



AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Fall 2014

NEWSLETTER

Volume XX, Number 2

A Joyous Celebration of Freedom

Czech and American dignitaries, visitors from the Czech Republic, Americans of Czech descent, and other friends of the Czech Republic joined together in Washington in mid-November for a joyous celebration of 25 years of freedom for the Czechs and of the legacy of Václav Havel, the man largely credited with achieving that freedom. AFoCR worked with other organizations, notably the Prague Freedom Foundation, the Václav Havel Library Foundation, and the Embassy of the Czech Republic, to produce a week-long series of events that harkened back to the historic visit of President Havel to the United States in February 1990 and his address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress.

The events kicked off on Sunday, November 16, with the screening at American University of the films *The Beggar's Opera* and *The Heart above the Castle*, revealing the political dynamics of Czechoslovakia before and after the 1989 Velvet Revolution.

Monday, November 17, was the actual day, 25 years ago, when Czech students – having received a permit to commemorate International Students' Day- demonstrated against the communist regime and were brutally beaten by riot police, provoking public outrage that led to the resignation of the regime. International Students' Day commemorates the Nazi German storming of Czech universities in 1939 and the subsequent killings and deportations of students to concentration camps. On the afternoon of the 17th, students at Georgetown University read from President Havel's works in remembrance of the events of 25 and 75 years ago and the prominent role played by students. The event was attended by former Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg. Also that afternoon George Washington University hosted a panel discussion about the fall of the iron curtain.

The major event for Monday was an evening concert by the Czech Philharmonic at the Washington National Cathedral. The concert, attended by 2,000, was sponsored by the Prague Freedom Foundation. Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright were among those offering opening remarks. The musical program *(continued on page 5)*

Ground Broken for New Sokol Gymnasium in West, Texas



(l to r) Texas Governor Rick Perry, Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek, Sokol West President Shane Bivens, and West Mayor Tommy Muska break ground

State and local politicians, as well as dignitaries from the Czech Republic gathered in West, Texas, on November 20 to break ground for a new Sokol gymnasium to replace the one destroyed in the fertilizer plant explosion in April 2013. The construction budget for the gymnasium, the first phase of the planned facility, is \$1.2 million. The gymnasium is expected to be completed by summer 2015, and the town hopes to build a community hall as a second phase. AFoCR is leading the fundraising effort, which was launched with a generous grant from the government of the Czech Republic.

West, a tight-knit community of 2,800, 70% of whom are of Czech descent, has made fine progress in rebuilding after the tragedy. The new Sokol is one of the last highpoints. "I would like to praise your courage," said Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, in addressing a crowd of more than 100. "I hope we are laying the ground for a new home here in West."

AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek spoke about his appreciation of Sokol as he was growing up in Berwyn, a suburb of Chicago with strong Czech traditions, and about the importance of the Sokol facility to the community in West. He noted that helping Czech communities with recovery when tragedy strikes is a key AFoCR priority.

Texas Governor Rick Perry described the rebuilding of the gymnasium as a key milestone. "This is about a building, but it's about more than a building," Perry said. "Last year's tragedy ... it's not just this geographic community, it goes across this state. We were all from West. Community is what helps us transcend tragedies. We have had our fair share of those in Texas over the years." Perry also applauded the relationship between West and the Czech Republic.

The devastating explosion killed 15 people, 12 of whom were first responders to a fire burning at West Fertilizer Co. The blast also injured hundreds of the town's residents and destroyed many of its buildings and homes.

The groundbreaking ceremony opened with a performance of Czech dances by students from West High School in traditional Czech kroje. Then Governor Perry, Prime Minister Sobotka, Chairman Malek, Sokol West President Shane Bivens, and West Mayor Tommy Muska each turned a shovel of dirt to ceremonially break ground. After the groundbreaking, Ray Snokhous, outgoing Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic for the state of Texas, hosted a luncheon at his home in celebration.

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
Washington, DC 20016-5572

Letter from AFoCR President Tom Dine



*AFoCR President
Tom Dine with Dr.
Pavol Demeš at
15th Annual
Czech and Slovak
Freedom Lecture,
Nov. 14, 2014*

THE U.S. AND NATO - SOLIDARITY AGAINST DISORDER

As the new year commences, U.S. foreign policy is challenged on many fronts, in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa. It is our duty as concerned citizens to help steer our ship of state from bewilderment and drift, and to direct it instead to crack down on global elements adverse to our vital national security interests. Each crisis needs to be addressed on the basis of its own importance.

First, taking place are over a dozen events that range in importance from serious to dangerously critical to our well-being. Let's start with public health challenges in West Africa in which so many African and a few American lives are being consumed by Ebola, as medical technology and knowledge race to find a way to contain this viral disease. Next, China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea has and is sending a wave of concern over our Japanese ally. In response, both growing public sentiment and Prime Minister Abe's own instincts contemplate unleashing the Japanese military as an offensive and defensive force. The Chinese are playing with fire.

Then there is autocratic Putinism. Putin's personal anger at the strength and success of the West, particularly of the U.S., along with the downfall of his beloved U.S.S.R., has led to the Kremlin dashing the West's post-Cold War optimism regarding freedom and democracy. Russia's forceful physical annexations in Georgia and now in the Crimea plus its renewed use of covert military assaults in Eastern Ukraine will make 2015 a very troubled time for Ukraine's leadership. Putin's focus on creating international disorder has become a headline grabber on a daily basis.

Internal and external wars rage in Arab-speaking countries, destroying Syria, engulfing Iraq, and crippling Yemen, Libya, and Bahrain. Sectarian hate and brutality practiced by Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, jihad groups, and Iranian revolutionary forces are producing further disorder and danger to the United States and our allies. For sure President Obama must get over his "sloppy thinking about no military solutions," as rightly argues Jackson Diehl on *The Washington Post's* editorial page.

Secondly, of serious concern are the dangerous encroachments and threats looming over countries surrounding Russia, with it continuing feelings of inferiority: Moldova, Georgia again, Ukraine as mentioned above, the three Baltic states, and the four Visegrad states. The good news is that those countries that are NATO members are protected by Article V of the Washington Treaty, which is similar to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, guarantees the defense of each member country if militarily attacked. The Article provides that an armed attack

on any alliance member will be deemed by every other NATO member as an attack against all members, and each will take the actions it deems necessary to assist the ally in danger. This security arrangement both applies both to attacking countries and non-state actors like terrorist groups, whether uniformed or not.

Because of Putin's bad habit of grabbing land and pressuring governments to side with Moscow, fear is present in all countries that lie near the Russian bear. In interacting this past year with foreign officials and intelligentsia from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, as well as Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and - of course - the Czech Republic, I frequently sensed the anxiety coursing through the veins of our allies' political leaders and publics. Visiting officials and ambassadors from these countries express strongly emotional opinions that normally would be expressed in the sedate manner of a foreign policy professional. For instance, Kestutis Paulauskas, a nuclear arms control expert from Lithuania, said that Lithuanians had joined "the NATO of 1949," meaning a NATO whose mission was to ensure an American presence in Europe and to prevent Russia from expanding into his country and others of the former communist bloc. He said he feared when, not whether, Putin will invade his country.

When in Washington for the unveiling of the Havel Bust in the U.S. Capitol, Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka at a seminar sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, appeared to be less fearful of an overt attack. He emphasized the closeness and intensity of the Czechs' relationship with the Obama Administration and the American people, and that Prague's security is enhanced by NATO. He saw Russia's historic strategy of pursuing "spheres of influence" in Central and Eastern Europe as a threat to his democratic country. Thusly, European solidarity in both NATO and the EU are necessary. He worried that sanctions on Russia would exacerbate regional tensions with Moscow, but pointed out that in 2014 Ukrainians had become the largest minority dwelling in his country. "We must work to keep the ethnic peace within our society."

In 2015, the American Friends of the Czech Republic and other concerned American citizens must work in their local hometowns and in Washington to help shape a coherent and effective U.S. policy regarding the dangerous and tense crises that we face. The United States and its allies are essential to renewing regional and global order and stability, and I offer the belief that this may mean limited use of force in the places where it is needed.

Tom Dine



*Michael Van Dusen Welcomes Dr. Pavol Demeš
to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for
Scholars, Nov. 14, 2014*

Havel Bust to the Capitol

by Milton Cerny



Havel Bust in U.S. Capitol Statuary Hall after Unveiling, (photo by Lillis Werder)

A number of people have asked “how was it possible that you were able to have Václav Havel’s bust enshrined in the U. S. Capitol Building, only one of four international leaders so honored?”

The process began in the summer of 2013 when my law partner at McGuireWoods LLP, Elliot Berke, mentioned to me that Winston Churchill’s bust would be dedicated in Statuary Hall and enshrined in the Freedom Foyer in October. He thought it would be great if Havel could be similarly recognized. There was one alcove left in the foyer, and we realized we would need to work quickly. I contacted Czech Ambassador Petr Gondolovič to gain his support and that of the Václav Havel Library Foundation (VHLF) and the American Friends of Czech Republic (AFoCR). We negotiated with the Václav Havel Library in Prague, which owns the copyrights and trademarks for the use of Václav Havel’s name and likeness, for its approval of any bust bearing his name.

Havel’s widow, Dagmar Havlová, favored a bust created by Lubomír Janečka, who was born in Czechoslovakia, but because of his art was forced into exile by the Communist Party in 1984. He had already created a bust for the Havel Library to present to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. We commissioned Mr. Janečka to create a similar bust for our celebration of the 25th anniversary of the overthrow of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

The staff of House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner

liked the concept for the bust and pedestal and the timing of its dedication. Representatives of the VHLF, AFoCR, and the Czech Embassy met with the Speaker’s staff to plan for the dedication. A bi-partisan House resolution, H. Res 506, was introduced by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) on March 11, 2014, and it passed unanimously. Other supporters of H. Res 506 included Rep. Eliot Engle (D-NY); Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA); Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD); Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY). The assistance of former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek were instrumental in our success.

From March through July, Mr. Janečka worked on casting the bust at a foundry in Prague while we worked with various officials in the Capitol to gain approval of the pedestal and its inscriptions. Mr. Janečka’s concept of the bust initially began in 2012 with nine sketches showing different periods of Havel’s life. Of these, Mr. Janečka chose Havel speaking before a Joint Session of the U. S. Congress in 1990. He called it “Václav Havel Victorious”-- full of life and full of hope for his country and the world. Mr. Janečka’s goal was to capture Havel’s clear and open nature and the firmness of his convictions. The bust, cast in bronze, is gilded with gold. The pedestal is made of magpie granite and with the inscriptions in gold. Inscribed on its left side is the Czech lion symbolizing the Czech dynasty from the 13th century and phases of Havel’s life. The coat of arms of the Czech Republic appears on the front. Three small stones embedded in the pedestal represent areas in the Czech Republic important to Havel, including precious agate from the Český ráj, moldavite, a gemstone from the Vltava River, and small stone from the garden of Havel’s summer house at Hrádeček.

The placement of Václav Havel’s bust in the Capitol Building, the creation of the T.G. Masaryk Memorial on Embassy Row, and the return of the Woodrow Wilson Monument statue to Prague complete the trilogy of freedom, the founding of Czechoslovakia, and its rebirth through the Velvet Revolution 25 years ago. (Milton Cerny is a former President of AFoCR and currently a VHLF Director.)

Unveiling of Havel Bust in U.S. Capitol Building - November 19, 2014

(photos by Lillis Werder)



Speaker of the House John Boehner, Senator Robert Menendez, Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, and Representative Ed Royce



Dagmar Havlová with House Speaker John Boehner



United States Armed Forces Color Guard

Groundbreaking of West, Texas, Sokol Gymnasium November 20, 2014 (photos by Lillis Werder)



Presentation of Colors



Playing of the National Anthems



Interpreter Roman Boháček and Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka



AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek



West Mayor Tommy Muska



West High School Students



West Children with Czech and Washington Visitors



Prime Minister Sobotka Symbolically Placing Sokol Gymnasium Cornerstone



Texas Governor Rick Perry



Ray Snokhous, outgoing Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic for Texas, Clarice Snokhous, Prime Minister Sobotka, and Olga Sobotka



American, Czech, and Texas Flags Above Snokhous Home



Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič Made Honorary Deputies for the Day by the Local Sheriff

(continued from page 1) included the symphonic poem “Vltava” (“The Moldau”) by Bedřich Smetana and Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95, “From the New World,” by Antonín Dvořák. The sublime performance received a prolonged standing ovation. The concert was followed by a reception in the Cathedral’s Bethlehem Chapel.

On Tuesday morning, The Atlantic Council held the “Lion and Eagle Symposium” at its Washington offices. The conference, entitled “Twenty-Five Years of Freedom - Transatlantic Geopolitical, Security, and Economic Challenges through the Eyes of Czech and American Envoys,” reviewed Czech/U.S. relations over the last 25 years, featuring panel discussions by 12 current and former ambassadors – from both Washington to Prague as well as Prague to Washington. Welcome remarks were delivered by Dr. Paula J. Dobriansky, Senior Fellow, at the John F. Kennedy Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University. The Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament, Jan Hamáček, gave the keynote address. The panel moderators were William Drozdiak, President, American Council on Germany, and Kevin Klose, Former President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Tuesday evening came the gala dinner at the Omni Shoreham Hotel.

The highlight of the entire celebration was the dedication of a bust of President Havel in the United States Capitol on the afternoon of Wednesday, November 19, an honor unanimously voted by the U.S. House of Representatives earlier this year. That morning, however, the Czech Embassy, The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress, and the Václav Havel Center at Florida International University presented the conference “Václav Havel’s Legacy Today” in the Library’s Coolidge Auditorium. Former Czech Ambassador to the U.S. and current Czech Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Michael Žantovský, moderated the first panel - on Havel’s political importance today - consisting of Dr. Albright and U.S. Senator John McCain. The second panel - on preserving Václav Havel’s legacy – was moderated by Former Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations, Martin Palouš. The panelists were the President of Florida International University, Mark Rosenberg; the President of the National Endowment for Democracy, Carl Gershman, Columbia University’s Professor of Global Political Economy and former Czech presidential candidate, Jan Švejnar; and Board Chairman of the Václav Havel Library in Prague, Jan Macháček.

Also on Tuesday morning Prime Minister Sobotka was given a brief tour of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial by AFoCR Director Robert Doubek, who was in charge of creating the memorial in the early 1980’s. Before departing the Prime Minister laid a bouquet of flowers at the base of the apex of the memorial’s walls.

The ceremony to dedicate the bust of Václav Havel was hosted by Speaker of the United States House of Representatives John Boehner, in the presence of Speaker Hamáček and Prime Minister Sobotka, as well as President Havel’s widow Dagmar Havlová. The ceremony was held in the two-story National Statuary Hall, which houses statues and busts of American presidents and other historic figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. The U.S. Armed Forces Color Guard, accompanied by a Czech Army officer, presented the colors, and the U.S. Army Band played the National Anthems of the United States and the Czech Republic.

Speaker Boehner praised President Havel as “a writer who exposed the communists, using the one weapon that they couldn’t match, and that was the truth,” and recalled his resulting prison sentences. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said President Havel’s leadership served as an example to people everywhere in the world striving for democracy and human rights. Prime Minister Sobotka recalled Václav Havel’s 1990 message that “no one who paid the price for freedom should be forgotten.”

A special musical tribute to President Havel, who loved rock, jazz, and blues, was played in two brief selections by American musician and guitarist Billy Gibbons of the band ZZ Top, who is a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

The Havel Bust will reside in the “Freedom Foyer,” a rotunda on the first floor of the Capitol building, and will be one of only four depicting foreign individuals in the Capitol. The other three are 19th-century Hungarian freedom fighter Lajos Kossuth, Swedish humanitarian Raoul Wallenberg, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

On Wednesday evening, the Czech Embassy hosted a jubilant reception for the occasion of the visits of Speaker Hamáček and Prime Minister Sobotka. A number of speakers compared the euphoric mood to that of the Embassy reception in February 1990 for the new President Havel.

To continue the notable events, the National Endowment for Democracy on Thursday morning, November 20, hosted a panel discussion on human rights: “25 Years after the Velvet Revolution: The Continuing Struggle for a Europe Whole and Free.” The panelists included Šimon Pánek, a former Czech student activist during the Velvet Revolution, who is the executive director of the humanitarian organization People in Need, which he co-founded in 1992.

The week’s events concluded on Thursday evening at the Washington bookstore “Politics and Prose,” with a discussion by Dr. Albright and Ambassador Žantovský about Žantovský’s new book, *Havel A Life*. Both Dr. Albright and Ambassador Žantovský were close friends and confidants of President Havel, so the discussion featured many amusing back stories about him and the Velvet Revolution.



*Dagmar Havlová
with John
Pellouchoud and
AFoCR Director
Kristyna
Pellouchoud
Driehaus
(photo by Lillis
Werder)*



*Prime Minister
Bohuslav
Sobotka and
Olga Sobotka
(photo by Lillis
Werder)*

AFoCR Dinner Honors Visit of Czech Prime Minister to Texas



AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek with Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka in Dallas (photo by Lillis Werder)

AFoCR hosted a dinner in Dallas in November to celebrate the first visit to Texas of Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka. During the visit, the Prime Minister visited the Dallas JFK Memorial and the Sixth Floor Museum at the Dealey Plaza Depository for a reception with the Czech community. The reception was hosted by Brian Vanicek, newly appointed Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for Texas.

The dinner, attended by Texas Governor Rick Perry and Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič, was held at the historic Arlington House. AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek, Prime Minister Sobotka, and Governor Perry spoke about the importance of the Sokol in West, Texas. Guests viewed a specially produced film on the West tragedy. The film and photos from the dinner can be viewed on AFoCR's web site at: <http://www.afocr.org/gallery/afocr-hosts-dinner-czech-prime-minister-bohuslav-sobotka-dallas-texas-arlington-hall>

AFoCR Director Fritz Duda, who is leading the Sokol West reconstruction effort, and AFoCR Vice President Phil Kasik arranged the dinner.

Annual Board of Directors Meeting



Hillwood Museum, former home of Marjorie Merriweather Post

AFoCR's Board of Directors held its annual meeting in November at the historic Hillwood Museum in Washington. Chairman Fred Malek called the meeting to order, and President Tom Dine welcomed newly elected Director Barbara Gibian, managing partner for Taher Investment Group, an international capital management firm, and daughter of founding Director Tom Gibian. The Directors received reports on the successful projects to place a bust of Václav Havel in the U.S. Capitol and to erect an interpretive plaque at the Woodrow Wilson Monument in Prague. The Board also approved preliminary plans for rebuilding the gymnasium for Sokol West. Norman Eisen, former Ambassador to the Czech Republic, was elected to the Board of Directors. Officers elected to serve in 2015 will be Fred Malek - Chairman, Tom Dine - President, Bill Cabaniss - Executive VP, Phil Kasik - Executive VP and Assistant Treasurer, Mike Rokos - Treasurer and Robert Doubek - Secretary.

Annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture



Dr. Pavol Demeš Delivering the 2014 Freedom Lecture at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington (photo by Lillis Werder)

The 15th Annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture was delivered on November 14 by Dr. Pavol Demeš, External Advisor, Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States. His talk, delivered to a packed auditorium at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars near the White House, was entitled "Slovakia's Road to Freedom and Democracy." Relying upon his personal connection to the momentous events, Dr. Demeš related a moving illustrated narrative tracing the path to democracy of Slovakia over the past 25 years. The annual event is co-sponsored by AFoCR and the Friends of Slovakia.



Czech National Day was celebrated October 28, 2014, at the Masaryk Memorial in Washington. (L to R) AFoCR President Tom Dine, Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Slovak Embassy Peter Zelaňák, AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek, AFoCR Directors Michael Rokos and Phil Kasik (photo by Lillis Werder)



Prague Castle, October 28, 2014: Czech President Miloš Zeman awards Sir Nicholas G. Winton the Order of the White Lion, the Czech Republic's highest award, for in 1938 saving 669 Czechoslovak Jewish children. (photo by Petr David Josek)

Chicago Czech Center Celebrates Official Opening



(l-r) CCC Treasurer John Pellouchoud, CCC Chair Kristyna Driehaus, Theatre Bohemia actor as President W. Wilson, Consul General Bořek Lizec, Katerina Lizec Kulhánková, Theatre Bohemia actor as President T.G. Masaryk, CCC Director Martina Kutak, and CCC Director Marian Hajda

Over 200 guests attended the opening of the Chicago Czech Center (CCC) on the evening of October 3^d, 2014, at the offices of DIRTT Environmental Solutions/Chicago.

Representatives from the United Moravian Societies and the Sokol, dressed in traditional uniforms and kroje, greeted guests upon their arrival, and a buffet was set with Czech goulash and other delicacies. The bar served Czech wine and beer, as well as Slivovice. A video wall looped presentations highlighting all participating organizations and the City of Prague. Among these, FACETS multimedia showed Czech movies, the Bohemian Lawyers Association reviewed the scholarships and trips that it offered, American Friends of the Czech Republic highlighted its achievements, and the T.G. Masaryk School set up a mock classroom. In addition, American Sokol presented the Czech and American flags, and actors with Theatre Bohemia dressed as President T.G. Masaryk, President Woodrow Wilson, and scholar J. A. Komensky mixed with the guests.

CCC Treasurer John Pellouchoud, as master of ceremonies, reviewed CCC's mission and goals as a non-profit service organization supporting the Czech community as well as introducing the Czech Republic's rich offerings to the American public. He explained that CCC has access to multiple event venues, allowing it to save the expense of having its own facilities. Its "front door" is its web site: www.chicagoczechcenter.org. Czech Ambassador to the United States Petr Gandalovič expressed his humility upon meeting so many people with Czech heritage in United States. He praised the many Czech-related organizations that have opened schools, provided stewardship over cemeteries, and served the many needs of the Czech community. He expressed his belief that CCC would well serve the community and thanked CCC's founders and directors. The Ambassador then introduced the new Czech Consul General in Chicago, Bořek Lizec, who "will be the point person in the Chicago area." Next, CCC's president, Marek Kutak, welcomed all distinguish guests and introduced the Czech-related partnering organizations.

Among the highlights of the evening were performances by Chicago-based Czech vocalist Jana Hurdesova, accompanied by guitarist Jiri Cafourek. CCC opened on a high note, and continues to have a strong following. As of beginning of December 2014, its Facebook reach is 5,851. For more information on upcoming events, visit www.chicagoczechcenter.org or like/follow on Facebook, Chicago Czech Center.

NCSML to lead Bohemian Beer Tour and Visit to Liberation Festival in Plzeň



Medieval Village of Loket, Czech Republic (Photo by Dagmar Veselková)

It's the Year of Beer in 2015 at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. One of the highlights is a Bohemian Beer Tour to the Czech Republic from April 24 to May 4, 2015. The tour will begin in Prague with a welcome dinner with world beer expert, Evan Rail. The first three days will be in Prague - for strolling the bridges and cobblestone streets of Old Town and exploring sites and cultural activities. Day trips are planned to near-by breweries, pubs, and craft beer tastings.

The tour moves on to Western Bohemia to visit Žatec, its brewery, and "Temple of Hops" museum, along with the Herold Březnice Brewery in the Březnice Castle and the Chodovár Family Brewery, the oldest brewery in Western Bohemia, where one can even try soaking in a beer bath. The tour stops overnight in the charming medieval village and castle of Loket, where beer is brewed in the vaulted cellars of a 14th century malt house.

The tour will culminate with three days in Plzeň — the Capital City of Beer — for its famous Liberation Festival, celebrating the 70th anniversary of liberation of Plzeň by General George Patton's 3rd Army in May 1945. The visit features many unique festival events, including an historic reenactment of the battle for Plzeň and a military camp circa 1945, plus the world-famous Convoy of Liberty parade featuring vintage U.S. military vehicles, uniforms, and dignitaries. This is the most celebrated salute to Americans in Europe and an experience not to be missed. Of course, also included is a tour and sampling of unfiltered beer at one of the world's most famous breweries, Pilsner Urquell.

While tour goers will enjoy the ease and value of group travel, there will be ample time for independent exploration and shopping. The tour is a land package only, enabling participants to take advantage of their frequent flyer miles and the chance to extend their stay on either end of the trip.

Go to www.ncsml.org for the tour brochure, full itinerary, and registration form. The number is limited, so it is first-come, first-served registration.



Březnice Castle, home of the Herold Březnice Brewery (Photo by www.panoramio.com)

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*Tomáš G. Masaryk
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*Candles Lit in Memory of
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