

CZECH the News

Newsletter of the Embassy of the Czech Republic

Vol. 1, 2008

Embassy Conducts Holocaust Education, Celebrates Winton

Marking the United Nations International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust on January 27, the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, DC, conducts an annual Holocaust educational outreach program to students between the ages of 12 and 18 in the United States. The Embassy launched this initiative in 2007 when more than 150 students from the Washington metropolitan area came to the Czech Consulate over a 4-day period to view the “Neighbors Who Disappeared” exhibit. Marie Zahradnikova, the exhibit’s curator from the Jewish Museum in Prague, presented the project which was produced by contemporary Czech school

children who became curious about the fate of families who disappeared from their home towns during the Nazi era. Ms. Zahradnikova’s presentation to U.S. students included a historical overview of Jews in the Czech lands and the effects of World War II on the Czech Jewish population. After viewing the exhibit for themselves, students assumed the identity of one of the disappeared neighbors, then wrote and presented their stories to classmates.

In 2008, the Embassy of the Czech Republic, with the support of the Israeli and British Embassies, continues the Holocaust educational outreach program using the story of



Ambassador Petr Kolar (L) with Nicholas Winton’s son Nick Winton (center) and Igor Wassenberger (R) in Prague.

Photo courtesy of Zuzana Minacova

Nicholas Winton, a young Briton who helped save the lives of 669 Czechoslovak Jewish and non-Jewish children during the run-up to World War II. The in-school initiative includes screening the

documentary, *Nicholas Winton—The Power of Good*, followed by a discussion and presentation by Holocaust educator Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff and questions
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Czech Republic Joins Schengen

On December 21, 2007, the Czech Republic officially joined the Schengen area—a geographical region comprised of European member states that participate in the Schengen Agreement and allow free movement of nationals between member countries. The Schengen area was formally founded in June 1985 with the signing of the Schengen Convention, and was originally comprised of 15 European member states that abolished systematic border control checks on citizens.

Schengen area members apply uniform rules of entry and duration of stays to nonmember citizens. Visitors to the Czech Republic from non-Schengen countries can stay for a maximum of 90 days within a 180-day period, calculated from the date of first entry into any Schengen

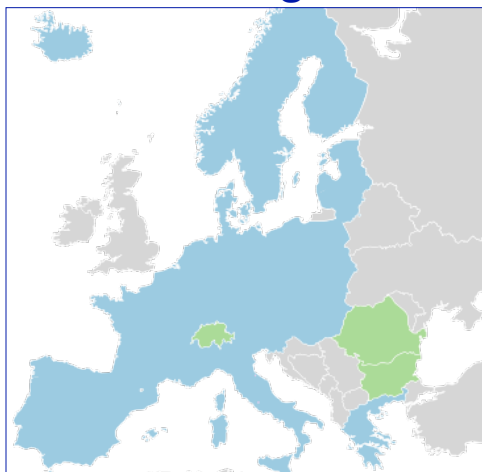


Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.org

Map of Europe shows the Schengen countries in blue.

area country Movement between Schengen area States is included in the 90-day maximum stay. Non-Schengen area nationals who are subject to a visa requirement according to their nationality will still need a visa which will specify the duration of the authorized stay, not to exceed 90 days in any half-year period. Unless otherwise stated, the visa is valid for all Schengen States.

Border posts were abolished in the Czech Republic on December 21, 2007, and external border controls at international airports in the Czech Republic for flights within the Schengen area will be abolished on March 30, 2008, in compliance with Schengen rules. The main change in travel for U.S. visitors to the Czech Republic is that the 90-day maximum stay includes time spent in all European countries within the Schengen area.

In addition to the Czech Republic, other new members of the Schengen area since December 2007 include Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and the Slovak Republic. They join current Schengen members Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.





Photo courtesy of Chad Wyatt

Message from the Ambassador

Dear Friends,

While change is the current buzzword in American politics, the Czech Republic also is undergoing some transitions of its own, many of which will enhance Czech foreign relations. As of December 2007, the Czech Republic officially joined the Schengen area which removes border controls between us and our European neighbors. Travel from the Czech Republic to other Schengen member countries is now as easy as travel between U.S. States, and standardizes our travel security measures within the European Union (EU). Citizens of Schengen area nations can move freely between states while visa requirements for non-Schengen area citizens are now consistent throughout most of Europe (for an overview of how this change affects U.S. citizens, see the full story on the front page).

The Czech Republic also continues to move closer to full visa parity with the United States. In the meantime, we are busy preparing to assume the presidency of the European Union. For the first 6 months of 2009 the Czech Republic will serve as the face and voice of the EU. The high volume of activities, meetings, and events associated with the EU presidency necessitates that the Embassy here in Washington undergo renovations in late spring 2008. After the dust settles and the tarpaulins are removed we will be better able to accommodate our many guests. Also in 2008, the Czech Republic is submitting its bid to host the 2016 summer Olympics in Prague in the hope of sharing our beautiful city with the world.

The year 2008 serves as an important anniversary of many important events that shaped Czech history—including the 90th birthday of the founding of the first Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, as well as commemoration of the pivotal political changes of 1938 (the Munich Agreement which gave Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland to Germany and de facto control of Czechoslovakia to Hitler), 1948 (communist takeover of the country), and 1968 (Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia). We plan to mark these defining milestones in Czech history throughout the year to celebrate the triumph of free will and democracy over oppression.

I invite you to join us at the many functions the Embassy will sponsor in the greater Washington metropolitan area throughout 2008. In the meantime, I wish you great success, health, and happiness in the new year.

Warmly,

Petr Kolar



Czech Trams Glide to Success in U.S.



Photo courtesy of www.inekon.cz

Czech tram in Seattle, WA

Demonstrating the growing importance of Czech exports to international markets, Czech trams and trolleys are currently running on tracks in several U.S. cities including San Francisco, Boston, Tacoma, and Portland, Oregon, with Washington, DC, and others preparing to incorporate this environmentally friendly and efficient technology into local mass transit systems. The two largest Czech tram manufacturers, Skoda Transportation and Inekon Group, design and produce trams, trolleys, and parts for the U.S. market.

On December 12, 2007,

after 3 years of planning and construction, Seattle became the latest U.S. city to use Czech trams in its transportation infrastructure when it unveiled a brand new 1.3 mile streetcar network which utilizes three trams manufactured by Inekon Group. The Ostrava-based rail transportation company produced and adapted the trams to meet U.S. specifications. Inekon Group's U.S. tram sales in the Seattle deal are valued at USD \$10 million (approximately 200 million Czech crowns) with overall U.S. sales amounting to approximately USD \$30 million (600 million Czech crowns). 🇨🇪

Ambassador's Timeline of Events

September 18, 2007



Ambassador Petr Kolar with Senator Dianne Feinstein and Slovak Ambassador Rastislav Kacer discuss human rights issues at the Burma Forum, cosponsored by the Embassy of the Czech Republic and the Stanley Foundation.

October 25, 2007



During the Czech National Day celebration, Ambassador Kolar presented General James Jones, former Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, with the Cross of Merit, the highest honor bequeathed by the Czech Minister of Defense.

October 31, 2007



Ambassador Kolar met with Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen and members of the Tennessee World Affairs Council to discuss Czech-US and Czech-Tennessee issues. He also spoke to students at Vanderbilt University.

November 12, 2007



Ambassador Kolar with Academy award-winning director Jiri Menzel after opening Menzel's Washington premiere of *I Served the King of England* during the EU Showcase at the AFI Silver Theater. 🇨🇪

Czech Government Awards Five Czech Americans

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Czech Republic awarded the 2007 Cernin Palace Bronze Memorial Medal to five extraordinary Czech Americans whose life's work has helped enhance Czech-American relations. Named for the building which houses the MFA, the annual award honors those who have made significant contributions to preserving and promoting relations between the Czech Republic and the United States. Ambassador Petr Kolar presents the awards to the honorees, who are nominated by Czech honorary consuls in the United States. The 2007 recipients are Tíre and Lubomir Chmelar, Libuse Imbrone, Radomir Luza, Marvin J. Marek, and Marjorie Sobotka.

Tíre Chmelar (in memoriam) and Lubomir Chmelar helped found Czech Greenways-Zelene Stezky whose Prague-Vienna Greenways is a 250-mile long network of hiking and biking trails that travels between the two cities through historic towns in some of the most picturesque countryside in Europe. The Greenways objective

is to promote and preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the region while developing sustainable ecological tourism. The Chmelars modeled the Czech Greenways project on the Hudson River Valley Greenways in New York. In 1994 New York Governor Mario Cuomo declared these two greenways sisters. Tíre Chmelar and her husband were instrumental in raising funds from international organizations to develop and support the Czech Greenways program.

Libuse Rybnicek Imbrone was raised in a family of Czech immigrants who nurtured in her an appreciation of Czech language, literature, art, music, and civic affairs. Throughout her life, Ms. Imbrone has worked to promote Czech and Slovak culture in the United States. She is a long-time member of Sokol-Minnesota and a founding member of the Czech and Slovak Cultural Center in St. Paul, MN.

Radomir Luza, born in Czechoslovakia, was an active member of the anti-fascist resistance in German-occupied Czechoslovakia during World

War II. The son of a Czechoslovak Army General who went into hiding, young Luza was captured by the Germans and then released in hopes that he would lead the Nazis to his father. Instead he evaded his pursuers and joined his father in the underground movement. His subsequent story of resistance, hiding, and guerilla attacks on the occupiers is told in his memoir *The Hitler Kiss*. Mr. Luza escaped from Czechoslovakia in 1948 and came to the United States where he is professor emeritus of history at Tulane University. His books, articles, and teaching have contributed greatly to the understanding of Czech history.


Marvin J. Marek has dedicated more than 30 years to fostering Czech heritage in Texas. In addition to serving as president of the Texas chapter of the National Alliance of Czech Catholics, Mr. Marek's work with the Czech Educational



Honorary Consul Josef Mestenhauser presents the Cernin Palace Bronze Memorial Medal to Mrs. Libby Imbrone

Photo courtesy of Nora Jankovcova

Foundation of Texas helps promote the study of Czech music in the United States and enables Czech students to study in Texas.

Marjorie Sobotka is a devoted genealogist and author of numerous publications including the book *Nebraska-Kansas Settlers, 1891-1895*. A board member of the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International, Ms. Sobotka actively works to perpetuate Czech and Slovak heritage in the United States and helps Americans find relatives or ancestry in the Czech Republic. 

Embassy Conducts Holocaust Education, Celebrates Winton (continued)

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and answers with Alice Masters, one of the children saved by Winton. Film screenings and discussion also will take place at the Library of Congress and at the Magen-David Sephardic Congregation in Rockville, MD.

American Friends of the Czech Republic (AFoCR) has been pivotal in bringing the Winton story to the American public. Their promotional efforts led to a special letter of recognition from President Bush to Nicholas Winton in July 2006, the passage of House Resolution 583 by the U.S. House of Representa-



Photo courtesy of JoAnn Cooper

tives honoring Sir Winton for his heroic actions, and publication of the educational book *Nicholas Winton's Lottery of Life* by Matej Minac and translated from the Czech by AFoCR president Peter Rafaeli. AFoCR is currently distributing 17,000 free copies of the book to educational institutions nationwide upon request. In October 2007, Mr. Rafaeli and Ambassador Petr Kolar traveled to Prague to attend a week-long series of events that honored Sir

Students participate in the 2007 Holocaust educational outreach program at the Embassy of the Czech Republic.

Winton and included a visit with Czech President Vaclav Klaus, a reception at the residence of U.S. Ambassador Richard Graber, recognition at Vaclav Havel's Forum 2000, and a Prague gala attended by more than 3,000 guests including 2,700 school children.


For more information on the Holocaust educational outreach program conducted by the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, please call JoAnn M. Cooper at (202) 274-9126. 

Photo courtesy of Mary E. Fezilo

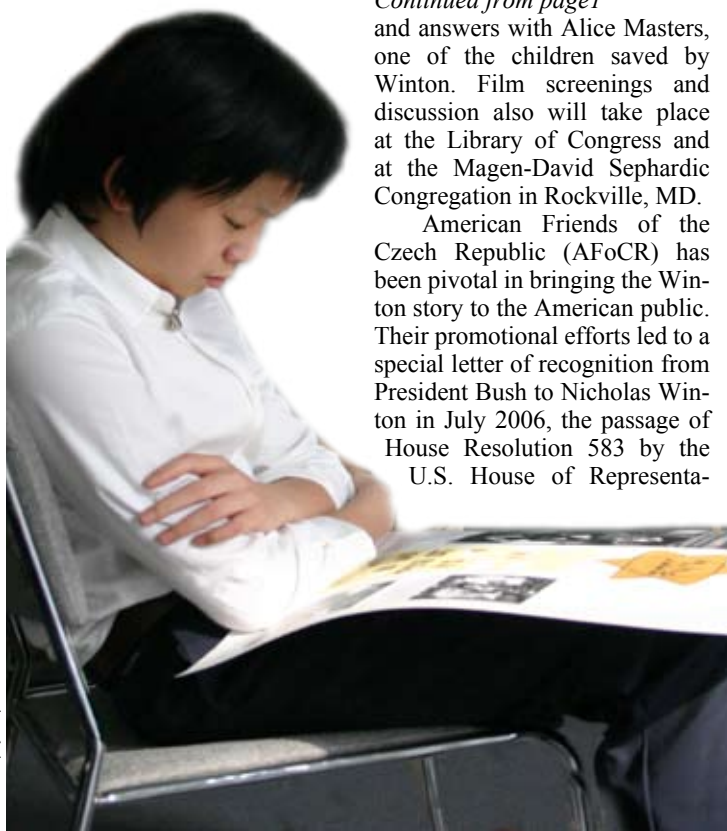




Photo courtesy of Gabriela Landa

Gabriela Landa

Gabriela Landa – Capturing the Abstraction of Things

The American Realist painter Edward Hopper said, “If I could say it in words, there would be no reason to paint.” But for Gabriela Landa, a Czech-born, New York-based artist who speaks five languages, neither words nor painting offered her enough outlets to communicate her creativity. So she added photography, sculpture, and jewelry design to her repertoire of expression.

Born in Karlovy Vary in Czechoslovakia, Gabriela was 2 in 1968 when her family immigrated to Germany via Yugoslavia and Austria, settling in Bayreuth, Bavaria. She grew up straddling two worlds—German life at school and with friends and Czech life at home with her family. Her parents insisted that she learn Czech and know about Czech culture. Artistic influences from Czechoslovakia followed her to Germany in the form of Czech theater directors and performers who came annually to work at the Bayreuth Festival and regularly visited her family’s home. Gabriela credits them with stimulating her creativity, “They opened a window to then-Czechoslovakia and another giant one onto the arts,” she remembers. While these Czech artists were her teachers, the Bayreuth Festival was her university. “If there had been nothing else in Bayreuth at that time, and there was nothing else, Wagner’s operas were worth living there. Over a period of 15 years Wagner’s oeuvre taught me about mythology, legends, mysticism, and psychology as well as the world’s best singing.”

Landa first came to the United States in 1986 as an exchange student and spent a year in Florida where she was attracted to the ecological beauty of the area. Since her early years admiring the variety of European landscapes—verdant fields, stony outcroppings, and dramatic cliffs—and summering on the Kornaty Islands along the Croatian coast, Landa has been inspired by the way elements—water and stone for instance—shape and influence each other, especially over time. Her work is strongly influenced by nature, which she calls her “ultimate one

and only inspiration.”

In college Landa studied art and anthropology at the University of Munich and took courses at the Art Academy there. A year later the Berlin wall fell and Gabriela went to Prague to find her roots. She continued her study of art at Charles University, especially Baroque and Art Nouveau and what she calls “a world view different from the Western European one.” After 3 years of traveling between Prague and Bayreuth, experiencing difficulties transitioning between cultural identities and not finding the roots she searched for, Landa transferred to the University

“Learning about other peoples and their identification has been one of the greatest things for my life and art.”

~ Gabriela Landa

of Vienna where new friends encouraged her to further broaden her cultural horizons. So she went with them to Guatemala. There she met Arturo Monroy, an art master of native Indian descent, under whose guidance Landa expanded her knowledge of painting, especially her sense of color. Subsequently, she spent half the year for the next 6 years in Guatemala absorbing a new language, culture, and worldview. Monroy’s indigenous influence is apparent in Landa’s paintings but she points out that the predisposition in her identity and her artistic expressions is not easily quantifiable. “I create a world as I see it—full of symbols, free-floating yet in a certain composition to each other. My work mirrors the changes in my life: there is a sense of defragmentation but also one of unity, which coexist like in a breathing process.”

During the late 1990s Landa traveled between and lived in Prague, Berlin, Los Angeles, Miami, and Guatemala where

she exhibited her artwork and, as she puts it, “kept in touch with my original cultures.” In 1996 Czech fashion designer Helena Fejkova included Landa’s jewelry designs, also known as “wearable sculpture,” in her fashion collection. Landa has since cooperated with numerous fashion designers and her work has been featured not only in shows in Europe and the United States, but also has been used in the film industry and on MTV.

Landa likens the influences in her life, which straddle Europe and the Americas, to the archeological layering of architecture in ancient civilizations, “Where, for instance, the Indians built a pyramid at first and after the Christian influence arrived, they set a church on top, integrating the original pyramid as the base of the new construction.” But she also responds to the genius loci of wherever she is, “In Guatemala with all its time, color, and spirit, I feel like painting. Los Angeles inspires me to sculpt. New York is a media city, perfect for photography, and Europe is a mix of those things,” she says, adding that, “Learning about other peoples and their identification has been one of the greatest things for my life and art.”

In May 2001 Landa moved to New York because she recalls “Guatemala had become too dangerous and Europe was too safe to interest me. I was curious



Photo courtesy of Gabriela Landa



Photo courtesy of Gabriela Landa

New York montages by Gabriela Landa.

about life in a more open society.” Within months, however, New York would change dramatically. “9/11 happened,” she remembers, “That was it for making art and creating beauty for awhile and the best I could do was to discover the city’s essences of that time with my camera.” Through her New York photomontages,

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Gabriela Landa – Capturing the Abstraction of Things *(continued)*

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Landa says she tried to “catch the moment of diffusion in all the energy and movement happening in Manhattan.” She then layered many of the photos with images from Prague, France, Italy, and elsewhere, “to create a common language between those places,” and was struck by how the cultural differences were easily bound together in one image.

While she views art as a very personal expression, in her own work Landa strives to capture universal qualities that unify everyone and everything, or what she calls “a language of essences.” She explains, “If we are not able to see each other’s differences as beautiful, we will have to let go of them and find other values which unite us.” As time passed, photography alone, being bound to machinery, became too limiting for Landa’s imagination. So when a friend in New York offered to share his studio space with her, she returned to painting, drawing, sculpting, and design. In addition to creating artwork Landa also writes about the arts. Some of her clients include the Czech art magazine *Atelier*; *EuroJournal*, a German-based publication for



Photo courtesy of Gabriela Landa

In the painting *Universe with Bird of Paradise* on the left, Landa reveals the influence of her time spent in Guatemala.

diplomats about cultural and political issues; the German daily newspaper *Die Welt*; and the Czech BBC.

Landa views her connection to her homeland from a Native American perspective, “The Indians cherish the place where your umbilical cord is buried in the ground; although mine surely wasn’t buried, my place of birth has a growing significance to me and I hold it sacred, although at a distance,” she says. Separation from the comforts of home, Landa adds, plays a major role in her work, “I love to see things from a distance as a way to catch the abstraction of things.” Although she now resides in the United

States, Landa maintains close contact with her European roots. Her parents still live in Bayreuth where her mother is president of the Czech-German Association of Bayreuth. In the Czech Republic, Landa recently concluded an exhibition at Jaroslav Sveceny’s Violino Gallery in Prague and is preparing a new exhibition in Karlovy Vary.

Here in the United States, she is finishing a body of photographic prints and is working on a large interior sculpture for a New York hotel. “I create interior and exterior sculptures from glass and stones and other materials as doorways of beauty that lead the viewer into a sacred sphere of his imagination. In the future, I want to make these sculptures more than life-size, so one can really pass through them,” she says. While the sizes and genres of Landa’s artwork are varied, her artistic goal remains constant, “I want to bring beauty into existence. I am not an artist who expresses his suffering in his art. I like to transform suffering or just wait until it is watered down to a level where I can start working again and bring happiness.”



www.gabrielalanda.com

A model wears the necklace *Continents* designed by Gabriela Landa

For more information on Gabriela Landa and her art, please visit www.gabrielalanda.com.

Choral Arts Society to Perform Dvorak Easter Concert

The 190-voice Choral Arts Society of Washington (CASW) under the direction of Norman Scribner will perform Antonin Dvorak’s *Stabat Mater* at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on Palm Sunday, March 16, 2008, at 3 pm. Honorary concert patrons Ambassador Petr Kolar and Mrs. Kolarova will host a pre-concert reception at their home for CASW supporters.

Stabat Mater (*There Stood the Mother*), Dvorak’s greatest choral work, is renowned as one of the most eloquent compositions inspired by the ancient Latin poem *Stabat Mater* that tells the story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Dvorak’s *Stabat Mater* contains soaring melodies and orchestration that so movingly capture the emotions of Mary witnessing the final agony of her Son Jesus Christ that soloists performing the piece are often moved to the



Photo courtesy of Choral Arts Society

The Choral Arts Society performs at the Kennedy Center.

brink of tears.

The Choral Arts Society of Washington, entering its 43rd season under the leadership of

founder and artistic director Norman Scribner, is a major symphonic chorus in the United States. Composed of professional-caliber volunteer singers, the Choral Arts Society of Washington has sung under the world’s leading orchestra conductors, recorded numerous acclaimed CDs, and tours nationally and internationally. The Chorus is regularly called upon to help inaugurate presidents, honor world leaders, celebrate national holidays, and participate in televised performances. Soloists performing *Stabat Mater* with the Chorus are Kelley Nassief, soprano; Stacey Rishoi, mezzo-soprano; Jonathon Boyd, tenor; and Trevor Scheunemann, bass.

For more information on the Choral Arts Society and for concert tickets, please call (202) 244-3669 or go to www.choralarts.org.

Upcoming Czech Events in the U.S.

**February 2, 1-9 pm
(Protivin, IA)**

Celebrate the Second Annual Masopust (which translates as “good-bye to meat”, and is a Czech-style Mardi Gras) at the Community Center in Protivin, IA. Events include live music from Jim Busta and Larry Novotny, dancing, raffle, and more. Attendance for Masopust is by advanced ticket sales only. Tickets are \$20. For more information, contact Linus Voves at (641) 394-2055, or Steven Klimesh at (563) 562-3594.

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Photo courtesy of Zuzana Minacova

Matej Minac

Director Reflects on Filmmaking Journey

Film director Matej Minac, born in 1961, grew up in Slovakia. His mother, a photographer and artist, wanted him to have a stable career like his mathematician brother and become a hotel manager by waiting tables. To his mother's great chagrin, Minac decided not to waste time as a waiter but instead set his sights on film school at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in Bratislava (VŠMU) where he would achieve his dream of being a filmmaker. "For years she was telling me what a stupid thing I had done, that I didn't obey her and didn't study something that is more useful, practical, and better for life," he recalls.

Minac became famous for his feature debut film *All My Loved Ones* (*Vsichni moji blizci*, 1999), about a Czech Jewish family at the onset of German occupation and the family's decision to send their child to safety in England. He also filmed a similar-themed documentary, *Nicholas Winton—The Power of Good*, (*Sila lidskosti—Nicholas Winton*, 2002), which tells the extraordinary story of Nicholas Winton, the British stockbroker who saved 669 Czech Jewish children during the 9 months that preceded the outbreak of World War II. The film won the prestigious International Emmy Television Award in 2002.

Inspiration for Minac's first film, *All My Loved Ones*, surprisingly came from Minac's mother, who was working on her own family album exhibition at the time. In the past, she had not talked about her childhood, but while doing the exhibition she recalled happy memories of her five crazy uncles. She told Minac about their adventures at the casinos, but grew somber

when she remembered the war and how little by little most of the people from her childhood had disappeared. Her recounting her childhood opened a door in Minac's mind. He remembers, "Suddenly it struck me that this can be really a great story, which was actually never done before... I wouldn't shoot a film about the wartime experiences, but I would

**"Anything that is reasonable can be achieved."
~ Nicholas Winton**

shoot a film about what preceded the war from the perspective of a child. The child gradually starts to understand that something's happening and eventually he is the only one who is rescued."

With his mother's stories in mind, Minac went to the Jewish Museum in Prague where he discovered the book *Pearls of My Childhood* by Vera Gissing. In the book Gissing mentions a man named Nicholas Winton who saved over 600 children before the outbreak of World War II. Minac decided to base his treatment on Winton, and

asked his friend Alice Klimova to translate it into English.

Klimova read the script and told Minac that the story had a number of mistakes, especially the part about the children leaving by train to England. When Minac asked her how she knew, she dumbfounded him by saying, "I know because I was one of those children, one of Winton's children." She said she was only 4 and a half at the time, but directed Minac to "Nicky" Winton who was still alive and well in England. Minac immediately set up an interview and spent hours discussing Winton's story and how he had brought the children to England.

After meeting Winton, Minac not only wanted to make a feature film, he also wanted to create a documentary about Winton. Looking for support, Minac discovered that Czech and Slovak Television were not interested in backing the project. "They told me—look, you are doing a feature film. You know, you should concentrate on the feature film, and I said—you know, certain things you can't



Nicholas Winton (in 1939) holds a child he helped rescue.

Photo courtesy of www.wintonize.com
Fred Linn credit on YouTube

postpone in life and I have to do this documentary right away because simply the man may die, and he's incredible," said Minac. In an interview with Czech Radio, Minac discussed his decision to proceed with the documentary with little support, saying, "What would Nicholas Winton do in my position? Because when he came here to Prague and he wanted to rescue all these children... everybody was telling him here in Prague...it's absurd. You can never manage it. The British won't let the children in. The Gestapo won't let the children out. You don't have the money, so how do you want to do it? It's crazy. And Winton says that anything that is reasonable can be achieved."

One World Heads to DC for Festival Opener

The 10th Annual One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival will take place in Prague, Czech Republic, March 5–March 13, 2008. Organized by the Czech non-governmental organization (NGO) People in Need, the festival is traditionally held under the auspices of former Czech president Vaclav Havel. This year's festival is dedicated to the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the people of Burma. People in Need additionally plans to organize "echoes" of One World in 10

to 15 major cities around the globe, including Washington, Bucharest, Brussels, Hong Kong, London, and Paris.

One World in Washington, DC, takes place from April 9–12, 2008, and kicks off with a screening of *Damas de Blanco* (*Ladies in White*) at the Avalon Theatre. During the course of the One World Festival in Washington, People in Need plans to screen seven films focusing on Cuba, Burma, and Belarus. Most screenings will be followed by debates with the filmmakers or experts on

the film's theme. An equally important part of the festival includes a 3-day human rights conference structured around the themes: New European Union Member States and the Support of Democracy, Cuba as Seen through Central European Eyes, and Belarus: How to Help the Dissent.

By organizing the One World Festival at international venues, People in Need aims to make human rights issues more visible while emphasizing that support of democratization and human rights are important



Aung San Suu Kyi

Photo courtesy of daseoye.files.wordpress.com

aspects of modern Czech foreign policy. The Czech Republic is dedicated to addressing democratization of totalitarian regimes by sharing its experience from its own successful transformation.

Embassy Participates in Environmental Film Festival

With global warming a top priority in today's world, the green-savvy Embassy of the Czech Republic is contributing two film selections to the 16th Annual Environmental Film Festival in Washington, DC, on Wednesday, March 19, at 7 pm.

In her short film *The Fridge*, Czech animator Lucie Stamfestova ingeniously reveals how life can go haywire when a refrigerator door is left open. Vegetables start sprouting daisies and cute chicks hatch from eggs. Meanwhile, a light bulb looms in a corner with the temperature rising. Will the man who opened the fridge return to close the door before all is spoiled or will even greater calamities ensue? Stamfestova creatively addresses

the crisis of global warming through the microcosm of life she establishes in the fridge.

The Embassy also will screen a documentary by director Alena Cincerova. *The Farmers (Sedlaci)* examines the stories of farmers whose land was given back to them in post-communist restitution. Cincerova returns to the farmers she filmed over 10 years before to see how they are faring. Are they still struggling with the debris left over from communism, or are their farms prospering? The juxtaposition of new film foot-



Lucie Stamfestova cleverly reveals the problems of climatic change in *The Fridge*.

Photo courtesy of Lucie Stamfestova

age with 11-year-old archival material creates an impressive report about the life of Czech farmers under two different political systems and during two different millennia.

Avalon Brings Czech Filmmaking to the Forefront

The Avalon, a historic art house theater in Washington, DC, has become the place to see some of the best Czech films in the Nation's capital. For the last year, the Embassy has collaborated with the Avalon to bring award-winning films that are in limited distribution in the U.S. This season features director Matej Minac's film *All My Loved Ones* as part of the Embassy's Holocaust educational outreach program. The April screening of *Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco)* will open the One World DC Film Festival, devoted to bringing human rights films and concerns to a wider audience.

February 13, 8 pm



Photo courtesy of www.kultura.sms.cz

All My Loved Ones (Vichni moji blizci)

Directed by: Matej Minac
1999, 94 min., in Czech with English subtitles

Starring: Josef Abraham, Jiri Bartoska, Libuse Safrankova, and Krzysztof Kowalewski

Shortly before the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, Jewish doctor Jakub Silberstein, instead of fleeing for safety, buys a beautiful villa where he resides with his wife, children, and eccentric but amiable brothers. At the villa, the Silberstein family enjoys a succession of weddings, parties, religious celebrations, and day-to-day events until chaos arises. When the brutality of the Nazis erupts and one of Jakub's brothers commits suicide, the family decides to save David, the youngest son. They entrust him to the care of Nicholas Winton in hopes of saving him.

March 12, 8 pm



Photo courtesy of www.nudabrne.cz

Bored in Brno (Nuda v Brne)

Directed by: Vladimír Moravec
2003, 103 min., in Czech with English subtitles

Shy, slow-witted Standa has plans to travel to Brno to spend the night with Olinka, the girl of his dreams. While Olinka receives advice regarding lovemaking from supportive single women who live in her building, Standa relies on the encouragement of his slightly more experienced older brother Janda. The brothers stop beforehand in a local pub, where Janda tries to shore up Standa's courage. Meanwhile, Olinka deals with the unexpected return of her overprotective mother by drugging her into unconsciousness and hiding her in the pantry. Olinka plans to lose her virginity to Standa, but his extreme nervousness threatens her plans.

April 9, 7 pm



Photo courtesy of People in Need

Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco)

Directed by: Ivana Milosevic
2007, 53 min., in Spanish with English subtitles

The Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White) is an organization of women who united to push for the release of 75 political prisoners, imprisoned during the 2003 spring crackdown in Cuba. Every Sunday, the women meet in the Miramar section of Havana in a silent protest march as a means of pushing for the immediate release of the incarcerated men, who are their husbands, sons, and family members. This documentary allows the women to tell their stories and speak out about what it means to be a woman in Cuba; about the impact of having a loved one labeled an enemy of the state; and about their desire to be reunited with their loved ones.

Upcoming Czech Events in the U.S.

Continued from page 5

February 16 (Astoria, NY)

Zlata Praha Restaurant invites you to the 27th Czech and Slovak Ball. The evening begins at 8 pm with live music, dancing, dinner, and more, and takes place at the Astoria World Manor, 25-22 Astoria Boulevard, Astoria, NY. To purchase tickets or receive additional details call (718) 721-6422 or e-mail info@zlatapraha.cc.

March 6 - 8 (Cedar Rapids, IA)

The Czech and Slovak History and Culture Conference will be held at the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library and at the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Cedar Rapids. For more information, please visit www.ncsml.org or call (319) 362-8500.

March 26 - 30 (New York, NY)

Czech singer/composer Iva Bittova will perform "Out of Place" with the Wendy Osserman Dance Company. The event takes place at 8 pm at the Hudson Guild Theater located at 441 West 26th Street. For more information, please call (212) 868-4444 or visit www.smarttix.com.

March 29 (LaGrange, IL)

The Czech and Slovak American Genealogical Society of Illinois (CSAGSI) announces the 2008 Mini Conference on Emigration-Immigration of the Czechs and Slovaks into Illinois. The event will take place at the First Presbyterian Church of LaGrange from 8:30 am-2:30 pm. For further information, please call (630) 906-8175 or e-mail dolly1939@aol.com.




Czech Population Hits Record Growth

According to the Czech Statistical Office the population of the Czech Republic grew to 10,349,372 inhabitants as of October 2007, the highest since the 1980s. The number of the country's inhabitants increased by 62,200 in the first 9 months of 2007. Although the birth rate rose in 2007 and was higher than the death rate, the population growth is attributed mainly to immigration. Immigrants comprise 3.6 percent of the population of the country, with the largest influx in 2007 (20,700) from Ukraine. In the first 9 months of 2007, approximately 52,400 immigrants moved to the Czech Republic, twice the



Photo courtesy of JoAnn Cooper

**Vaclavske namesti
(Wenceslaus Square)**

number than in the same period the previous year. Also in the first 9 months of 2007, some 86,400 babies were born in the Czech Republic, 6,300 more than in the same period in 2006. 

Did You Know?

Hiking Trails

The Czech Republic has one of the most comprehensive and complex networks of hiking trails in the world. In 1889 the Czech Hiking Club established the system used to mark the trails and has since made accessible a vast network of beautiful trails across the whole country. The Czech Republic currently has approximately 40,000 km (24,852 miles) of marked trails for hikers, skiers, and cyclists. 



Photo courtesy of www.pragueviewgreenways.org

Cyclers stop to enjoy the view of the Sumava Mountains in the Czech Republic.

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