

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Summer 2015

NEWSLETTER

Volume XXI, Number 1

Czech President Visits Washington



Czech President Miloš Zeman Places Floral Tribute at Masaryk Memorial in Washington (photo by Lillis Werder)

Czech President Miloš Zeman visited Washington in March. The primary purpose of his visit was to attend a conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). After addressing the AIPAC conference, President Zeman visited the Masaryk Memorial on the anniversary of the President-Liberator's 165th birthday.

After a short ceremony, AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek, Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič, and President Zeman each spoke briefly of the monument as a symbol of U.S. and Czech friendship and of the importance of unity toward democratic values as espoused by Masaryk in a world where challenges to those values exist.

Following the ceremony, President Zeman met briefly with AFoCR directors, and several floral tributes were laid.

In Memoriam - Sir Nicholas G. Winton

1909- 2015 - By Peter A. Rafaeli



Prague Castle, October 28, 2014 (Czech National Day). Czech President H.E. Miloš Zeman Awards Sir Nicholas G. Winton (age 105½) the Order of the White Lion, the Czech Republic's Highest Award, for Saving 669 Czechoslovak - Mostly Jewish - Children by Taking Them in 1938 to Britain and Sweden.

(Photo credit: London Telegraph)

Today, June 1, 2015, was a difficult day for me and my family. We lost a dear friend, Sir Nicholas G. Winton, aka "Nicky" to his family and friends. I met him for the first time in New York City 15 years ago when we attended the screening of a film about his heroic mission to save 669 mostly Jewish children from Czechoslovakia - my native country - in 1939. I got to know him in 2000 and our friendship blossomed instantly. He was the most modest of humanitarians, who for 50 years kept silent about his heroic deeds. When we at AFoCR decided to publicize his noble actions in the U.S., we believed that America's youth needed to know. We therefore printed and distributed 17,000 copies of a book about him to schools and other institutions. AFoCR is proud to have brought this story, as our contribution, to the awareness of America's youth. He will be sorely missed. May his soul rest in peace!

Sokol Gym Takes Shape in West, Texas



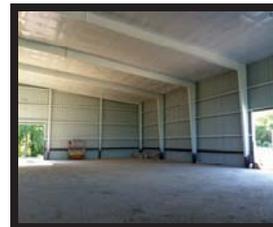
Sokol Gymnasium as of June 1, 2015 (photo by Mary Beth Dulock)

In April 2013, an ammonium nitrate explosion at a fertilizer plant struck the town of West, Texas, destroying many homes, an apartment building, a school, a senior citizen facility, and the Sokol facilities, including the gymnasium and the adjacent Lone Star Hall, - an important social gathering place for the West community. Most of the 2,900 residents of West claim some Czech heritage.

AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek traveled to West shortly after the disaster to evaluate the situation and offered AFoCR's assistance in raising funds and in rebuilding the Sokol. After an initial lead gift from the government of the Czech Republic, Malek led AFoCR's fundraising effort, and AFoCR Director Fritz Duda, who lives in Texas, undertook the task of coordinating design development and planning for the project. Construction began early this year, and by June, the new Sokol began to take shape.

Like a phoenix, the new Sokol is rising, even better than before, with improved facilities and systems. Sokol West members, especially the youth, as well as the citizens of West, are looking forward to a dedication of the new facility in a ceremony in the fall.

Many thanks to all the organizations and individuals who have contributed to the project. It could not have been achieved without your support.



Inside of New Sokol Gym as of June 8, 2015 (photo by Mary Beth Dulock)

AFoCR's Sokol West Reconstruction Fund still needs your help to reach our rebuilding goals. Please consider donating through AFoCR's web site, www.afocr.org. Click the "Donate" option on our home page and follow the instructions, or send a check payable to the AFoCR West, Texas Fund to:

**AFoCR
4410 Massachusetts Ave. NW #391
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Letter from AFoCR President Tom Dine



*AFoCR
President
Tom Dine*

"NATO on the Move"

NATO is moving, albeit slowly, toward tangible counter moves in response to recent Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. The western alliance, of which the Czech Republic is a member, is bolstering the four frontline Baltic states and Poland, all NATO countries. Thus they are protected by Article V of the NATO Treaty, which provides that an armed attack against one member is an attack against all members.

Since 2012, the Kremlin has provoked and intimidated its Nordic and Eastern European neighbors, from Scandinavia to Ukraine, by applying aggressive espionage, corrupting political elites, utilizing propaganda onslaughts, mounting cyber attacks, launching surprise military incursions, and violating airspace, territorial waters, and national borders.

This spring and summer, Russia has expanded its military exercises, patrols, and incursions in the area, including in eastern Ukraine. NATO data shows activities of the Russian air force near and over NATO territory increasing by 50 percent from 2013 through last year. For instance, aircraft have flown unannounced over Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the North Sea. One fighter jet flew dangerously close to a U.S. aircraft over the Baltic Sea as the Russian navy conducted exercises below. The world press has reported Russian ground exercises, despite the Kremlin trying to keep these matters secret.

Sweden, Norway, and Finland are on alert in the Arctic. The three Baltic states are frightened of a return of the Russian army onto their lands. Poland is outspoken and on alert.

Most particularly, it is NATO that is preparing for the possibility of a Kremlin military operation into the vulnerable Baltic republics. In 2014, the U.S. began rotating a brigade of troops into those three countries,

as well as Poland. These brigades are rotating this summer. In mid-2015, NATO, led by the Pentagon chief, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, now wants to preposition heavy military equipment of artillery, tanks, armored personnel carriers, and other weapons. As a former defense budgeteer, I know that prepositioning saves time in an emergency and, over the long run, money.

The Czech and Slovak Republics are a part of this NATO operation. Both governments believe this new surge into the vulnerable border states will assure and reassure governments and publics.

Another assuring exercise (Operation Dragoon Ride) took place in the Czech Republic late this March when a contingent of American and NATO personnel based in Germany visited Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Czech Republic for 11-days. The troops in 120 vehicles - tanks, trucks, and jeeps - crossed the northern Czech border and passed through small towns, as well as Brno, Prague, and Plzen, before returning to Germany. The convoy was escorted by the Czech military police.

Crowds along the whole course in the Czech Republic spontaneously greeted and cheered the allies as if there had been a liberation. The much talked about oppositional protesters, promising roadblocks and crowds of protest, barely appeared during the three days of display by the U.S. Army. In Prague, the convoy stayed at the Ruzyně barracks, with more than 20,000 people visiting and interacting with the troops. Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka visited the convoy on March 31st, as did Defense Minister Martin Stropnický and former Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg. At least 82% of the Czech people approved of and supported this demonstration of strength, according to an opinion poll by the independent STEM agency.

Some in the U.S. and in Europe oppose any steps to beef up militarily the Nordic, Baltic, and Eastern European fronts so as not to provoke Russia's leader, Vladimir Putin. Yet, I believe these moves are prudent - indeed tangible - defensive deeds that the belligerent Mr. Putin must take into account as he ponders his next anti-western provocations.

Thomas A. Dine
President, AFoCR



Alex Braun Joins AFoCR Board

AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek announced in June that international public relations consultant Alex Braun had been elected to serve on AFoCR's Board of Directors. A resident of the Washington Virginia suburbs, Braun is a Senior Vice President at Penn Schoen Berland, a premier communications consultancy, where he specializes in political and crisis consulting.

In 2015, Braun was selected to be among "40 under 40" by the American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC). A previous year, he was named International Campaign Consultant of the Year by AAPC, the most prestigious industry award.

Braun is a Fulbright scholar and holds an MA in Political Campaign Management from New York University, an MA in International Relations from Central European University in Budapest, and a BA in the same field from Charles University in Prague.

Braun has provided counsel to presidents, prime ministers and other high level political clients in more than 50 campaigns on four continents. Some of his notable clients include Tony Blair and Hillary Clinton, as well as presidents in Mexico, Ukraine, and the Philippines and prime ministers in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Thailand. He has also co-authored two books, spoken at conferences and taught university courses on strategy and communications.

In addition to his political work, Braun has conducted messaging and brand positioning research for Fortune 500 corporations such as Microsoft, Ford, Comcast, and State Farm.

AFoCR is fortunate to have him as an important part of its leadership team.

Prague Days in Chicago

Chicago became "Czechago" for six days in June, festooned with street banners picturing Chicago greats with Czech roots. Prague Days celebrated the 25th anniversary of the relationship of Prague and Chicago through the Chicago Sister Cities International program. A busy schedule of events marked the commemoration, with the theme of honoring Czech history in Chicago. The events kicked off with a concert in Thalia Hall (often referred to as the "Pilsen Opera House") in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, featuring Czech, Hispanic, and African-American music. On the following day, it was a dose of punk, rock, jazz, and pop at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park.

Opening on June 12 was the "Treasured Legacy" exhibit of Alphonse Mucha inspired works of jewelry, created by his granddaughter Jarmila Mucha Plocková, at the Maya Polsky Gallery. Czech Consul General Bořek Lizec and gallery owner Maya Polsky hosted an opening reception, attended by Lord Mayor of Prague Adriana Krnáčová.

The high point of Prague Days was the Gala at the University Club, where more than 250 guests enjoyed a program of music, dancing, and Chicago Czech history. Gala host Lord Mayor Krnáčová acknowledged the important connection between

Prague and Chicago and the influence of the Czechs arriving in the U.S. midwest beginning in the 1850s. Also noted were the contributions of Czech "pioneers" to Chicago's development, including Mayor Anton Cermak, Congressman Adolph Sabath, industrialist Charles Crane, Governor Otto Kerner, McDonalds founder Ray Kroc, NFL founder George Halas, Illinois Treasurer and Controller Judy Barr Topinka, astronauts James Lovell and Eugene Cernan, and film icon Kim Novak. Ms. Novak, who participated in the happy mood of the evening, also joined in the screening of her film *Vertigo* the next day.

Also speaking at the gala were Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič and U.S. Ambassador to Prague Andrew Shapiro, a native of the Chicago area. To cap off the program, the sculpture "Nature" originally created by Alphonse Mucha, and recently recreated by his granddaughter Jarmila Mucha Plocková in cooperation with Prague sculptor Peter Nižňanský was unveiled. Ondrej Havelka and his Merry Makers then made merry for the rest of the evening. One happy couple made the successful silent auction bid (\$5,000) for two glass side seats for game six of the Stanley Cup.

On Monday June 15, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and Lord Mayor Krnáčová unveiled "A Heart for Václav Havel" in Chicago City Hall. The sculpture will be on view through the summer.

Other notable events included a reception at the Driehaus Museum for Czech Ambassador to Great Britain Michael Žantovský, hosted by Kristyna Driehaus where the ambassador signed his book *Havel: A Life*. A concert also took place by Czech jazz great Emil Viklický and his Grand Moravia Trio, performed and sponsored by the Czech & Slovak Museum & Library of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

The efforts of many organizations and individuals created yet another positive impression of Czechs not only in Chicago, but internationally. Prague Days was a great success.



Actress Kim Novak at Prague Days Celebration in Chicago (photo by pragedayschicago.com)



Ambassador Michael Žantovský at Driehaus Museum, June 13, 2015 (photo by Kristyna Driehaus)

Tomáš Masaryk Memorial Birthday Celebration with Czech President Miloš Zeman - March 3, 2015 (photos by Lillis Werder)



AFoCR President Tom Dine & Czech President Zeman



Masaryk Memorial



AFoCR President Tom Dine



President Zeman



Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič



President Zeman

25th Anniversary of President Václav Havel's 1990 Speech to a Joint Session of the U.S. Congress - March 18, 2015



(l to r) Representative Jan Schakowsky (Illinois), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, House Speaker John Boehner, Representative Steny Hoyer (Maryland), & Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič



Floral Tribute



(l to r) Representative Steny Hoyer, Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič, & Representative Jan Schakowsky

Prague Days in Chicago - June 2015 (photos by pragedayschicago.com)



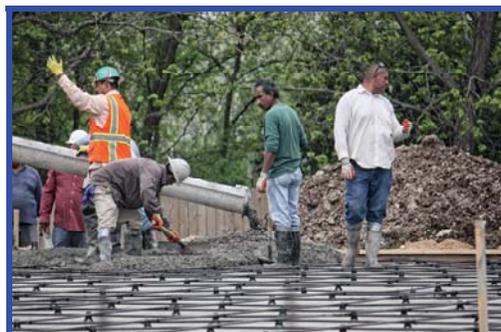
Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and Prague Lord Mayor Adriana Krnáčová



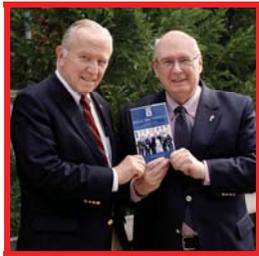
European Union Day at Czech Embassy - May 9, 2015 (photos by Lillis Werder)



Sokol Gymnasium Reconstruction in West, Texas (photos by Mary Beth Dulock)



Ambassador Bill Cabaniss Biography Published



AFoCR Vice President Bill Cabaniss with Author Worth Earlwood "Woody" Norman, Jr.

Masaryk Memorial Repaired



Masaryk Monument Undergoes Repair After Icy Winter

A biography of AFoCR Director William Jelks Cabaniss, Jr., a former U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic (2004-2006), was recently published. The book, *William Jelks Cabaniss, Jr.: Crossing Lines in His Business, Political, and Diplomatic Life*, by Worth Earlwood "Woody" Norman, Jr., covers Ambassador Cabaniss' life and career as a businessman and Alabama legislator in the House of Representatives (1978 – 1982) and State Senate (1982-1990). It describes how he helped establish the credibility of Republican leadership in Alabama, which "marked (its) potential emergence...as a two-party state." Cabaniss served as Ambassador to the Czech Republic from 2004-2006, appointed by President George W. Bush.

As Ambassador, he focused on the political and business communities and fostered a partnership with strong ties between the two countries. Meanwhile, his spouse Catherine Cabaniss, an artist, engaged with the Czech art community. The book chronicles Cabaniss' contributions to both the U.S. and the Czech Republic. Since returning to the United States from Prague, Cabaniss has been an active AFoCR Director and currently is a director of the Václav Havel Library Foundation, which is supporting the Havel Presidential Library in Prague. The book is available at amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, and as a Kindle ebook.

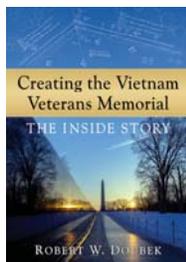
The Washington winter was unkind to the Masaryk Memorial. Expanding ice had slightly lifted the base of the statue off its moorings, but fortunately, the problem was identified in a routine inspection by AFoCR. A professional conservator made temporary repairs, and a plan and budget for a longer term, permanent repair are underway.

In Memoriam: Tom Gibian



Founding Director Thomas G. Gibian at Masaryk Birthday Celebration, March 7, 2014

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of AFoCR Founding Director Thomas George Gibian in early 2015. Born in Prague, Tom interrupted his university education to serve with distinction in the British Royal Air Force during WWII, flying many missions in support of troops, including the D-Day invasion. He subsequently earned a Ph.D. in chemistry and became a successful corporate leader. A loving husband and father, community leader, and proud bearer of his Czech heritage, he was one of AFoCR's strongest supporters and advisors, helping to guide the organization from its founding to the celebration of its 20 year anniversary this year. He will be missed by his colleagues at AFoCR and all across the communities and organizations he touched.



New Book by AFoCR Director Robert Doubek

A new book "*Creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: The Inside Story*," by AFoCR founder and Director Robert W. Doubek, was released in June 2015. Doubek served in Vietnam in 1969 as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Air Force and later was in charge of building the memorial on the Mall in Washington. Dedicated in 1982, the memorial has become an American cultural icon and remains one of the nation's most visited monuments. The book tells the story of the memorial's origins, which were both humble and contentious. A grassroots effort launched by veterans with no funds, the project was completed in three and a half years. But an emotional debate about aesthetics and the interpretation of heroism, patriotism and history nearly doomed the project. From his insider's perspective, Doubek tells the complete story of the memorial's creation amid Washington politics, a nationwide design competition, and the heated controversy over the winning design and its creator.



U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic Andrew H. Schapiro plays a rendition of the Rolling Stones' Jumpin' Jack Flash on the popular Jan Krause Show in the Czech Republic on June 10, 2015. Video can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeRpGvdnA10>

600th Anniversary Death of Jan Hus



*Painting by Václav Brožík
of the condemnation of
Jan Hus at the Council of
Constance*
(photo by
www.awesomestories.com)

In commemoration of the 600th anniversary of Jan Hus’s death, the Embassy of the Czech Republic in May 2015 presented a special lecture, *Jan Hus: The Bible and the Reformation*, by Martin Prudký, a former Vice-Rector of Prague’s Charles University. Also speaking was His Excellency Jan Hamáček, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament. Dr. Robert Řehák, Embassy Cultural Attaché, hosted the event.

Prudký, a Professor of Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Faculty of Theology of Charles University, has devoted his books and studies to the literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible and its interpretation and reception in various historic and recent contexts.

Jan Hus (1371 – 1415), the famous Czech church reformer, was burned at the stake for his beliefs at the Council of Constance, after having been given a safe conduct pass to appear and defend those beliefs.

After his death, the followers of his teachings, the Hussites, rebelled and defeated five consecutive papal crusades in Bohemia between 1420 and 1431 - the Hussite Wars. Some in the Czech Republic even today, follow the teachings of Hus and his successors. His statue stands in the center of Prague’s Old Town Square, and his motto “Pravda vítězí“ (Truth prevails.) is inscribed on the banner of the President of the Czech Republic.

Prudký’s lecture dealt with the role of the Bible as one of the most decisive aspects of Hus’ motivation and the most important influences on the development of the Lutheran and Calvinist reformation movements in the 16th century. Prudký provided a view of the life and work of Hus and of the reformation movement in 15th century Bohemia.



*Jan Hus Memorial Stands at Old Town
Square, Prague*
(photo by Lillis Werder)

European Union Day at Czech Embassy



Open House at the Czech Embassy for European Union Day on May 9, 2015, was an event to remember. The open house featured a vintage motorcycle show, trained police dogs, live music, delicious Czech food, and the world famous Pilsner Urquell beer. One display featured the fascinating Karel Čapek, the writer who introduced the word “robot” to the languages of the world. Also commemorated was the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII. A display by Czech Tourism distributed information about the city of Pilsen— a Culture Capital of Europe for 2015. Police from Rockville, Maryland, brought their special canines to demonstrate their training in all the duties of canine law enforcement.

AFoCR set up an information table, hosted by Director of Communications Lillis Werder and son Samuel Werder, with a display of past and current projects, including the rebuilding of the Sokol gymnasium in the town of West, Texas, and the monuments erected by AFoCR in Washington and Prague. Visitors received brochures and AFoCR pens as souvenirs. Approximately 3,000 visitors attended EU Day this year. This event helped spread the word to many Washington area residents about the numerous projects and efforts of AFoCR. It was an honor for AFoCR to be represented at the Czech Embassy during such a festive event.

Havel Speech Commemorated at U.S. Capitol



*(l to r) House Minority
Leader Nancy Pelosi,
House Speaker John
Boehner, and Czech
Ambassador Petr
Gandalovič at the U.S.
Capitol beside the Havel
Bust*

The 25th anniversary of Czech President Václav Havel’s historic address to a Joint Session of Congress in 1990 was commemorated at the U.S. Capitol in March 2015. The ceremony was held at the newly placed bust of Havel in the Hall of Freedom Fighters near the Capitol Rotunda. House of Representatives leaders and Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič, as well as directors of AFoCR and the Václav Havel Library Foundation, together paid homage to Havel’s inspiring speech that eloquently quoted Thomas Jefferson’s views of freedom.

The Congressional attendees included House Speaker John Boehner, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Maryland Congressman Steny Hoyer, and Illinois Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky.

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*Tomáš G. Masaryk
 Memorial in
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*Candles Lit in Memory of
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