

Newsletter

Washington Celebrates t.g. Masaryk's Birthday

After an unusually cold and snowy winter in Washington, March 8th dawned warm and sunny, a delightful burst of spring-like weather. By mid-afternoon, over 200 people had gathered at the entrance to Embassy Row on Massachusetts Avenue in the heart of our nation's capital to honor the 153rd birthday of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, liberator and first President of Czechoslovakia.



Bob Doubek, Phil Kasik and Foreign Minister Svoboda share a light moment at an AFoCR luncheon in honor of Foreign Minister Svoboda.

The event was jointly sponsored by AFoCR, the Embassy of the Czech Republic, the Washington Chapter of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences and the Czechoslovak National Council. The venue was the newly constructed Masaryk Park. Created an act of Congress facilitated by the efforts of AFoCR, the park features a larger than life sized statue of Masaryk. The statue was unveiled in the presence of President Václav Havel and Michal Kovac, former President of Slovakia, last September during President Havel's last visit to the United States. Since then, under AfoCR's direction, work has been progressing to complete the construction of the park. The heavy snows of the winter delayed completion, but much was ready for the events on March 8th. Only the final landscaping remained to be done.



Phil Kasik and Mike Rokos with Sokol leaders Joe Vrzalik and Larry Laznovsky welcome Foreign Minister Svoboda to Masaryk Park.

AfoCR President Phil Kasík presided over the ceremony and introduced the speakers. Czech Ambassador Martin Palouš spoke about the place of TGM in history. The keynote address was given by Czech Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda, who was in Washington for an official visit and meetings with Secretary of State Colin Powell. Foreign Minister Svoboda commented that he was delighted to meet the leaders of AfoCR since this organization was actively assisting the Czech Republic by collecting and distributing flood relief money throughout the Czech Republic.



Nearly complete T.G. Masaryk Park.

Other Czech-related organizations joined in the day's festivities. Sokol National President Larry Laznovsky and Joseph Vrzalik of Sokol Baltimore held the flags of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The national anthems of the U.S., the Czech Republic and Slovakia were sung by the Czech and Slovak Heritage Association Choir from Baltimore. AfoCR Vice President Michael Rokos presented the invocation for the event.

Following the events at the Park, a reception was held at the Embassy of the Czech Republic. Ambassador Martin Bútora of Slovakia attended all of the events of the afternoon as did several former U.S. Ambassadors to Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

AFOCR is still actively engaged in raising funds to complete the Park and endowment scholarships that will serve to perpetuate the legacy of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The scholarship endowment will complement the statue of Masaryk in Washington with a living memorial of scholarship and study reminding us all that the goals and ideals of Masaryk are as timely today as they were a century ago.

AFOCR Fund Helps Czechs Rebuild After Historic Floods



The Jewish Museum in Prague.



Vocational School in Decin.



Amb. Martin Palous, Minister Susan Cutshaw, Milt Cerny and Director of Music Robert Swift at the Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church. The MOUMC provided \$7,000 to the Flood Relief Fund.

After the disastrous flood of 2002, AFoCR led the way in supporting many urgent flood relief projects in the hardest hit areas of the Czech Republic. AFoCR's Prague-Needs-Help Fund Relief Fund provided a way for hundreds of concerned American corporations and individuals to support the Czech Republic in recovering from the floods. Having seen first hand the extent of the damage while in Northern Bohemia and Prague last summer, AFoCR President Phil Kasik returned to Washington ready to commit AFoCR to a major relief effort.

As the floodwaters receded, AFoCR's Prague-Needs-Help Flood Relief Fund quickly took shape in Washington with the advice and support of the Czech Embassy. Using its own organizational infrastructure, website, state of the art electronic pledge system and its network of contacts throughout the United States, AFoCR reached out to concerned Americans across the country. The response was heartening as Americans everywhere, including many of Czech descent, responded generously.

Contributions came from American organizations, associations, churches, corporations and concerned individuals who saw the need and wanted to help. Thanks to their support and generosity, the Fund has received hundreds of contributions, ranging from \$5 to \$50,000. A few of the larger contributions came from U.S. companies doing business in the Czech Republic, from prominent members of the U.S. film industry and from several prominent Czech-related organizations. A number of concerned groups and churches undertook special flood relief fundraising on a person to person basis. The American Chamber of Commerce in Prague (AMCHAM) and many AMCHAM members participated actively in fundraising efforts.

The majority of the funds have now been granted to projects in Prague and many other hard-hit areas. The first AFoCR relief aid was directed toward the urgent problem of preventing the spread of disease from contaminated water supplies. Working with

AmeriCares, an American non-profit relief organization, AFoCR provided partial funding an emergency shipment of vital vaccines. Direct grants of emergency aid quickly followed to the cities most devastated to deal with immediate cleanup and restoration of services. Ceske Budejovice, Decin, Melnik, Pilsen, Pisek, Pribram and Usti nad Labem received grants or equipment as recommended by the American Embassy in Prague after visits by Embassy officials.

The Fund then turned to selecting specific projects for the recovery and restoration of public facilities, restoration of important cultural and historic sites and artifacts, and acute housing needs. The projects were selected by AFoCR with major input from the U.S. and Czech Embassies and the American Chamber of Commerce in Prague and non-profit organizations working in the country. The projects covered hospitals and medical facilities, schools and education facilities, replacement housing units, and historic facilities and museums. Specific projects are listed on the AFoCR website at www.afocr.org/floodupdate.htm.

The Prague-Needs-Help Flood Relief Fund continues its work as many urgent projects remain to be funded. Tax-deductible contributions may still be sent to the "AFoCR, Prague-Needs-Help Flood Relief Fund" at Harleysville Bank, P.O. Box 428, Spring House, PA 19477. Funds can also be wired to Harleysville National Bank, P.O. Box 195, Harleysville, PA 19438-0195 utilizing ABA/Routing No. 031911812. Make checks payable to "AFoCR Prague-Needs-Help Flood Relief Fund" or contribute electronically at AFoCR's website at www.afocr.org.

Message From the President

As I looked out upon guests assembled at Masaryk Park for the commemoration event on March 8 and waited for the National Anthems to be sung, with Ambassador Palous and Foreign Minister Svoboda looking on, it began to dawn on me that we – all of us – had achieved something important in arriving at that place in time. To me, until that instant, Masaryk Park simply meant dealing with the myriad of technical, administrative and yes, political details of a complex construction project, not the least of which was getting it completed for that very day. But as I looked up at the statue of TGM, framed against the blue March sky on the first day of decent weather in weeks, I saw a hint of a smile. As TGM modestly posed for the group with hat in hand and surveyed the beautiful park that was created around him, he seemed to be saying "Vitame Vas."

It was an important day for AFoCR and for the many supporters of the Masaryk Memorial project. Washington is often called the monumental city. Now the city has a new monument; one that will stand as an enduring symbol and memorial to the freedom and democracy of the Czech and Slovak nations and their friendship with America.

The war on terrorism is now a real war. We all pray that it will be as short as possible and lead to a safer world for all of us. As America leads the mission to meet this

challenge to peace and freedom, the support of friends is vitally important. And support in both word and deed is the most important. We salute President Havel for standing by his principles as he joined with other European nations in acknowledging the important role of America in coming to the aid of Europe in past conflicts, and the threat posed by Iraq and other countries that support terrorism in the world. We also salute the Czech army troops trained and specially equipped for countering chemical and biological warfare. They are now on duty now and prepared to support the U.S. led mission in the event of a chemical or biological attack. Most recently the cabinet indicated support for deployment of a field hospital unit in southern Iraq. With a staff of up to 300 doctors, nurses and logistics specialists, the unit would help ease the anticipated humanitarian crisis. There is an old saying that "friends in need are friends in deed." With their words and deeds the Czechs are truly 'friends in need' during these uncertain times.

Already much has been said about President Havel's inspired and principled leadership of the Czech nation through these challenging formative years. Czech membership in NATO was just one of his noteworthy achievements – but arguably one with the most far-reaching effect. We applaud his presidency and wish him every success as he returns to more creative pursuits. We offer our sincere congratulations to President Klaus. We wish him success at a time of great opportunity as the Czech Republic develops its economy, continues to play important roles in the North Atlantic Alliance and opens a new era of cooperation as it completes the final steps to join the European Union.

Donor Advised Funds

AFoCR has launched a donor advised fund campaign. It encourages donors to make a grant to a charity located in the Czech Republic through a donor advised fund account with the AFoCR. If accepted under the AFoCR guidelines, donors can make the donations directly to AFoCR as tax deductible contributions for federal income, estate and gift tax purposes. AFoCR will process the request to the grantee organization and receive a report back regarding the expenditure of funds. The donation must fit into the broad charitable and educational mission of AFoCR. Otherwise, a direct gift by an individual to a Czech charity that is not tax exempt under U.S. law will not be tax deductible.

AFoCR will charge a small administrative fee for processing the donation. An example of such gift currently under consideration is a proposed donation to Charles University in Prague for an educational building on a matching dollar-for-dollar basis with the donor will match up to \$275,000 raised by the University. In exchange for the gift, the donor will receive the naming rights to the building and get a tax deduction of the gift that can be deducted at 50% of the individual's adjusted gross income. This vehicle is a good way to support the Czech Republic and help build the T.G. Masaryk Education Endowment through present and deferred gifts. Individuals should also consider making the AFoCR T.G. Masaryk Educational Endowment a part of their estate planning to carry out their desire to help the Czech Republic and provide educational

and cultural opportunities for future generations. Please call the AFoCR at 202-338-5148 for further information.

EU Referendum On the Horizon

The Czech Republic will soon vote on accession to the European Union. A poll released in March showed that 80% of the Czech population favors accession, as compared to 49% a year ago. President Vaclav Klaus has been critical of European integration in the past, even though his party is in favor of joining the European Union. The Senate and Parliament favor the accession as does Prime Minister Spidla. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has commissioned a two part information campaign first, to inform the Czech people about the European Union and second, to present the Czech Republic to the other European Union countries as a prepared candidate for entrance. The Czech Republic has indicated that its entrance into the European Union will not affect its trans-Atlantic relationship with the United States.

End of an Era

The Presidency of Vaclav Havel ended on February 2, as constitutionally mandated. Many events have been held recently as the legacy of the Havel presidency begins to be discussed and celebrated. A major contribution to this dialogue took place in Washington on February 10, with a panel consisting of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, Czech Ambassador Martin Palous, Slovak Ambassador Martin Butora, Emmy award-winning screenwriter Arnost Lustig and Washington Post Editorial Editor Jackson Diehl met. The topic was the "Legacy of Vaclav Havel, Outgoing President of the Czech Republic." Zbigniew Brzezinski moderated the panel at this well-attended event at the Czech Embassy.

AND A NEW BEGINNING

After two failed attempts, the Czech Parliament succeeded in electing the new Czech president. In accordance with the Czech Constitution, the election of the president is by vote of the Parliament, rather than directly by the people. President Vaclav Klaus was elected by the Parliament on February 28 and inaugurated on March 7, 2003. In accordance with the Czech Constitution, President Klaus will serve a five year term. Coincidentally, the March 7 inauguration day is also the birth date of Liberator and first President, T. G. Masaryk.

Columbia Space Shuttle Tragedy - Words of Support

From Captain Lovell, AFoCR Advisor

February 11, 2003

To the American Friends of the Czech Republic:

As part of the astronaut community, I am deeply saddened by the loss of Columbia and its gallant crew. The tragedy brought vividly to mind my own experience on Apollo 13.

Although the Columbia accident will have an impact on our exploration of space, I am confident that NASA will discover the cause, fix it and continue our endeavors in space. The benefits to man from space exploration are too great to cancel our thrust into the unknown.

Captain James A. Lovell
Apollo 8
Apollo 13

From Captain Eugene Cernan, AFoCR Director

"Mankind has an insatiable desire to learn something about the unknown, and there is no greater unknown than the universe which surrounds us. We can thank God that he has given some the passion to explore that unknown. To paraphrase our President, 'Daring endeavors are accompanied by great risks.' For those of us who have had this opportunity, we can only consider it a privilege to serve mankind and our country."

Message From the Treasurer

Dear Friends:

Calendar year 2002 was an important and challenging year for our organization. We worked hard to achieve our long-time goal of erecting a memorial statue to Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Czechoslovakia's first President and Liberator. His statue now stands at a prominent downtown Washington, D.C. location. It is situated in great company, namely between the statues of Winston Churchill and Mahatma Gandhi. Currently we are still building the T.G. Masaryk Park, the beautifully landscaped area surrounding the statue. March 2003 was the first time when Masaryk's birthday commemoration took place at this new site. As you may know, the Masaryk statue was dedicated on September 19, 2002 by Czech President Václav Havel, former Slovak President Michal Kováč, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and the U.S. Ambassador to Prague, Craig Stapleton.

You are also aware of the devastating and record breaking floods which hit the Czech Republic during the summer of 2002. Our organization immediately began organizing flood relief efforts by contacting and financially supporting AmeriCares, a premiere U.S. relief organization. We also promptly established a special bank account and we collected in excess of \$ 300,000 that funded numerous grants throughout the impacted areas in the Czech Republic.

Where do we stand today? We have three immediate goals, all of which require your consideration and generosity, even if you have previously donated.

The goals are as follows:

- Payment for the completion of T.G. Masaryk Park in Washington, D.C.
- Expanded funding of the T.G. Masaryk Scholarship Fund
- Additional funding for Flood Relief Grants (as of now there are several unfunded pending grants)

Your additional financial assistance is still very much needed. Please keep in mind that your contributions are tax deductible as AFoCR is recognized by the U.S. Government as a tax exempt 501(c)(3) and 509 (a)(1) public charity. Your tax deductible donations can be mailed to the following addresses:

- For T.G. Masaryk Park and Scholarship Endowment Fund send check to: AFoCR – Masaryk Memorial Fund, 2801 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.
- For flood relief send check to: AFoCR Prague-Needs-Help Flood Relief, Account No. 16425 6822 c/o Harleysville National Bank, P.O. Box 428, Spring House, PA 19477. Funds can also be wired to Harleysville National Bank, P.O. Box 195, Harleysville, PA 19438-0195 utilizing the ABA/Routing No. 031911812.

Donations to AFoCR can be also made by credit card at our website: www.afocr.org.

Any questions can be directed either to AFoCR or directly to me, Peter A. Rafaeli, AFoCR Treasurer at 215-646-7777 or by e-mail to Philadelphia@honorary.mzv.cz.

Sincerely,

Peter A. Rafaeli

Operation Iraqi Freedom

The United States and 50 countries, as of April 15, 2003, have joined in the effort to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), bring freedom and the rule of law to Iraq and depose the government of Saddam Hussein.

The joint Czech-Slovak anti-chemical unit (the "NBCR") based in Kuwait as part of the Enduring Freedom effort is one of the highest regarded anti-chemical units of its kind. The unit, as stated by Prime Minister Vladimir Spidla and Minister of Foreign Affairs Cyril Svoboda, will provide emergency and humanitarian operations and will support the Iraqi Freedom coalition in the case of the use or suspected use of WMD against civilian populations or coalition forces.

It is clear from statement issued by Minister Svoboda and Prime Minister Spidla that the Czech Republic, while not engaged in the military Iraqi Freedom operation, is on the side of the international coalition in its efforts to disarm Iraq and subsequently reconstruct it. Furthermore, the Czech Republic "under existing UN Security Council Resolution permits authorized coalition overflights and ground transfers through the territory of the Czech Republic."

The type of support of the Iraqi Freedom operation varies from country to country. The United States government has created a coalition which attempts to bring into cohesive force the various forms of support in this effort. For an official statement of the Czech government on the war in Iraq, see the statement below.

Statement of the Czech Government – March 19, 2003

1) The Czech Parliament has authorized the stay on the territory of the Czech Republic of the armed forces of countries engaged in the set of measures taken to enforce the compliance of UN Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq disarmament. The Government has also authorized ground transfers and overflights over the territory of the Czech Republic of the armed forces of countries engaged in the set of measures taken to enforce the compliance of UN Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq disarmament (the overflights are already being conducted). No new act of the UN Security Council was necessary for these measures to be realized. The Czech Republic provides them in favor of the "international coalition" or the "coalition group". The Czech Republic is therefore on the side of the "international coalition" and its effort to disarm Iraq and subsequently reconstruct it. It was in this context that the Czech Republic has been with full approval of her government listed as part of the "international coalition" by the United States.

2) In a statement on March 19, 2003 the Government of the Czech Republic stated:

"The Government of the Czech Republic always prefers peaceful solutions to international conflicts and considers the use of force an extreme option. The Government of the Czech Republic views the operation of coalition forces as the last usable means leading to the fulfillment of the relevant UN resolutions. However, it regrets that the effort to obtain a new UN mandate has not been successful."

In the context of this statement and in accordance with the relevant resolution of the Parliament, the Czech Republic is not taking part in the operation against Iraq and is not engaged in the military Iraqi Freedom operation.

3) The Czech Army NBCR unit has been deployed in Kuwait within the framework of the Enduring Freedom operation. It is however ready to support the Iraqi Freedom operation by taking part in any emergency and humanitarian operation in case WMD are used or are suspected to be used against civilian population or coalition forces, as well as to deal with consequences of possible disasters in the area of its deployment in accordance with the resolution of Czech Parliament. Only in such situation would there occur a transfer of authority from the Enduring Freedom to the Iraqi Freedom operation.

~ Cyril Svoboda, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Notable American With Czech Roots

Vlastimil Koubek

Architect

Vlastimil Koubek was one of Washington, D.C.'s most influential architects. His work on nearly 100 hotels, offices and apartment buildings helped shape the city's skyline. Mr. Koubek immigrated to the United States from Czechoslovakia in 1952 and served two years in the U.S. Army. He studied architecture in his native Czechoslovakia and after working briefly for a New York architectural firm, opened his own architectural practice, Koubek Architects in Washington, D.C. in 1957.

Mr. Koubek's buildings include the headquarters of the National Bank of Washington, the American Security Bank, the Union Labor Life Insurance Co., the American Automobile Association and the Postal Service. He was the lead architect for L'Enfant Plaza's east building, the International Square building and the renovation of the Willard Inter-Continental hotel and office building in the mid-1980s. In 1985, Washingtonian magazine named Mr. Koubek one of 20 notable Washingtonians "who in the past 20 years had the greatest impact on the way we live and who forever altered the look of Washington."

Mr. Koubek died of cancer on Feb. 15, 2003 at his home in Arlington, Virginia. He is survived by his wife Peggy and daughter Jana Koubek.



[Join us on Facebook](#)

Copyright © AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC