

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Fall 2013

NEWSLETTER

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Václav Havel Memorial Dedication Ceremony at Georgetown University



*(l to r) Dagmar Havlová, Fred Malek, George Drost, Robert Doubek & Bill Cabaniss
Photo by Lillis Werder*

On Wednesday, October 2, a memorial to former Czech President Václav Havel was dedicated in Alumni Square courtyard at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

The event began in Gaston Hall with a seminar to discuss Havel. Former Secretary of State and Georgetown Professor Madeleine K. Albright, a longtime friend of Havel, spoke extensively about his life and work. Participants from the Czech Republic included noted priest and author Msgr. Tomáš Halík and Šimon Pánek, Managing Director of the People in Need Foundation. Testimonials on video included those from journalist Fareed Zakaria, singer Suzanne Vega, the Dalai Lama, writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, and Anglo-Czech playwright Tom Stoppard.

Hundreds of guests, faculty, and students made a procession from Gaston to the memorial site, carrying Czech flags and jingling keys. Paper carnations lined the sidewalks. At the dedication ceremony, the ribbon cutting was performed by Havel's widow Dagmar Havlová, and AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek described the memorial as "a modest tribute ... but fitting, because it signifies the man and what he stood for."

Havel passed away two years ago and was known as a great playwright, dissident, and human rights activist under Communist rule in Czechoslovakia. He made the successful transition to politician after the 1989 Velvet Revolution ended the country's totalitarian rule without bloodshed.

The memorial was established with help from the Embassy of the Czech Republic, the Václav Havel Library in Prague, and AFoCR. It features the national symbol of the Czech Republic, a linden tree, encircled by a table with two chairs, centered in a landscaped garden backed by a low stone wall bearing a memorial plaque. The table and chairs were created by Bořek Šípek, who had been Havel's architect for Prague Castle, and the garden was designed by Tomi Landis of Washington, DC.

Havel had visited Georgetown on his first trip to the U.S. as president in 1990 and felt a strong bond with students, whose initiative had led to the Velvet Revolution.

Disaster Recovery in West, Texas Rebuilding Sokol Facilities a Key Focus



Damaged Sokol West Facility

The town of West continues to recover slowly from the fertilizer plant fire and explosion on April 17 that destroyed nearly 20% of the town's buildings, including both buildings that comprised the Sokol West facilities. Although some residential reconstruction is underway and plans for reconstructing public buildings are moving forward, Sokol West, as a membership organization, is unlikely to qualify for government assistance to rebuild.

AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek and Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič visited West in October. Ambassador Gandalovič offered support from the Czech Embassy in Washington and presented a gift to Sokol West from the government of the Czech Republic in the amount of two million Czech koruna - over \$200,000. The funds will be used to rebuild the destroyed Sokol facilities.

Mr. Malek conferred with Consul General of the Czech Republic Ray Snokhaus, Texas Sokol leaders, and local officials, and concluded an agreement by which AFoCR will assist Sokol West in planning, funding, and rebuilding new facilities. This unprecedented partnership will include reaching out to contracting and planning specialists, soliciting cooperation from Texas-based construction businesses, and raising additional funds to complete the project.

AFoCR's West, Texas Relief Fund, is actively soliciting contributions, which will be committed to the Sokol reconstruction project. Please consider donating through the AFoCR web site, www.afocr.org. Just click the "Donate" option on our home page and follow the instructions. Alternatively, you can send your check payable to the AFoCR West, Texas Disaster Relief Fund to:

AFoCR

4410 Massachusetts Ave., NW #391

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Letter from AFoCR President Tom Dine



AFoCR President Tom Dine Speaks at the Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture, Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, November 12, 2013

Investing in the Czech Republic and Other Visegrád Countries

When I lived in Prague from 1997-2005, attractive investment destinations for companies seeking low costs and high returns were Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, in that order. When the Visegrád Four (V4) joined the European Union early in the 21st century, giving the four countries access to the single European market and a political stamp of approval, foreign direct investment received a significant boost.

The global economic crisis of 2008 and the Eurozone debt crisis in 2011 were momentary setbacks, negatively affecting V4 investment climates. Today, investment is back and growing progressively, although the situation varies in each country. Poland is the V4 star, and Polish analyst Maya Rostowska describes her society's economy as "the green island in a sea of red recession-hit EU member states." Slovakia has recovered quickly from its short but sharp recession, thanks to strong exports and investment. On the other hand, Hungary's economy has contracted by 6.8 percent. The Czech Republic has experienced a more modest downturn.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts modest numbers for the full year 2013. Poland and Slovakia will have growth rates between 1.1% and 0.6% respectively, while growth in Hungary will be stagnant, and the Czech Republic will experience a 0.4% contraction.

Poland is in the best position to attract foreign investment, and consistently leads the V4 pack in terms of FDI inflows. In one year, 2012 to 2013, it shot up 19 places in the World Bank's "Doing Business" survey (from 74 to 55): companies like its enforcement of contracts and ease of registering property and paying taxes. Pro-business government policies continue to emanate from Warsaw.

The Czech Republic receives the second-largest amount of foreign direct investment among the Visegrád Four, and is first in terms of FDI per capita, despite the well-known condition that the country has the worst business environment in the region. The World Bank rates the Czech Republic as 65th in terms of the ease of doing business, and the private sector finds it difficult to start one. It fares better, however, in other areas, such as registering property and trading across borders. Slovakia shows a slightly worse condition in comparison to the Czech Republic. Hungary's business environment like its political environment is rapidly deteriorating. FDI inflows are stagnant. It seems that investors are scared by Prime Minister Viktor Orban's erratic and increasingly authoritarian policies. Investors are also reticent due to the country's poor record of protecting investors and its complicated tax system.

American companies have invested almost \$9 billion in the V4 states since they joined the EU. Strategic advisors believe there are profitable opportunities for further investment by US firms in the better sectors of the Visegrád countries, but as one analysis writes, "American investors interested in the region will have to make sure they know their Silesia from their Žilina."

Beware of a More Aggressive Russian Bear

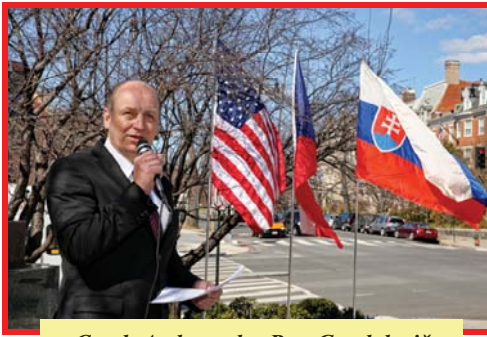
Another variable in understanding the dynamics surrounding the four Visegrád countries is a new aggressiveness in Russian foreign and economic policy. The personality of President Vladimir Putin reflects this belligerence, not only in imposing and re-enforcing a domestic vertical power structure with more social controls and a very small clique of loyal decision makers. The Russian bear is also showing its teeth internationally, by threatening the Baltic states, pressuring the V4 countries, and thwarting to counter the United States in the Middle East. For Putin and political and oligarchic elites in Moscow, the wounds to their pride - the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, the decimation of the Soviet empire, the loss of great power status, a non-robust economy that still depends on raw materials rather than a diversification - have re-stimulated a return to excessive Russian nationalism.

This re-stimulation recently was seen on the streets of Moscow and other cities when ultra-nationalist groups committed hate crimes against workers from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Putin condoned these ugly actions driven by ingrained, age-old fears, prejudices and pride. Even opposition leader Alexei Navalny endorsed this racism when a recent extreme right-wing march of hoodlums in Moscow led to beatings and homicide. The (London) *Times* reported, "The vast majority of participants are neo-Nazis." The belligerence has also been felt by neighbors Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, with Russia trying to thwart their interest in joining the EU by warning it would block goods from entering Russia. Lithuania has also been threatened.

Moscow has been supporting Bashar al-Asad's brutal crackdown on Sunni Muslims in Syria since May 2011. Well over 120,000 deaths to date and at least two million refugees are the result. So, it is a deeply divided country along a startling patch-work of religious groups and desert tribes. No realistic prospect of putting the country back together again exists in the near future, certainly not led by Russia. What is crucial to Russia is access to Syria's warm water ports along the eastern Mediterranean Sea for its navy and freighters containing lethal arms for the Syrian Army, Hezbollah, Iran, Al-Qaeda, as well as a seat at the cease-fire table whenever negotiations commence.

Russia is also trying a more heavy-handed and competitive diplomacy to open up new opportunities for itself in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, traditional American spheres of interest. Recently Egyptian interim Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy said his country would look "beyond the United States to meet its security needs." The top of the Saudi family structure has expressed anger at Washington for not doing enough in Syria to stop the violence against Sunnis and the destruction of the societal order. As a counterpoint, Putin is advancing Russia as a dependable ally.

Beware of Russia's bristling nationalism.
Beware of the bear again!



Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič

Celebrating the Enduring Czech - U.S. Relationship on Czech National Day

By Peter Gandalovic and Fred Malek

On Oct. 28, 1918, Czechoslovakia became a sovereign state, and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was soon elected as its president. The support that Masaryk received from U.S. President Woodrow Wilson sealed the strong bond that the U.S. and Czechoslovakia already shared through the tens of thousands of immigrants who had made the transatlantic journey in search of the American dream.

Today, millions of Americans claim Czechoslovak or Czech ancestry. That bond between our two peoples remains strong. In times of crisis, Czechs have helped American communities affected by disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, the floods in Cedar Rapid and the explosion in West, Texas.

Democracy returned to Czechoslovakia with the peaceful Velvet Revolution in 1989. The country's new democratic leader, President Václav Havel, who courageously dissented against the totalitarian regime, visited Washington just three months after the revolution. He was the first head of state from the former communist bloc to speak before a joint session of the U.S. Congress.

The peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia into the Czech and Slovak Republics took place in 1993, serving as a model for similar situations. The two countries now are enjoying best bilateral relations.

In 2013, the Czech Republic and the U.S. are collaborating to advance democracy and human rights throughout the world. The Czech Republic is a staunch NATO ally and a proud member of the European Union. The U.S. and the Czech Republic share the same perspective in promoting peace in the Middle East and cooperate on global strategic security challenges.

The Czech Republic and the U.S. also continue their joint commitment to facilitate economic cooperation. Bilateral trade has increased by more than 35 percent in the last five years. Many American businesses have found the Czech Republic attractive for investments, thanks to its geographic location and highly skilled work force. Recently, several Czech companies have opened new facilities in the U.S., creating jobs in Virginia, Iowa and Georgia.

To further strengthen this relationship, Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, and Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., have formed a bipartisan Czech Caucus in the Congress to provide a forum in regards to U.S.-Czech relations and celebrate the countries' political, economic and cultural ties.

Together, we celebrate the 95th anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia and the democratic values shared by the U.S. and the Czech Republic. We wish that the Czech-American relationship remains vibrant and mutually inspiring.

AFoCR Co-Sponsors Visit to Czech Republic by Children from West, Texas



Standing (l to r): Larry Podsednik, Kathy Podsednik, Jared Janek, Mary Kate Janek, Holly Soukup, Daniel Gerik & Karen Bernsen; Seated: Clarice Snokhaus & Raymond Snokhaus

AFoCR, in collaboration with the Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association of New York and the Czech Embassy, recently sponsored a visit to the Czech Republic by four children from West, Texas. West has long been known for its strong Czech heritage, and it suffered extensive damage from an industrial explosion in April 2013.

Since 1994, the town of Kunovice, Moravia, has been the host of the International Children's Folklore Festival called "Kunovské léto". The mayor of Kunovice invited the West children to the festival as a way to help them recover from the devastation and gain insight into the language and culture of their ancestral country. Jared Janek, Daniel Gerik, Mary Kathleen Janek, and Holly Soukup, ranging in age from 13 to 16, won the opportunity to visit the Czech Republic by writing the winning essays in a contest entitled "What does it mean to be Czech?" The children were escorted by Larry and Kathy Podsednik, who are also residents of West. They were assisted by Karen Bernsen, the Interim Director of West Long Term Recovery, as well as Raymond Snokhaus, Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic for the State of Texas, and his spouse Clarice.



AFoCR Annual Board of Directors Meeting Held 11/11/13 at the Offices of AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek. (l to r front row) AFoCR Director Michael Rokos, Patricia Stack, Phil Kasik, Robert Doubek, (l to r top) Kristyna Drieaus, Joseph Balaz, Gail Naughton, Fred Malek, George Drost, Tom Dine, and Dick Schubert

Flood Relief for the Czech Republic



Flood Inundates Newly Renovated Library in North Bohemia City of Děčín (photos courtesy of NCSML)

In June, the Czech Republic suffered catastrophic flooding, with the cost of the damage estimated at more than a billion Czech crowns. Děčín was one of the hardest-hit Czech cities, with more than 1,600 of its 50,000 residents evacuated and many lower-lying buildings ruined when water levels rose 10 meters. Images of Děčín's waterlogged library painted a dramatic portrait of the devastation.

Recognizing the urgent need, the Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation, Sokol Cedar Rapids, and St. Wenceslas Church, in cooperation with the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library (NCSML), conceived a relief effort for Děčín's library. Cedar Rapids suffered from similar floods in 2008, which inundated its downtown and one of its cultural centerpieces, the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library. The Czech Republic responded with a generous donation to reconstruct the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library. With that generosity in mind, the fundraising campaign swung into high gear to raise funds for repairing the Děčín

library. It reportedly reached its goal of \$50,000 in October.

Gail Naughton, President and CEO of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, and a Director of AFoCR, noted that the generous financial gift from the government of the Czech Republic was among the first major contributions toward the reconstruction of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library after the devastating flooding of 2008.

A delegation of donors and campaign organizers plans to travel to the Czech Republic in December to present the donation to grateful community leaders in Děčín.



*(top) Aerial View of Flooding
(bottom) Crews Work to Clean Flood Damage in Děčín*

Maleks Host Dinner Honoring Dagmar Havlová October 1, 2013 (photos by Lillis Werder)



Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič, Catherine Cabaniss, & former U.S. Ambassador to Prague Bill Cabaniss



Dagmar Havlová with Memento from AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek and AFoCR President Tom Dine



Marlene Malek, Dagmar Havlová, & AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek

Dedication of Václav Havel's Place

Georgetown University, Washington, October 2, 2013 (photos by Lillis Werder)



Msgr. Tomáš Halík, Šimon Pánek, & Dr. Madeleine K. Albright



Msgr. Halík, Šimon Pánek, & Dr. Albright



Msgr. Halík



Dagmar Havlová at Havel's Place



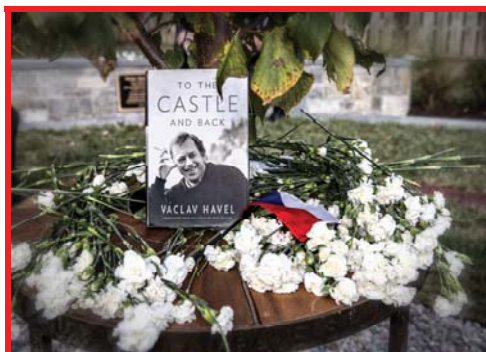
Dagmar Havlová



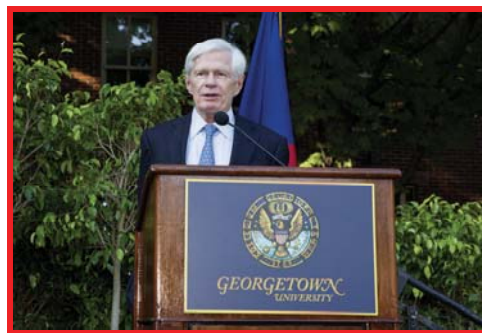
*Tomi Landis, AFoCR Director
Robert Doubek, & Bořek Šípek*



*Georgetown University President
John J. DeGioia*



Tributes



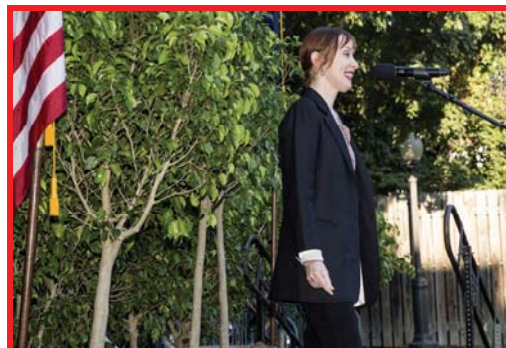
AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek



*Ambassador Petr Gandalovič,
Pavlína Gandalovič, & Dagmar Havlová*



AFoCR President Tom Dine



Vocal Artist Suzanne Vega

Czech National Day Ceremony at Masaryk Memorial, Washington, October 28, 2013

Photos by Lillis Werder



Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič



*(l to r) AFOCR President Tom Dine,
Director Michael Rokos, Chairman Fred
Malek, and Ambassador Gandalovič*



*Fred Malek and Czech Media
Correspondent*



Ambassador Gandalovič



Floral Tribute from Free Cubans



*(l to r) Czech Cultural Attaché Robert
Rehák, Fred Malek & Tom Dine*

Visit to West, Texas, October 15, 2013



*Ambassador Gandalovič, Pavlina
Gandalovič, Larry Posednik,
& Kathy Posednik*



*Presentation of Czech Republic Gift for
Reconstruction*



*Fred Malek, Ambassador Gandalovič, &
Honorary Czech Consul General
Ray Snokhaus*

Czech Ambassador Advocates Self-Limitation and Self-Correction by Western Democracies



Ambassador Michael Žantovský delivers the 2013 Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture

Ambassador Michael Žantovský, presented a philosophical, illuminating, and relevant lecture entitled *"The Uncertainty of Freedom, and the Freedom of Uncertainty"* in Washington, DC, on November 12, 2013. Several audience participants called the presentation "brilliant." The occasion was the annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture. Žantovský, who was an aide de camp to Václav Havel during and after the Velvet Revolution, is now the Czech Republic's envoy to the Court of St. James of the United Kingdom.

Hosted by the American Friends of the Czech Republic and the Friends of Slovakia at the prestigious Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars near the White House, Ambassador Žantovský addressed threats to freedom in western democratic societies, including excessive state interference in economies through excessive regulation, restrictions on individual liberties in favor of security, and a growing number of populist demagogues who advocate salvation. "Freedom becomes a threat to itself" in today's world, he said.

Emphasizing timeliness, Žantovský advocated more openness, which in turn would create more uncertainty, a critical feature of freedom. Václav Havel clearly chose uncertainty over predictability and security, he said. The late president and playwright during his dissident days wrote: "Our destiny depends on us. The world does not consist of dumb superpowers that can do anything and clever small nations that can do nothing." Twenty years later, as Žantovský reminded his audience, Czechoslovakia was free to choose its own destiny, which would be much more different and dramatic from that conceived during the Prague Spring.

The future of the open society "comes down to self-limitation and self-correction", he stated. "Just as a government of a free society is by definition a limited government, paradoxically, a free man cannot for long remain free without imposing limits on his own conduct of his own volition. You can call it morality, you can call it responsibility, or you can call it humility. It is inseparable from the history of human conduct."



AFoCR Vice President Phil Kasik (l) and President Tom Dine (r) Present Certificate of Appreciation to Ambassador Žantovský

AFoCR Plans for 2014 Havel Bust Installation in U.S. Capitol Building



Sculptor Lubomir Janecka with Havel Bust

Václav Havel will be honored by having his bust placed in the United States Capitol Building. Only three other international figures – all freedom fighters like Havel - have been so honored, and his image will join those of Winston Churchill, Lajos Kossuth, and Raoul Wallenberg. The bust will be located with those of Churchill and Kossuth in a historic vestibule in the House side of the Capitol to be designated as the Hallway of Freedom. The plans call for the dedication to occur in November 2014, the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution when the Czechs and Slovaks regained their freedom under Havel's leadership.

The bust was created by Lubomir Janecka, who was born in the Czechoslovakia and after completing his art degree at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague was forced into exile after years of harassment and discrimination by the Communist Party because of his art. He and his family fled to Pennsylvania in 1984 where he still resides. The original of the Havel bust is located at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. In many ways, this recognition of Václav Havel will be a symbol of the continuing relationship between the people of the United States and the life of a man who embodied the free human spirit of mankind.

Czech Rotary Club Assists West, Texas

In a ceremony held in Prague on September 3rd, the Czech Rotary Club presented a gift of funds to assist the rebuilding effort in the town of West, Texas. Presenting the gift were Alexander Turkovič, Governor of Brno Rotary Club District 2240, and Irena A. Brichta, District Governor for Rotary Club Prague International. Ray Snokhaus, Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic in the State of Texas, received the gift on behalf of the town of West. Also present were Ivan Dubovický and Aleš Fojtík, of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



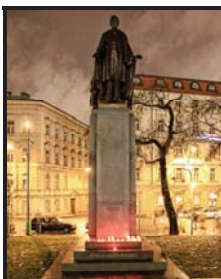
(l to r) Alexander Turkovič, Ivan Dubovický, Ray Snokhaus, Irena A. Brichta, Aleš Fojtík

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*Candles Lit in Memory of
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