



AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Spring 2007

Newsletter

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Latest on The Visa Issue

Dear Friend of the Czech Republic,

Recently, you may have received our Visa Waiver Bulletin asking for your help. The visa situation changes every day and, before the proposed new legislation for the Visa Waiver Program requirements are discussed in the U.S. Congress, we would like to urge you—as a friend of the Czech Republic—to contact your Senator and Representative with a new message. Please ask your friends and family to do the same. Send letters to those Representatives in whose Congressional districts you reside or do business. Due to delays from the screening of mail sent to Congress, faxed correspondence is much more reliable and expedient when writing to your representatives. You can find the mailing addresses and fax numbers for members of Congress on the Internet. Your Representatives and Senators are listed on www.house.gov or www.senate.gov by entering your ZIP Code.

Czechs have made tremendous progress since throwing off the communist yoke in 1989. By and large their achievements have been by the sweat of their own brows, but there are some areas where they have needed our help. Joining NATO was one. Obtaining fairness on visa-free travel is now another. Czechs should have the same opportunity to visit the United States as enjoyed by citizens of “old Europe.” Let’s get this done so that Czechs can fully and equally rejoin the western family of nations. The Czech people are counting on us. Please inform your elected representatives of your views on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Rokos, President

LETTER SAMPLE:

Dear INSERT REPRESENTATIVE NAME HERE,

I strongly support efforts to promote easier exchange between citizens and business leaders of the Czech Republic and the United States.

I am writing to urge you to co-sponsor and actively

work for the Emanuel-Shimkus Bill: H.R. 1543 – Visa Waiver Modernization Act. This legislation is similar to Senator Voinovich’s original proposal that has been passed with amendments in the Senate as a part of the broader legislation (S.4). Bill H.R. 1543 fully reflects opinion of the U.S. administration and it focuses on increasing the security of the U.S. and its allies through up-to-date and “smart” security measures rather than on the annual number of visa applications denied by the United States. This reform bill creates logical Visa Waiver Program (VWP) standards and strengthens our common security with new safeguards tied to security data weighed against passport information presented by visitors to and from the United States.

I believe the free flow of citizens, business, and tourism through open and secure travel is the foundation of our strong U.S.-European relations.

Currently, the Czech Republic—as well as a number of other European Union (EU) and NATO member countries—is not included in the VWP. Citizens of the Czech Republic must obtain a visa for travel to the United States, while U.S. citizens travel visa-free throughout the EU. It is my belief that this visa inequity not only stands in the way of significant personal and commercial exchange, but also has become a high-profile public issue in the Czech Republic and other excluded EU countries.

It is from this perspective that I am writing to express my serious concern about the Visa Waiver reform included in S.4 through an amendment by Senator Diane Feinstein. While laudable in its intent to expand security measures as well as participation in the VWP, it would effectively exclude the majority of “Roadmap” countries that have been actively working for more than 2 years with the U.S. Government to join the VWP.

The Emanuel-Shimkus Bill does not automatically prevent VWP consideration based on a country’s visa refusal rate. Rather, it reforms the VWP through extensive new requirements for country-by-country review and further advances the substantial improvements in security capacity. I urge you to support Visa Waiver Program reform by co-sponsoring H.R. 1543.

The FUND for AMERICAN STUDIES Teaching Freedom since 1967



On the path to prosperity and democracy, the Czech Republic faces new problems and new opportunities. Where is the nation going to find the leaders who will provide the answers to these challenges and who will guide development in the coming decades?

One training ground is the American Institute on Political and Economic Systems (AIPES), which since 1993 has taught students about limited government and free-market economics. Conducted in Prague, the program emphasizes America's experience with democratic institutions, and it shows how these lessons can be applied to help Eastern Europe.

AIPES is administered by The Fund for American Studies, in partnerships with Georgetown University and Charles University. Approximately 110 students are drawn from across the former Soviet-bloc and from the United States for the three-week program, and over the past 15 years, more than 1,400 students have received this training.

New this year, The Fund for American Studies is offering an even more in-depth chance for Czech student to learn about American economic and political institutions. The Fund has established the Tomas G. Masaryk Scholarship Fund, which will offer a Czech participant in the previous year's AIPES program the opportunity to attend one of the four summer programs The Fund conducts in Washington, D.C.

This opportunity includes the chance to come to Washington, take academic classes for credit at Georgetown, and live in the city among a diverse group of American students from across the country. In addition to their studies, students intern at institutions such as Congress, federal agencies, media outlets, and Fortune 500 companies. They experience first-hand both the theory and actual practice of American democracy and capitalism.

The Tomas G. Masaryk Scholarship Fund is modeled on a similar, successful scholarship for Polish students. Now, The Fund hopes to raise the financial resources needed to make this a permanent addition to the academic offerings for outstanding Czech students.

The Fund is actively seeking donations that will be earmarked for this program. The Tomas G. Masaryk Scholarship Fund commemorates Czechoslovakia's first president by looking ahead to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. If you would like to learn more, or would like to make a contribution to this effort, please call Ed Turner, at The Fund for American Studies, 202-986-0384.

President Havel Visits Washington, D.C.

On Monday, February 26, 2007, the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington D.C. and the Stanley Foundation presented The Burma Forum: Havel, Burma and *Total Denial*, a new initiative that encourages discussions about how the international community can best support efforts to bring about national reconciliation, a transition to democracy, and full restoration of human rights to Burma.

The evening commenced with a 30-minute screening of *Total Denial*, a documentary about human

rights violations occurring in Burma.

The documentary educates the audience on the consequences of prioritizing corporate gain over humanity by examining

the results of UNOCAL/TOTAL financially supporting the military junta that overthrew the freely elected government in 1989 in exchange for protection of its oil pipelines. The Burmese military continues to burn villages, enslave minorities and maintain power due to financial support from UNOCAL/TOTAL.

The screening was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Ambassador Petr Kolar. The panel included former President Vaclav Havel, Director/Producer of *Total Denial*, Milena Kaneva, and Co-Founder and Co-Director of Earth Rights International, Ka Hsaw Wa. The discussion was riveting and enhanced with comments from the Office of the First Lady and the State Department.

The evening concluded with a reception at which all were encouraged to continue conversations on the Forum and to speak with the panelists. For more information on the Burma, please visit www.earthrights.org or www.totaldenialfilm.org

Pictures above are former President Vaclav Havel, his wife Dagmar, with past AFoCR President Phil Kasik, and Michael Rokos



AFoCR Receives Contribution – Winton Book- Printing Doubles

Mrs. June Walker, National President of Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc. informed us of their decision to provide financial support to our Nicholas Winton Educational Project. We are grateful to the Hadassah organization for the generous support which should enable us to print 7-8 thousand additional copies of Matej Mináč's book *Nicholas Winton's Lottery of Life*.

The introduction of this AFoCR project was initiated by Dr. Ivan Dubovicky of the Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr.

Dubovicky met with Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Morlie Levin, Hadassah's Executive Director and during their meeting in Prague he brought to their attention AFoCR's Winton book project.

Hadassah's support will enable AFoCR to distribute, free of charge, about 15 000 copies to school systems interested in using the book in their history, political science and Holocaust education curricula. Recipients will be responsible to cover the shipping expenses from our contract distribution facility in Michigan to their destinations. One donation was in memory of Bohus Benes, on the 30th anniversary of his death. He is the nephew of Dr. Edvard Benes, 2nd president of Czechoslovakia.

For information on AFoCR's Nicholas Winton Educational Project and questions about how to make a tax deductible contribution to the project please contact Peter A. Rafaeli, AFoCR Vice President by e-mail to cz.consul.phl@juno.com or by phone at (215)-646-7777.



June Walker, President and Morlie Levin present to AFoCR and AMB. Kolar \$17,000 check for Winton Project.

A Young Czech's View

By Martin Pokora, Washington Intern from Czech Rep.

Being in America is always special in many ways. It is hard to stay calm when the Land of the free opens its hands. One cannot miss the American positive attitude towards life and work. Theorems and formulas can always be learned at any time; to learn how to look at things from the other people's perspective is priceless experience for future life.

The most memorable event of my stay so far, however, was meeting with another Czech citizen, president Vac-

lav Klaus. As we can see, America is not just a melting pot of many nations, it also brings together people from one country, who might have never met back home.

There is still a large stock of facts to reveal when it comes to common Czech and American history. It is very exciting to find out how much the Czechs had contributed to the development of the USA. This is, unfortunately, not commonly known fact in the mother's country at all and I find it very necessary to start changing it.

It is not a surprising observation that life in America is quite cheap. However, expensive accommodation and services in general make it difficult for the tourists from abroad. It will take a while before Czech salaries rise to a level from where it is more affordable for them to come visit their relatives.

What do contemporary American and Czech people have in common? Both are friendly and like good food. Americans are more conservative and, mainly, patriotic. Even though there are vast differences among regions, being „proud to be an american“ is a phenomenon.

And the american spirit? Driving my car one afternoon I stopped at a red light. On my right hand side a man in his forties was sitting behind the wheel of his pick-up truck. Green liquid was pouring down his broken engine. After we had both pulled over he moaned desperately–„I live 6 hours from here and I don't have any money.“ I offered him \$40, the only money I could find in my wallet. „Would that be enough for repair?“ I asked. „Yes, but...how would I be able to pay you back?“ I just smiled. I will never forget the expression on his face. „This is exactly what keeps America rolling!“ He is right.



President Klaus with the Vice-Chairman of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, of the Czech Republic. Observed T.G.M.'s Birthday during his visit to Washington D.C. in March 2008

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