

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Masaryk Memorial Statue Repairs Planned for Summer



Masaryk Memorial on Massachusetts Avenue near Dupont Circle, Washington, DC

photo credit: Lillis Werder

Since 2002, the T. G. Masaryk Memorial has stood tall in Washington, D.C., as a symbol of the longstanding and enduring relationship between the U.S. and the Czech Republic. This memorial and the Woodrow Wilson Monument in Prague together honor the U.S. and Czech leaders who were key to the founding of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

Like many statues on Washington memorials, the iconic statue of T.G.Masaryk is in need of some structural repairs. AFoCR is working with specialists to survey the statue and decide on the best way to correct the issues, which are largely environmentally related. The scope and schedule for the repair work is now being developed, with the goal of completing the repairs by Fall 2016. The objective of the project is to take care of current problems and minimize their likelihood in the future.

The project's cost and duration depend on the initial surveys now being performed by the statue conservation specialists. The Czech Government has provided a grant which will cover part of the repair; however, additional funds will likely be needed.

Donations for this project can be sent to AFoCR at 4410 Massachusetts Ave., NW, #391, Washington, DC 20016-5572 or made on-line at www.afocr.org.

Czech Tennis Great Featured in Annual Embassy Festival



Czech-born Tennis Champion Martina Navrátilová

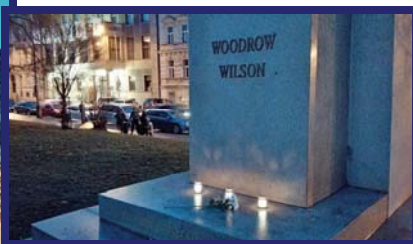
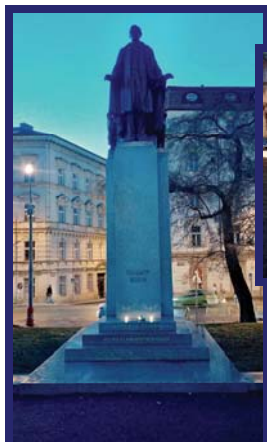
photo credit: <http://a4.files.biography.com>

The annual Czech Embassy Mutual Inspirations Festival 2016 will again feature an extraordinary Czech personality who has greatly influenced and inspired others through his or her work. This year's honoree is Czech-born tennis legend Martina Navrátilová, who took women's tennis to another level and inspired the world with her unsurpassed records. The Festival is an annual initiative spearheaded by the Embassy, in partnership with AFoCR.

This year, inspired by Navrátilová, the Festival will highlight athletic activity and a healthy lifestyle. Beyond her unmatched career record of 167 singles and 177 doubles championships, she is a proponent of numerous societal issues. Navrátilová now fights childhood obesity in America by promoting physical activity and good eating habits. She emphasizes that girls who play sports have higher self-esteem and excel in school. She also works with various charities benefiting underprivileged children.

The festival will run through September and October and include lectures, film screenings, discussions, concerts, and panels. The schedule of activities will be announced soon and will be available on the Festival website at www.mutualinspirations.org.

As she approaches her 60th birthday this October, Martina remains the oldest winner of a grand slam title, male or female winning a record nine Wimbledon, including six consecutively. Martina credits her childhood in former Czechoslovakia where she saw women having families, jobs and playing sports with an innate sense that sports are good for you as well as fun. Her mother played volleyball and tennis and Martina learned to love and play a variety of sports, which continues to help her fitness.



At the Wilson Monument in Prague, candles were lit on the anniversary of his death, February 3, 2016.

Havel Birthday Commemoration Events

October 5th will mark the 80th anniversary of Václav Havel's birth. Commemoration events are planned in Washington by the Embassy of the Czech Republic in cooperation with the Václav Havel Library Foundation in New York.

Letter from AFoCR President Tom Dine



The Czech Republic's Expanding Defense Posture

In the context of Russian, Chinese, and Jihadist violence and territorial terror in Europe and Asia, Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have charged America's allies with inadequate defense spending and preparedness. Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, charged in his April 23rd foreign policy speech that most NATO members do not share the military burden of the alliance's common defense. Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have often voiced similar criticisms.

A close look at Czech Republic defense and deterrence spending, however, shows a major effort underway to raise military expenditures to the 1.4 percent GDP mark by the year 2020 with the intention of reaching the required 2.0 percent GDP in the following years. Also, the core military manpower levels will grow by almost 50 percent by the year 2025. Currently, in NATO only the U.S., the U.K., France, Estonia, and Poland meet the alliance's spending goals; among East Asian allies, South Korea devotes nearly 2.5 percent of GDP to its military, with Taiwan and Australia close to 2.0 percent.

In the last 25 years, the Czech armed forces have gone through an unprecedented modernization program. Breaking clean from a cumbersome Warsaw Pact frontline force, the Czechs have created a well-trained and well-equipped up-to-date force, fully interoperable with its NATO counterparts. This is, I believe, a remarkable achievement. The Czech armed forces will also significantly expand their deployable capabilities on the ground and in the air over the next decade.

In the area of land forces, by the year 2025, the number in uniform will increase from 15,000 to 24,000. Also expanding will be acquisitions of armored personnel carriers, NATO-caliber mobile gunneries, self-propelled mortars, assault rifles with grenade launchers, engineer technologies, combat vehicles for special forces, and sophisticated anti-aircraft systems.

Planned air force purchases are multipurpose helicopters, mobile air defense radars, airfield radars, and

unmanned aerial vehicles, while logistical support projects on order are communications and information systems, transporters and ballistic personnel protection.

Besides home deployments, the Czech military is also increasing its capabilities to deploy outside of NATO in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa -- against the Islamic State and like-minded terrorists. For example, the Czech Parliament has just approved sending an aviation assistance team to Iraq to train Iraqi air force personnel on the L-159s, their subsonic fighter planes supplied to Iraq by the Czech Republic.

Regarding the heavy migration to Europe from the Middle East and Africa, the Czechs in cooperation with NATO are expanding their operations in crisis areas, and sending medical teams, for instance, to Slovenia.

Finally, the Czechs are greatly concerned about the situation in Ukraine where Russia's excessive nationalism and feelings of inferiority and Putin's rush to display "great power" status have led to grabbing Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine. Prague is already involved bilaterally in on-the-ground projects in the areas of industry, training, logistics, and medical support.

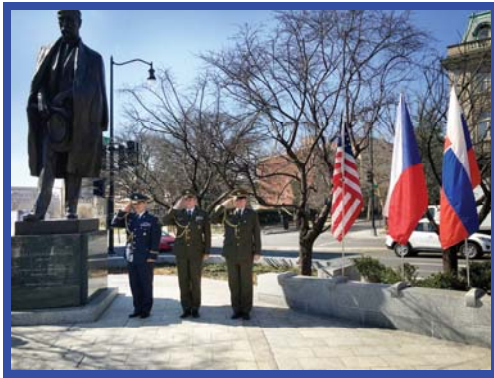
Beyond Russia's aggression against its southern neighbor, Moscow has positioned itself as a strategic adversary of the West and NATO in particular. This is seen in recent military maneuvers in, over, and around the Baltic countries and in its recent military doctrines of 2010 and 2014. In December 2015, the latest edition of the Russian Security Strategy was issued in which Moscow claims that NATO constitutes a threat to its "national security."

Prague's current military buildup in the context of NATO sends a message to Russia. Moreover, in answer to America's presidential hopefuls about annual military spending as a percentage of gross domestic product, the buildup shows that the small, cooperative Czech Republic is neither an impediment in meeting its NATO obligations or a drain on the U.S.

In fact, in 2016 and beyond, the Czech Republic is sharing NATO's military tasks and serving as a trustworthy ally.

Thomas A. Dine
President, AFoCR

Masaryk Birthday Ceremony at Masaryk Memorial Washington, DC - March 7, 2016



Czech Military Officers



(L to R) DCM of Embassy of Slovakia Peter Zelenák, AFoCR Directors Phil Kasik, Michael Rokos, Lara Brockway - 2015 Miss Kansas Czech-Slovak Queen, General Jiří Verner, AFoCR Director Barbara Gibian, Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič, and AFoCR President Tom Dine



AFoCR President Tom Dine

European Union Day at Czech Embassy Washington, DC - May 14, 2016 (photos by Lillis Werder)



Serving Pivo



AFoCR Display



Czech-bred Police Dogs



Czech Travel Display



Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič and Friends



The Polka

Ray Snokhous of Texas In Memoriam



The American Czech community has lost a leader, a champion, and a true friend. Ray Snokhous, age 86, passed away in February 2016 at his residence in the small central Texas town of West. His quick wit and winning smile won him friends and appreciation wherever he went. With his signature Texas style of humor, hospitality, and friendship he brought people together and got things done.

As Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic and later Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic for the State of Texas, he served for over 20 years. In 2011 he received the prestigious Gratias Agit Award presented by the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic.

With his wife Clarice by his side, Ray was active in numerous organizations, hosted many notable government and non-government delegations, and worked tirelessly at promoting Czech heritage and culture in the United States. He served on the Boards of the Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center in La Grange and the Czech Educational Foundation of Texas. He was a member of American Friends of the Czech Republic, the Czech Center Museum Houston, Czech Heritage Society of Texas, Sokol of Houston, the Texas District of the National Alliance of Czech Catholics, Texas Czech Genealogical Society, and numerous other Czech-related organizations.

Ray was always there to offer a hand or lead a cause like placing the Czech Republic in the Visa Waiver Program. When West suffered the tragic industrial accident in 2013 he quickly brought people together and inspired efforts at rebuilding the destroyed Sokol gymnasium.

Born in 1929 in West, where his father was the village blacksmith, Ray earned his MBA from the University of Houston and his Law Degree from the South Texas College of Law. He served in the United States Army with the 101st Airborne Division during the Korean War. He was an inspiration to all.



**Ray Snokhous
welcoming Czech
Prime Minister
Bohuslav Sobotka at
the Snokhous ranch
in West, Texas after
groundbreaking
ceremony of Sokol
gymnasium,
November 20, 2014**

Peter Rafaeli Steps Down from AFoCR Board

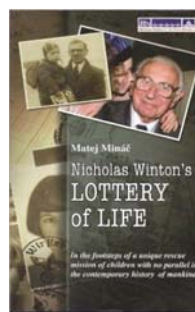


After 15 years of service, Peter Rafaeli will step down from AFoCR's Board of Directors this year. Peter joined the Board in 2001, became Treasurer in 2002, then Vice-President, and finally President in 2008. In those roles, he has provided leadership on many AFoCR projects, including flood relief in the Czech Republic, the visa waiver educational project, and the Winton Educational Project. AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek noted that he will be missed and congratulated him on his achievements. He has agreed to become an AFoCR Director Emeritus. Always thought of by his colleagues as the consummate diplomat, he plans to continue serving as Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic for Philadelphia as well as do more traveling with his wife Naomi.

Of special note, Peter led a number of AFoCR projects in support of the Jewish Museum in Prague. For the Winton Educational Project, Peter translated and arranged publication of the Czech educational book by Matej Minác: *Nicholas Winton's Lottery of Life*. He established a fundraising program that raised enough funds for AFoCR to publish 17,000 copies. The books have been distributed by AFoCR free of charge to educational institutions throughout the U.S.

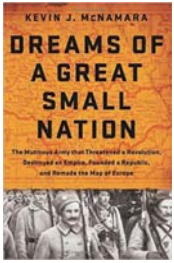
Peter was born in the former Czechoslovakia where he received his elementary and high school education in Bratislava. It was followed by an American high school diploma obtained by attending evenings in Montgomery County, Maryland. In his business career, he rose to top leadership positions in several dealerships in the mid-Atlantic region for VW, Mercedes-Benz, and Porsche + Audi Division.

While working and living in the Baltimore area in 1969, he became increasingly concerned with the invasion of his native Czechoslovakia by troops of the Warsaw Pact and the aftermath of the invasion. He went to the aid of his countrymen who fled their native land, and with the help of the Catholic Conference, the Tolstoy Foundation, and the U.S. Embassy in Vienna, Austria, devised a plan to help these refugees emigrate to the U.S. He helped 19 families in refugee camps in Austria to come to the U.S. and got them started with housing and employment.



**Nicholas Winton's
Lottery of Life by Matej Minác
available at
www.amazon.com**

Review of
DREAMS OF A GREAT SMALL NATION*
 by Tom Dine, President, AFoCR



Author of *Dreams of a
 Great Small Nation*
 Kevin J. McNamara

(photo credit:
www.kevinjmcnamara.com)

Military memories run deep in Czech history. Warriors and war victories and defeats are well-known and studied, in particular those during the medieval period. Little is known, however, of the remarkable mutinous actions of Czecho-Slovaks against the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the nascent Soviets in Russia during the First World War. In a fresh, fascinating, and grisly narrative entitled *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, Kevin J. McNamara, an American scholar and foreign policy analyst of Central and Eastern European affairs, records in great detail the heroic rebellion of a legion of Czech and Slovak soldiers. Recruited primarily from 300-odd prisoner of war camps in Russia, they formed an effective fighting force against the imperial regimes of Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest, as well as the Soviet revolutionaries in Moscow.

The "legionnaires," as this motley band of deserters, prisoners of war, and emigres were labeled, fought for three reasons: To "form an army of our own," as Tomáš G. Masaryk expressed, to escape from the old Habsburg hold as well as the new Soviet grip, and to contribute to Masaryk's efforts to achieve the long-held dream of a completely independent and sovereign Czecho-Slovak state.

McNamara makes the point that the Czechs of Austria and the Slovaks of Hungary were never one ethnic people despite sharing a similar language, a similar neighborhood, and a similarly oppressive Austro-Hungarian Empire. Those in the Legion, however, shared a common desire to escape their miserable situation in Russia and find their way home. The author also describes in detail Masaryk's strategic thinking and his travels all over wartime Europe ("Austria must be opposed in grim earnest.") seeking support for the liberation and establishment of a new country. His decision to go to Russia to organize a *druzina* of Czech and Slovak troops in fact created the army that would ensure the birth of the new country of Czechoslovakia, of which he would become president.

Originally comprised of only 350 former POWs, the Legion eventually grew into a cohesive group of more than 200,000 fighters strung out from western Siberia to Vladivostok. Initially scheduled for transport on the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok for transfer to ships and passage to the Western front, the Soviet Russians wanted them disarmed, while the Western Allies proposed to use them to establish a second front in the war against the Central Powers.

This dilemma needed an unplanned spark to light the legionnaire escape route and the unexpected took place in Chelyabinsk, the most "unlikely place to make history," on May 14, 1918. This day was two months after Russia had dropped out of World War I by signing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty; it was the 300th anniversary of the historic Defenestration of Prague; it was also the height of the German offensive on the western

front. On this ominous day at a train station in the bleak Ural town of Chelyabinsk on the eastern frontier, amidst heckling and cursing of the Czechs, a Hungarian prisoner of war hurled from a train car a chunk of metal and badly wounded one of the uniformed Czech soldiers standing on the platform. His comrades struck back with a vengeance. "After a furious series of scuffles, threats, arguments, and one violent assault," McNamara records, the provocative Hungarian assailant "was dead, killed by the legionnaires."

News of the Chelyabinsk incident produced a revengeful reaction in Moscow. The Big Three of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin reversed their earlier policy of supporting the anti-Habsburg legion; the Bolsheviks ordered the legionnaires disarmed and destroyed. Instead, the opposite occurred. The Czechs and Slovaks became galvanized. The Legion experienced a significant growth spurt of 50,000, reigniting a moribund military force, freeing that force from its Russian minders, and leading to the seizure of a lengthy stretch of the Trans-Siberian Railway from Samara (on the Volga River north of the Caspian Sea) to Irkutsk (north of Mongolia), eventually to the port of Vladivostok on the Pacific.

Masaryk parlayed knowledge of Legion successes against both the Central Powers and Soviet Russia to gain political support among Western Powers for an independent state. He conducted a speaking tour in the United States to solicit private monies and lobby President Woodrow Wilson, with his closest partners Edvard Beneš and Milan R. Štefánik doing the same in France and elsewhere in Europe.

McNamara covers the great legionnaire feat. "By September 1 (1918), "the legion had secured the entire Trans-Siberian from the European border to the Pacific Ocean." In turn, this allowed Wilson to reverse his non-intervention policy 180 degrees.

When the American Expeditionary Force entered the Russian Far East in late 1918, Japanese, French, and British troops joined with them. The drive to help the Czech Legion soon morphed into an effort to crush Lenin's regime. However, this military intervention only stimulated a Russian civil war between western-backed Whites and Kremlin-backed Reds, with the latter emerging victorious.

With the Great War over, the map of Europe changed. America and its allies pulled their troops out of Russia in April 1920, taking most of the heroic Czech and Slovak survivors with them. The Bolshevik Revolution emerged more strongly entrenched and the Czech and Slovak Legionnaires, after conquering Siberia, returned to their homes in the new country, Czechoslovakia, that they had done so much to create.

McNamara quotes several sources about the legionnaires. The strained Czechoslovak Army in Russia was best described by an American YMCA worker in Siberia in his diary, "The undaunted, confident, enthusiastic spirit of the Czechs, their disdain of danger, and their wonderful morale strike you with admiration from the first." The U.S. consul in Vladivostok, with a different vantage point, wrote something similar. "A handful of Czecho-Slovak soldiers, men of unparalleled courage, trained in the school of adversity," he cabled Washington and Moscow, are "entirely dependent upon their own resources in the heart of a vast continent." They "performed a deed which will live in history."

Certainly the legionnaires gained a coveted place of honor in the nation's military hall of fame.

*Kevin J. McNamara, *Dreams of a Great Small Nation*, 2016, 395 pages.

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*Tomáš G. Masaryk
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*Candles Lit in Memory of
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