

Newsletter - Spring 2001



Proposed Statue
of TG Masaryk

A New Monument Rises in Washington

American Friends of the Czech Republic is coordinating a national and international effort to honor President Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia and world leader, with a memorial statue.

[Click here
now
to help
fund
this
effort!](#)

President Masaryk stands in history as the best embodiment of the close ties between the United States and Czechoslovakia. A philosopher, scholar and teacher, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk accomplished a great deal in the United States. During repeated trips he taught in the United States, married a young woman from Brooklyn, NY, and developed personal relationships with some of the most illustrious American political figures of the time. However, all of this pales in comparison to his most notable achievement. For six months Masaryk traveled throughout the United States writing the Czechoslovakian Declaration of Independence from Austria that was signed in Pittsburgh and issued here in Washington, D.C. on October 18, 1918, where he was declared the President of Czechoslovakia.

Although the American Friends of the Czech Republic serves as the coordinator for this effort to honor President Masaryk, AFoCR is supported in this endeavor by the Czech

Republic and by dozens of Czech and Slovak organizations throughout the United States. Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY) and Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-IL) have championed our cause through the introduction of H.R. 1161, which provides congressional authorization for the placement of a Memorial to honor Tomas Garrigue Masaryk in Washington, D.C., in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act. Legislation has also been introduced in the Senate, S. 621, and is sponsored by another friend of the Czech community, Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE) along with his cosponsors Senators Richard Lugar (R-IN), Joseph Lieberman (D-CN), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Christopher Dodd (D-CT).

On April 26, 2001, the National Capital Memorial Commission unanimously voted to support the concept of a proposed memorial. In addition, on May 8, the House Sub-committee on National Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands also unanimously voted to support this project.



Proposed site for the statue in front of
The World Bank in Washington DC.

The potential site is a park located in front of the World Bank on Pennsylvania Avenue. The site holds a strong connection to President Masaryk's time spent in Washington, D.C. and his philosophy of political change. This park is only a short walk away from the old site of the Powhatan Hotel, which served as Masaryk's residence. The World Bank backdrop to this statue is fitting as this organization seeks to support the growth of free and democratic nations.

The Memorial will provide a point of focus in the understanding of the role that President Masaryk played in the spread of freedom and democracy to other parts of the world. More importantly, it will also serve as a reminder to visitors of our nation's capital that the foundation and principles that the United States is based upon transcend language, time, and ethnicity, and that the American ideals of freedom and democracy ingrained in just one individual can impact millions throughout history

Message from the President

This has been an exciting time since the dinner honoring Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and President Vaclav Havel. The newsletter speaks to many of these activities. Let me highlight a few of them and say how proud I am of our new Board members: Fred Malek, Dan Baldwin, Gen. Wesley Clark, Dick Shubert, Jan Svejnar,

Tom Cech, Eugene Cernan, Sandy D'Alemberte, Judy Baar Topinka, John Shattuck, Peter Rafaeli, Alexandr Vondra, and Bill White. Truly a blue ribbon group of people who have a deep interest in the Czech Republic. We had our first Board meeting of the year and as you can see from the notes it covered many important topics. [We have launched our project to honor T.G. Masaryk in the heart of Washington](#) - 2 blocks from



Mayor Jiri
Sneberger and Milt
Cerny stand
beside
commemorative
plaque of
friendship
honoring the U.S.
soldiers of World
War II in
Pilsen City Hall.

The White House in a park on Pennsylvania Avenue. Legislation has been introduced for this purpose and we are receiving fine support from Czech and Slovak groups here in the United States and in the Czech and Slovak Republics. We have met with visiting Czech government delegations from the Senate and Parliament. We sponsored the first lecture series at the Woodrow Wilson Center to bring Czech, Slovak, and American Scholars together to address a variety of topics including history, politics, civil society, and economy. We are working in the area of education with the University of Michigan in its Czech Studies Program. I met with the Rector of West Bohemia University and the Mayor of Pilsen in April to establish closer ties in education and community economic development. We are making plans with two major Czech charities, Nadace Via and People Helping People, to assist them in their efforts.

Let me close this column by paying tribute to a man who was instrumental in all of

these efforts and the successes that AFoCR has had over the past 4 years: Ambassador Alexandr (Sasha) Vondra. I first met Sasha when he was the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. You don't have to be with him very long to realize that he is an extraordinary man of superior ability and intellect. He has that disarming smile and the sense of humor of a seasoned diplomat. He served his country well whether it was in the NATO expansion effort, explaining the Czech position to skeptical congressmen, or forging alliances with other leaders. Regrettably, he will soon be leaving us to take up the post of the coordinator for the NATO Summit Conference in Prague scheduled for the year 2002. We will miss his counsel and wisdom and most of all his friendship. We were fortunate to have him among us and I count him as a personal friend. When the history books are written he will have made his mark in many ways: Student leader, diplomat, government official, and much more. We hope in those accounts that there will be a footnote that mentions that his greatest legacy was the bond of friendship that he helped build between the American and the Czech people. We will miss you, good friend, and will look to see you again here in Washington or Prague. But know that AFoCR will always remember you.

- Milt Cerny

Pilsen Visit

Milt Cerny met with Pilsen Mayor Jiri Sneberger and Rector Zdenek Voctracky of West Bohemia University on April 26, 2001 to discuss more formal relationships with the American Friends of the Czech Republic in Pilsen and the Masaryk Memorial Project.

Ambassador Vondra Bids Farewell

It has been more than four years since Martina and I came to Washington as a rookie diplomatic couple. Unlike most of our counterparts from other countries, we had not previously occupied any diplomatic post. Therefore, I should say that if our tenure here was not a complete failure, it was largely thanks to the advice and support we received from friends like you. For your kindness, we will be forever grateful.

Personally, I must admit that in leaving America behind, I will miss a lot - both in my mind and in my heart. It was indeed a great time to be here serving my country as we joined NATO and the United States as our new allies. It was with immense honor and pleasure that I worked with the many Americans and Czech-Americans to build the strongest Czech-U.S. ties that history can recall. And finally, it was a great opportunity for me to learn and regain new stimulus and ideals for a sometimes too skeptical

Central European mind.

But now, it is time to go home. My family will leave in the end of June so that our English-speaking children will have some time for some Czech language training before re-joining their schools in the fall. I will permanently join them in early August and assume my new responsibilities as President Havel and the Government's Commissioner for organization of the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague.

During the remaining time here, Martina and I would like to say good-bye to you and all of our friends.

- Sasha Vondra

Historic AFoCR Board of Directors Meeting



Original AFoCR Board of Directors taken at the "Civil Society Vision Award Dinner in September 2000" (left to right) Robert W. Doubek, Ronald Bartek, Vladimir Kabes, Milton Cerny, Philip Kasik, Michael Rokos, and Thomas G. Gibian.

The first meeting of the expanded AFoCR Board of Directors took place on March 27, 2001. A sincere thank you to new Board Member, Fred Malek, for hosting this meeting at his offices at Thayer Capital Partners in Washington, DC. Guest participants included distinguished diplomats, prominent business leaders, and key officials of the Czech Republic and United States. Attending the meeting were AFoCR Directors and invited guest participants including a Czech Senate Delegation (Senators Zantovsky, Matuska, Horak, Kroupa, accompanied by Alena Dolezalova, Hanna Mottlova and interpreter), Michael Kennedy (University of Michigan), Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs James Dobbins, Fraser Cameron (European Commission Delegation), Stephan Biegun (Staff Director, Senate Foreign Relations Committee), Walker Roberts (Deputy Staff Director, House International Relations Committee), and Jim Donegan (Department of State). Issues of particular interest included:

AFoCR Activities -The group reviewed AFoCR's origins, roles, accomplishments and

goals. This included: 1) AFoCR efforts and contributions to the pursuit of NATO membership for the Czech Republic; 2) honoring Madeleine K. Albright with a gala in September 2000; 3) receiving the Gratias Agit Award; 4) helping facilitate US-Czech commercial cooperation and the Czech economic transition coordinating closely with the Central and Eastern European Law Initiative (CEELI) and the Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education - Economic Institute (CERGE-EI); 5) assisting with the American Bar Association to honor President Havel with the CEELI Award for leadership in the rule of law; 6) strengthening relationships with the Mott Foundation, the Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, the Czech and Slovak Heritage Association, and all other groups committed to like causes. **Ambassador Shattuck** reported that AFoCR became a significant force during his tenure in Prague by connecting the two societies and helping develop a new Prague Spring of civil society in the Czech Republic.

NATO Affairs - A lot of hard work remains to prepare a successful NATO summit in Prague next year and agree on additional new members. U.S. leadership and NATO security assistance is required in regional conflicts like that in Macedonia to avoid recurrence of the Yugoslavian tragedy of 1991, although **Assistant Secretary Dobbins** did not foresee insertion of NATO troops at this point. A strictly European security and defense entity would be no substitute for NATO.

EU Membership - **Fraser Cameron** briefed the Board on EU negotiations with the Czech Republic. Obstacles for Czech accession include: 1) the Roma problem, 2) judicial reform, 3) financial infra-structure including investment incentives, and 4) free movement of goods, services, and labor. Progress is also needed regarding organized crime, traffic in drugs and people, and development of an independent, aggressive media. Mr. Cameron expressed confidence that the Czech Republic could complete negotiations by the end of 2002, achieve ratification by the end of 2003, be announced as a member by the spring of 2004, and gain full entry by January 2005.

Conditions in the Czech Republic and Congressional Perspectives - Some on Capitol Hill are expressing concerns about the Czech Republic's current political atmosphere, corruption, and its struggling economy. Congress has "no regrets" regarding Czech NATO membership but is disappointed the Czech Republic is not meeting its NATO commitments, especially in defense spending where it ranks last among the three new members. **Jan Svejnar** discussed Czech economic and financial matters, emphasizing efforts to develop a market economy through research, education and business assistance. He noted that progress is being made with bankers despite earlier corruption in privatization, and that a multinational Leadership Council is trying to establish models for succeeding in business without corruption. AFoCR will work with the Mott Foundation to help the Czech Republic further develop the "charitable impulse," craft the rules and regulations, form the right habits, shape a sense of community and above all, create a civil society and help its neighbors do the same.

Board Actions

- Approval of the Masaryk Project
- Approval of action to create registry of Grantors and Grantees in the Czech Republic
- Continue discussions with Nadace Via and People Helping People
- Continue negotiations with the City of Pilsen and West Bohemia University
- Continue discussions with the University of Michigan regarding Czech Studies Program
- Work closely with CEELI and CERGE-EI in Prague to support legal and monetary reform

AFoCR Adds 12 New Board Members

[Sandy D'Alemberte](#) President, Florida State University

[Daniel Baldwin](#) President, Czech & Slovak Museum

[Jan Svejnar](#) Director Davidson Institute, University of Michigan

[Alexandr Vondra](#) Czech Ambassador to the United States

[Eugene Cernan](#) Astronaut

[John Shattuck](#) Former Ambassador to Czech Republic

[Judy Baar Topinka](#) Treasurer, State of Illinois

[Fred Malek](#) Chairman, Thayer Capital Partners

[William White](#) President, C. S. Mott Foundation

[Thomas Cech](#) President Howard Hughes Medical Institute

[Peter Rafaeli](#) Honorary Counsel General

[Wesley Clark](#) Former General, NATO Armies

AFoCR Helps Sponsor Deaf Student



Radka Novakova

AFoCR is proud to announce that we are sponsoring an exceptional young woman from the Czech Republic who is studying abroad in English at Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. Radka Novakova comes from Prague, Czech Republic and is a brilliant student at Charles University. Radka is unique because not only is she considered an excellent student by her professors, but she wants to teach deaf Czech students how to communicate in English. AFoCR will assist in an effort to raise funds that will help Radka to study for at least one more semester here in Washington before she returns to Prague. If you would like to help her please [contact us](#) for more information.

Advisory Board Expanded



Left to right: Rep. Hamilton, Amb. Butora, Michael Novak (with plaque), Amb. Vondra, Michael Rokos, and Amb. Russell at a ceremony at the Woodrow Wilson Center sponsored by AFoCR.

We are pleased to announce that the AFoCR Advisory Board has been expanded to include three distinguished leaders in their field who are very close to the Czech Republic and the AFoCR mission.

MICHAEL NOVAK- A highly respected American theologian and author on social and democratic issues. He was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania of Slovak descent. He is the Senior Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. where he holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair in Religion and Public Policy. He received the 1994 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion and the Tomas Garrigue Masaryk Order in 2000 from President Havel. In 2000, he inaugurated the new lecture series sponsored in part by AFoCR at the Woodrow Wilson Center on the struggle of Czech and Slovaks for democracy and their role in U.S. Society. He served as the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Commission for Human Rights and the U.S. Board for International Broadcasting. AFoCR is honored to have him join us.

RICHARD G. LUGAR- The senior Senator from the State of Indiana is one of the most respected men in the United States Senate where he is currently the ranking member of the Agriculture Committee. He served as the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee where he established a record of competence and a reputation for his knowledge on defense and disarmament issues. He is a strong supporter of NATO and the Czech Republic. Prior to coming to Congress, he was a businessman, and the Mayor of Indianapolis, Indiana. Senator Lugar is a good friend and a real supporter of the AFoCR.

JAN HIRD POKORNY, FAIA- Last year at the AIA New York State Association of Architects, Jan Pokorny was honored with the coveted "The Quintessential Architect" Award for his long and distinguished service to the field of architecture and historic preservation. This is only the second time in Association history that the award has been given. The list of his accomplishments in the field of architecture and public service for historic preservation are without equal in the United States. He has received many honors from universities, here and abroad, as well as, achievement awards from governments and from his peers. He is a professor, a practicing architect, a city planner, and a visionary. Some of his leadership roles include: Commissioner, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission; Trustee Grand Central Terminal Trust Fund, New York City; and Director and Vice President of the Fine Arts Commission. AFoCR is proud to have Jan Pokorny join our Advisory Board to help us with the President Masaryk Project.



[Join us on Facebook](#)

Copyright © AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC