was established providing for joint cooperation and coordination by EU member countries to receive prisoners from the Guantanamo facility. A new era of cooperation between the EU and the US commenced.

Two embarrassments, however, blemished the Czech tenure. First was an effort by France, previously occupying the EU presidency, to stay at the forefront of the Brussels pack, aggressively escalating the organization's approach to various problems such as the gas pipeline threat from Russia and the war in the Gaza Strip. President Sarkozy deliberately grabbed the limelight from the normally low-key, consensus organization and the occupant of the presidency's chair. Second was a self-inflicted domestic blow in the spring, a no-confidence vote in parliament forcing the Topolánek government to step down as a result, leaving Prague's leadership of the EU in limbo until a new government led by new Prime Minister Fischer could take the reins of governance.

Over 182 days, the Czechs faced head-on the rough and tumble of international economic and energy politics, of war and stalemate, of bureaucratic wrangling. They showed that a small country can play in the big tent with skill and savvy, they displayed grace under pressure. Czechs showed again and again their talents for de-escalating potentially inflammatory situations, allowing diplomacy to function as Edmund Burke observed over 200 years ago, "The heart of diplomacy is to yield gracefully what you no longer have the power to withhold."

Cordially,

Thomas A. Dine
President

*EU rotating Presidency
Czech Prime Minister
Mirek Topolánek (L)
talks with European
Commission's President
Jose Manuel Barroso
during the press
conference after the first
day meeting of EU spring
summit in Brussels,
capital of Belgium,
March 19, 2009. (Photo:
Xinhua/Wu Wei)*



AFoCR in the News

Photo Credits: AFoCR and Lillis Werder



Czech Senators Jan Nádvořník and Jan Hálek with AFoCR President Tom Dine at Masaryk Memorial



Czech Senators Nádvořník and Hálek with AFoCR Directors at Masaryk Memorial



Czech Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Jaroslav Kurfürst at Embassy Reception in his Honor Receives Award for Achievement from AFoCR President Tom Dine



Special Envoy for Czechs Abroad Ambassador Vladimír Eisenbruk with Deputy Chief of Mission Kurfürst and AFoCR Director Robert Doubek at Masaryk Memorial and at Meeting with AFoCR Directors



AFoCR Director Peter Rafaeli with Sir Nicholas Winton at Reception Celebrating his 100th Birthday at Czech Embassy in London



AFoCR Vice-President Phil Kasik Visits Sculptor Daniel Talavera at Prague Studio where Wilson Monument is Being Recreated



Full-Size Styrofoam Model of Wilson Statue Created by Barrandov Studios, Prague



*Photo credit: Czech Embassy, Wash., DC
Czech Band CzechoMor performs for Guests at the Embassy*



Czech Ambassador Petr Kolář Greets Guests and Highlights Events from the Czech Presidency at the Embassy EU Celebration



Czech Embassy Chefs at EU Celebration

Wilson Monument Project Update

Sculpting of Statue Commenced Styrofoam Model Created



*Wilson Monument Sculptor Daniel Talavera at Work
in his Prague Studio*

As a result of a nine-month competitive selection process, AFoCR in late February executed a contract with a team of three Czech sculptors to recreate the statue of Wilson that will be the centerpiece of the monument. The members of the team are Michal Blažek, Václav Frýdecký, and Daniel Talavera, all experienced and highly regarded artists.

Shortly after their selection, the sculptor team rented a studio in Prague 6. Their first step in creating the sculpture was to build the armature that will form the framework around which the full-sized clay model will take shape. The armature will provide structure and stability and will be in effect the skeleton of the Wilson statue. As part of the armature, the team created a wooden frame for the chair in front of which Wilson stands. They have begun applying and modeling the clay on the arms of the chair.

An important step will happen during the summer: the mounting on the armature of a casting of the original plaster bust of Wilson from 1928. The bust, in the custody of the Czech National Museum, is the only part of the original plaster model of the statue that remains to the present. The remaining parts of the original were destroyed in 1977. When mounted, the bust will provide a key reference point for the overall proportions of the statue. Moreover, with the incorporation of the bust, the recreated statue will be connected directly to the hand of the original sculptor, Albín Polášek. The entire clay model should be completed in twelve to fifteen months.

While the sculptors have been working on the statue, the project's architects have been focusing on the design of the Monument's base and pedestal. The essential factor for this design is the height at which the statue will stand above ground level. To determine the ideal height, the architects and AFoCR have decided to use the same technique as did Polášek, except with a modern twist.

In his biography, "Carving His Own Destiny," by his wife Ruth Sherwood, it is described how Polášek made a full-size cut out of the statue on heavy cardboard. The cardboard replica was put on a wooden pedestal, and in front of the train station the pedestal was adjusted up and down by workers to find the most suitable height in relation to the building and its environs.

Rather than making the full-size replica out of cardboard, AFoCR commissioned Prague's Barrandov Film Studios to make a full-size three-dimensional model out of styrofoam. This ensures that views from all directions will be considered, and the light weight styrofoam will allow the model to be moved with minimal problems of safety and damage. Instead of workers making the height adjustments, AFoCR's architects will rent an industrial scissor-lift vehicle to do that work. This assessment of the pedestal dimensions is planned to be done this summer. Dedication is projected for July 2012.

NCSML Receives Grants from Czech Government & State of Iowa

NCSML Flood Recovery Jumpstarted



Ambassador Petr Kolář presents the gift from the Czech Republic to NCSML President/CEO Gail Naughton and board members, from the left, Carey Downs Gibson, Lu Barta Barron, Board Chair Gary Rozek, and Sue Plotz Olson

An allocation of \$10 million was awarded for flood recovery infrastructure projects to the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library by the State of Iowa in a bill passed by the legislature in May. NCSML President/CEO Gail Naughton said, "This extraordinary support has jumpstarted our recovery process. We are truly grateful for this recognition of the importance of this national museum in the state."

In October 2008, Ambassador Petr Kolář was in Cedar Rapids to present a gift of \$405,000 to the NCSML for flood recovery. "This swift response to our disaster was from the hearts of the people and gave us priceless encouragement at such a difficult time," said Naughton. "When we started to work with the state legislators on the appropriation, the fact that a foreign government was first to step forward influenced their decision."

With the state award, work began June 15 on the first flood recovery project. The restoration of a 1913 building in the heart of Czech Village will result in a new addition to the museum campus where a permanent exhibit on the history of the Czechs in Cedar Rapids and the 2008 flood will reside, along with administrative offices. Design and preparation of this project began when the gift from the Czech Republic was received.

Planning is now underway for the major project to rebuild the exhibition center and research library. A decision by the Board of Directors is expected in September on the components of that project, following a public input process that is gathering suggestions from members and friends across the country. For more information, see the web site www.NCSML.org.

Sir Nicholas Winton Celebrates his 100th Birthday

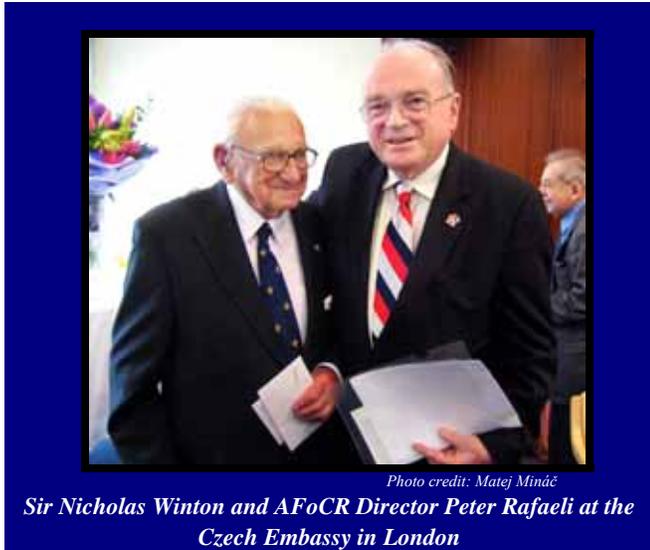


Photo credit: Matej Mináč

Sir Nicholas Winton and AFoCR Director Peter Rafaeli at the Czech Embassy in London

On Saturday, May 16, 2009, Sir Nicholas Winton, savior of 669 children from the former Czechoslovakia in 1939, marked his 100th birthday with a celebration in London's Czech Embassy. Over 250 guests gathered at the Embassy to honor Winton on this remarkable occasion. Amongst the participants were the Charges d’Affaires of the Czech Republic in London, the Slovak Ambassador to the U.K., the British Ambassador to Slovakia, and AFoCR Director Peter Rafaeli, who flew in for the occasion from Philadelphia. Also present were many “Winton children” from the United Kingdom, Canada, Czech Republic, Israel and other countries, many of whom were accompanied by their children and grandchildren.

Peter Rafaeli presented Sir Nicholas with a personal congratulatory letter from H.E. Petr Kolář, Czech Ambassador to the United States. The Ambassador is a staunch supporter of the AFoCR Nicholas Winton Educational Project, without which many of our successes would not have materialized.



Photo credit : picasaweb.com

Czech Embassy in London

Homage to a Great European: Sir Nicholas Winton



Photo Credit: Czech Consul General Chicago website
AFoCR Director Peter Rafaeli delivers keynote speech at Holocaust Museum Event

The Honorable Marek Skolil, Consul General of the Czech Republic in Chicago, organized a special event in honor of Sir Nicholas Winton on May 21, 2009. The Consul General of the U.K. in Chicago, the Prague Sister Cities Program of the City of Chicago, the Chicago Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, and the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie, IL all partnered with Ambassador Skolil to host an evening paying homage to Sir Nicholas Winton, a British citizen who saved during WWII 669 children from Czechoslovakia.

The event was held at the Museum in Skokie and AFoCR Director Peter Rafaeli was the keynote speaker at this memorable event. Over 250 guests attended this special celebration, and the screening of the International Emmy Award winning documentary "Nicholas Winton-The Power of Good" was warmly received as was a copy of the AFoCR published book "Nicholas Winton's Lottery of Life" written by Matej Mináč and translated by Peter Rafaeli. As of today, AFoCR has distributed over 6000 copies of the book free of charge to school throughout the United States.

Please email inquiries about the book to Philadelphia@honorary.mzv.cz.



AFoCR Vice-President Peter Rafaeli (left, front row) at Chicago's Holocaust Museum amidst 250 guests

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