

I. “Jan Palach 2020”, 16.1.2020, 17h00, Square Jan Palach

Dear President and Members of the Chamber of Deputies, Dear Members of European Movement Luxembourg,
Dear Honourable Members of the City Council and the City of Luxembourg representatives,
Dear Ambassadors, Excellencies,
Dear Consul Honorary,
Dear President of the Compatriots’ Federation,
Dear Compatriots,
Dear Colleagues, Enthusiasts of Czech History, Friends,

(1) WELCOME

I am almost overwhelmed to see so many of you here today, braving the weather unpredictable and a number of time constraints, due to some other receptions organized in parallel.

(2) PALACH

We commemorate, as every year, the Czech national hero, the icon Jan Palach and his demise, under tragic circumstances in 1969, after sacrificing his own life in silent protest against the Soviet troops’ occupation of the former Czechoslovakia in 1968. He protested, also, the silent creeping of the so-called political normalization under the watchful eye of Moscow following thereafter. He succeeded. In 1989.

Nous avons le devoir de nous souvenir de son abnégation qui a pris, aujourd’hui, une dimension universelle....

(3) GENERATIONS

Palach was a symbol of resistance for his generation and all generations past.

But he had big predecessors and strong followers, embodying new queries, tasks, rebellions.

Great Reformer Jean Huss, Our First President, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, our 1989 hero Václav Havel.

A coeur vaillant rien est impossible. We should be listening - or better - listening better to them. For our own sake. For our collective future.

(4) COUSIN LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg, notre cousin au cœur de l’Europe, did not forget that. Its support and friendship has been seminal.

We both have a Lion in our coat-of-arms, symbol of alertness, guard, strength, resolve, energy, boldness, fortitude, bravery.

Able to fight our daemons, national and otherwise, grateful to our family for their steady support, standing Together in all arduous tasks.

L’amitié qui ne va jamais se démentir.

(5) SQUARE

We had been more than lucky with Mr. Fernand Zürn and Mr. Robert Kriepps back in the 60s. They took up the flag of forthrightness to name this square after Palach.

It became a sort of Mekka or Speaker's Corner for us and for many others.

(6) TODAY

We are lucky now. Because you help to prevent dividing lines in the EU.

To endeavor reunifying Europe after more than 40 years of separation.

It is a process still bearing challenges but remains our joint priority.

Since having an open debate is of essence, to cherish togetherness, to maintain Europe – East, South, North, Centre, the West - sewn together.

In the bilateral, regional and collective European House.

Här Präsident, Dir Dammen an dir Hären, Exzellenzen, Chères Concitoyennes, Chers Concitoyens,

(7) COMMEMORATIONS

In 2019, we commemorated the 30 years since Communism in the Eastern Bloc fell apart.

In 2020, we will recall the end of the devastation of WWII, where the EU takes roots.

(8) The EU

We are going - unfortunately - to lose a member, the UK braking off the Union, one of the world's largest political and economic bodies, established to carve lasting peace from the wreckage of the war.

Brexit we regret. It still sends resonating shockwaves throughout Europe.

Luckily, the newest opinion polls clearly show, there is absolutely no chance of any Czechxit.

(9) AGENDA AHEAD

We will work hard - now under the Croatian PRES, slowly approaching on our own, in 2nd half of 2022 - on new common agenda points.

Our new, "geopolitical", Commission with a strong, inspiring figurehead of Ursula von der Leyen, has tabled ambitious plans.

She usefully reminded us of the Czech President Havel saying that we must "work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed".

We could usefully add quote from our first president, Masaryk, pleading for no lies, no stealing, no fear. And from Nelson Mandela claiming that "courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not He who does not feel afraid, but He who conquers that fear.

In fact, it could have been quotes from Palach himself....

(10) PRIORITIES

Because, yes. The agenda ahead is overwhelming. A tall order indeed.

First, fight against the Climate Change, von der Leyen's Green Deal, "Europas Mann-auf-dem-Mond-Moment", difficile mais faisable. It is a "Kulturkampf", change in our societal behavior to tackle, the best way, the catastrophe.

Second, Digitalisation. The same Revolution where we are confronted with the upcoming 5G network.

Third, Acting more proactively on the world scene.

Not forgetting, obviously, the difficult subjects of migration, and necessarily, finances.

(11) CIVILISATION

We might be still learning but, we are in all that together.

As last week's Economist suggested, our shared Europe might be becoming a civilization-state where institutions protect an entire civilization rather than a mere nations.

Aspiring, as one, to fight the pictorial maxims of the three wise monkeys (who see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil). Spreading positive Energy.

A sort of Star Wars 'Jedi Council Forum' or better still, the Middle Earth's the Lords of the Rings Community.

Overcoming differences, acting together. With bravery.

(12) POT DE NOUVEL AN

Excellencies, Här Präsident, Dir Dammen an dir Hären,

Let me conclude with a word of gratitude. Although the New Year started with important challenges - in the Near East and continuous brands in Australia - it is still a new chance, a new beginning. Ein neues Jahr, ein neues Glück.

It would be our pleasure to meet you in the Embassy soon for our "Pot du Nouvel An". To thank you for all the bravery and support, all over the years.

(13) FLOWERS/CANDLES

Now: After depositing "couronnes de fleurs" - together with Mrs Colette Mart, Member of the City Council of the City of Luxembourg whom we do thank wholeheartedly for her esteemed presence here – we invite you, if you want, to place, together with us, a candle under this memory plate of Palach.

Villmols merci fir Äer Opmiersamkeet.

II. “Jan Palach 2020”, 16.1.2020, 17h30, Czech Embassy, New Year’s Party

Dear All,

Thank you again for your presence.

Enough of lengthy speeches. Let me make a couple of points only.

One. You know we are going to have a new colleague: Ambassador HE Mr. Vladimír Bártl should join us early February. We are truly delighted about that.

Two. After political bilateral contacts last year – the Deputy Minister, the Prime Minister, and the President of the Chamber of Deputies all came - let us, now work on concrete, mutually beneficial projects.

- Prague organizes, in May, a second thematic expert seminar on 5G, with ambition to elaborate community Toolbox.
- The Embassy follow-up on our Robotics Conference of June 2019 with seminars on Nano and BioHealth - also under our regional PRES banner with its “Reasonable solutions, Revolutionary technologies and Reconciling approaches” catch phrase – in April and May.
- With our compatriots, we are going to celebrate their number here enlarging in May in the Bourlingster Castel.
- With our diplomatic Colleagues, we are looking forward to the new diplomatic Year. We will be honoured to participate with them in the Relais pour la Vie in March (with our second, small team join the national one), in the Europe Day in May, in the Luxembourg Pride in July and in the Bazaar international in November.

Three. We have a little surprise for the Palach’s Connoisseurs in the Gallery where a short, silent loop is being projected on Palach - with pictures taken from the new dedicated website, recommended to us by the Prague’s Institute for study of totalitarian regimes – and newest film, subtitled in English, on Palach, premiered only on January 14, on the Czech TV, by Mrs Olga Sommerová.

Almost the last word: we are having the great pleasure to participate, today, at the Palace, in the official New Year’s Party. I will therefore have to apologize for my early retiring from here, with some Ambassadors present. Please, remain and be jolly and happy here after we have to leave.

Last but not least. We have a little token to take with before you do. Peter, our Cook, has done a traditional little cake, the Czech way:) “Just Give Me Sweets and Nobody Gets Hurt:)

Thank you again for coming:)

All Guddes am neie Joer! Šťastný nový rok 2020! Happy New Year 2020!