

# CZECH the News

Newsletter of the Embassy of the Czech Republic

Spring 2006

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## Czech Republic Helps with Post-Katrina/Rita Reconstruction

The government of the Czech Republic has assigned special funds to help citizens of areas of the United States devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

In the course of this project, a check for \$100,000 for reconstruction of an elementary school in Deweyville was presented during the trip of Ambassador Kolar to Texas. He also visited several Czech-American communities (College Station, Temple, Shiner, and Dubina) and was presented to meetings of Czech-Texan organizations such as the Czech Educational Foundation of Texas, Slovanska Podporujici Jednota Statu Texas, and the Czech Heritage and Cultural Center.

The Czech Ambassador

also delivered aid personally to selected recipients in Alabama and Mississippi. During his trip to these two states, he presented a check in the amount of \$111,458.33 for the benefit of the Tapia Public Library in Bayou La Batre, AL, in order to purchase books and other written materials. The amount of \$100,000 also was donated for the revitalization of the charitable St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy in Biloxi, MS, for the purchase of medicaments and medical supplies. This financial assistance is designed to renew the functions of this charitable facility. During his trip to



Ambassador Kolar presents a check to help with the reconstruction effort.

Alabama and Mississippi, the Czech Ambassador met with State Governors Bob Riley and Haley Barbour, respectively, to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Another \$120,000 was given to the University of New Orleans in late spring.

## Jewish Ties

On March 24, 2006, Ambassador Petr Kolar visited Temple Rodef Shalom in Falls Church, Virginia, where he spoke on the history of the relationship between Czechs and Jews. Ambassador Kolar emphasized the important role the Jewish community has played in the development of the Czech lands and in building the Czechoslovak state and its democratic values. He also noted that the Czech Republic is "happy to communicate intensively with the Jewish communities here in the United States. To all of them, we would like to send a clear message that our Jewish friends are part of our history, our present, and our future. And we will work hard to ensure that it stays so. This heritage we will pass onto our next generations."

*Continued on page 8...*

On May 15 and 16, 2006, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Dr. Cyril Svoboda, visited Washington. Minister Svoboda met with his U.S. counterpart, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. In Congress, the Minister met with Senator Richard Lugar (R-Indiana), chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations.

During his visit, the Minister also met with representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, members of the Jewish and Cuban-American communities,



Minister Svoboda meets with Secretary of State Rice

think tanks, and Czech Americans living in the United States.

The Minister's visit to Washington confirmed that the Czech Republic shares the same values with the United States

## Foreign Minister

and therefore has many identical foreign policy priorities. Spreading democracy and respect for human rights, as well as the commitment to fighting against international terrorism, belong to these priorities. He noted that this trend of cooperation will not change significantly after the June parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic. Minister Svoboda repeated that acceptance of the Czech Republic into the Visa Waiver Program is a key issue from the perspective of maintaining strategic transatlantic relations.

## Experts Call Czech Republic an Economic Tiger

The Czech economy grew by 6.9 percent in the last quarter of 2005 as exports boomed, capping the fastest annual expansion in the country's history. Exports propelled the performance shooting up by 12.6 percent

while imports rose at a more moderate pace of 6.1 percent.

The figures took most economists in the country by surprise. They say the Czech Republic is now one of Europe's economic tigers with the economy growing about five

times that of the Euro-zone. They also value the structure behind the economic growth, which is benefiting foreign trade surpluses and foreign investments. Experts are optimistic about 2006 as well.



## Message from the Ambassador



Photo courtesy of Tomas Sedlacek

Dear Friends,  
The first half of 2006 was a busy time in Czech-U.S. relations. President Vaclav Klaus and Minister of Foreign Affairs Cyril Svoboda both visited the United States twice. In addition to meeting with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice here in Washington, Minister Svoboda officially opened the new Consulate General in Chicago. President Klaus also had an

active schedule delivering speeches in Chicago, New York, and California where he met with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Highlights from their trips can be found in this newsletter.

Between visits of the Minister and President, I did some traveling of my own, spending time in Florida, Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Along the way, I met many nice people and witnessed firsthand the rebuilding efforts in areas hit by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. I experienced a great deal of personal joy delivering funds from the Czech Government to libraries, health centers, and educational institutions that were devastated by the storms. Investment in a society's education and health infrastructures is an investment in its future. The Czech Republic is pleased to help U.S. communities not only rebuild but achieve new heights.

It was a busy 6 months back home with the run up to the June parliamentary elections. I am optimistic that the election results do not change Czech priorities in regard to foreign relations. The Czech government will remain committed to its strong cooperation and partnership with the United States, including our involvement in the Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom operations, in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan, and in coalition operations in the Balkans. Our two countries share the same values and have nearly identical foreign policy priorities—spreading democracy and respect for human rights and curbing terrorism, among them.

Acceptance of the Czech Republic into the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP) remains a top priority of my ambassadorship. Subjecting Czech citizens to an expensive and arduous visa application process is an outdated vestige of Cold War isolationism that no longer belongs in our modern EU-U.S. alliance. VWP participation is pivotal not only to maintaining strategic transatlantic relations, but to engendering closer people-to-people ties and enhancing Czech public perception of the United States as a true friend. With the active support of so many dedicated friends who are offering their help in this effort, I am confident that we will remove this last barrier to access between our nations and achieve VWP participation.

Truly yours,

Petr Kolar

## Prague Airport Opens New Terminal



Photo courtesy of Prague Airport

President Klaus of the Czech Republic cuts the ribbon in the opening ceremony of the new terminal in Prague.

Prague's Ruzyně Airport is becoming one of the major air hubs in Central and Eastern Europe and a key player on the European air traffic market. The number of passengers handled by Ruzyně Airport has been growing at a fast pace in recent years. Last year alone, the airport handled around 10.8 million passengers. This year, their number is expected to exceed 11 million. To help accommodate the growing demand, various investment projects are under way.

By opening the new Terminal North 2, which started its operation in January this year, Ruzyně Airport has made a significant step toward the longterm effort to modernize its facilities and increase handling capacity. The new terminal satisfies the conditions concerning the future membership of the Czech Republic in the border-free Schengen Area, as it allows separating flights between the Schengen Agreement countries (regarded

as domestic) from other international flights.

The two-floor layout of the terminal offers shorter distances between gates and safety benefits for departing and arriving passengers. In addition, it houses commercial areas including new restaurants, bars, shops, and other services that will significantly increase passenger comfort. Service space for air carriers will be extended and new conference rooms and other specialized facilities will open for VIP and business clients, passengers traveling with children, etc.

The new terminal will allow Ruzyně Airport to handle up to 4 million more passengers a year. Additional planned investment linked to this terminal will help channel more visitors to Prague and double the number of passengers to roughly 20 million per year over the next 12 years.

Construction cost of the new terminal totals more than \$340 million to date.

## President Klaus Visits the U.S.

President Vaclav Klaus visited the United States in April and May 2006, with stops in California, Chicago, and New York. Kicking off his California leg, Klaus met with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in Sacramento where the two political leaders discussed the opportunity for business and cultural collaborations between the Czech Republic and

California.

In Los Angeles, Mr. Klaus participated in the Milken Institute Global Conference as a forum panelist with leading economists, including Nobel Prize Winner Gary Becker, and delivered a speech on globalization to the conference audience. At the Simon Wiesenthal Center Klaus served as keynote speaker for the Yom Hashoah or Holocaust Remembrance Day

memorial gathering. He also met with Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and spoke before the World Affairs Council on the Czech Republic's role in the new Europe.

At the University of Chicago, Mr. Klaus delivered a speech on the post-communist transformation of the Czech Republic, and laid a wreath in remembrance of the first Czech president, Tomas Masaryk, on

the university's grounds.

In May President Klaus was in New York to receive the prestigious Adam Smith Award for excellence in free-market education. Each year the Foundation for Economic Education bestows the award for outstanding leadership in business economics. Mr. Klaus's keynote acceptance speech addressed "The Threats to Liberty in the 21st Century."

## Minister Svoboda Presents Million Dollar Check to RFE/RL

During his visit to Washington, Minister Svoboda presented a check in the amount of \$1,168,000 as the Czech contribution toward the relocation of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in Prague. The Department of State Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula J. Dobriansky, members of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, representatives of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and many others attended the ceremony.

RFE/RL is a private, nonprofit, international communications services corporation, funded by the U.S. Congress

through the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Its aim is to promote and spread democratic values, bolster democratic development, market economies, and fight against terrorism. The Czech Republic shares these values, as they belong to its foreign policy priorities.

RFE/RL has been broadcasting from the Czech Republic since 1995: its broadcasting center is located in the former Czechoslovak Federal Parliament building in the Prague city center. Due to security concerns (following commencement of broadcasting to Iraq and Iran and after September 11, 2001), the Czech



Minister Svoboda presents the check to RFE/RL

Photo courtesy of Daniel Novy

Government decided to relocate the RFE/RL to a less exposed site in Prague.

The Government of the Czech Republic has allocated CZK 27 million (\$1,168,000) as its contribution toward the relocation costs. This amount represents approximately 7 percent of the total costs of building a new site and the associated costs of relocation.

## Czech Antiterrorism Unit Deployed in Afghanistan

In support of Operation Enduring Freedom, a 120-member Czech unit has been sent to the Afghan mountains where it operates alongside U.S. troops. This mission is similar to that of 2004, when Czechs fulfilled special tasks within the antiterrorism campaign in Afghanistan. The Czech Republic already has two military contingents in

Afghanistan, one small unit of meteorologists and bomb disposal experts in Kabul, and a bigger mission with a German reconstruction team in the Northeastern region of the country.

At the same time, approximately 30 Czech soldiers, part of a NATO-led contingent providing humanitarian aid in Pakistan, wrapped up their

mission and returned to the Czech Republic. The Czechs were in Pakistan for almost a quarter of a year, arriving roughly 2 weeks after the country was hit by a devastating earthquake in October. In tandem with Dutch health workers, Czech military health officials treated about 6,000 patients during their stay in Pakistan.

## Minister Svoboda Stays in "Cuban Prison Cell"

The Czech NGO Clovek v tisni organized a protest against imprisonment of democratic opposition leaders in Cuba. Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Cyril Svoboda, together with other leading political figures, joined the protest and spent some time in a makeshift prison cell at Prague's Wenceslas Square.

"With my participation I want to support a long-term position of Czech foreign policy toward the Cuban regime," said Minister Svoboda. He added that the Czech Republic pushes Cuba to respect human rights and that it articulates this position within the EU and at international forums.

The event was organized for a third consecutive year this March and lasted 3 days. Apart from the construction of the symbolic cell, the event included demonstrations and marches to voice discontentment with Cuban democratic opposition treatment.



Minister Cyril Svoboda joins protest.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## New Press Secretary



Daniel Novy

Daniel Novy is the new First Secretary for Press Relations at the Embassy of the Czech Republic. Before coming to Washington, he served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 3 years where he worked in the International Law Department and as Deputy Director of the European Law Department. Mr. Novy holds a law degree from Trinity College Dublin and is currently finishing a law degree from West Bohemian University in Pilsen.

## News Brief

### Two Czech WWII Heroes Have Died

Czech World War Two Veterans Rudolf Pernicky and Frantisek Perina died earlier this year. Rudolf Pernicky died in January at the age of 90 and Frantisek Perina in May at the age of 95.

General Pernicky played an important role in the anti-Nazi resistance and was later imprisoned by the Communist regime. He was rehabilitated after the Velvet Revolution and this year was awarded the highest Czech state honor, the Order of the White Lion.

General Perina was one of the most famous Czech pilots. After the communists seized power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Perina was dismissed from the military and he emigrated to the United States. He returned home only after the collapse of the communist regime. Perina received a number of awards for his achievements, including the Czechoslovak Cross of War, the Order of the White Lion, and several foreign awards.

### 2006 Gratias Agit Award

On May 4, 2006, Dr. Cyril Svoboda, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, bestowed the Gratias Agit Award on a group of supporters and institutions positively promoting the Czech Republic and Czech heritage around the world. This year's laureates included 17 personalities and 4 institutions from 14 countries, including Madame Madeleine K. Albright, the Prague-born first female Secretary of State of the United States, and American Sokol, an organization that plays a highly important role in preserving Czech heritage in the United States.

## News Brief



### Prague is the Wealthiest City Within the New EU Member States

The Czech capital, Prague, has been named the wealthiest city among the 10 countries that joined the European Union in May 2005. A European Commission survey known as the Urban Audit also measured the quality of life in 258 cities in the European Union. Prague did especially well in terms of culture, ranking fifth in the number of museums per capita and seventh in the number of theatres.

### Most Czechs Satisfied with EU Membership - Poll

A total of 67 percent of Czechs are satisfied with the Czech Republic's membership in the EU, which is 13 percent more than last autumn, according to polls conducted by the polling agencies Factum Invenio, STEM, and Ivan Gabal's Society in January. The government ordered the polls for four million crowns as part of its public information campaign on the EU.

### Czech BBC Broadcasts Final Program

The Czech-language service of the BBC broadcasted its final program. After the BBC World Service announced it was axing it and several other language services, Czech BBC failed in a bid to continue as part of BBC Worldwide with commercial backing.

## Czech Republic Attracts Record Investments

The Czech Republic has attracted a record number of investments in the last year. Investment and business development agency CzechInvest reported 154 domestic and foreign investment projects entailing 3.2 billion U.S. dollars and 21,663 new jobs. The Czech National Bank registered the total inflow of foreign investment in the first three quarters amounting to 9.96 billion U.S. dollars. The good news keeps coming in 2006. In late March, Hyundai announced its decision to build a production plant in the industrial park of Nosovice, Northern Moravia, an investment of well over a billion dollars and potentially some 13,000 new factory and supply jobs.

**Why is the Czech Republic currently so popular for foreign investors? "It's all about the right mix of location, economic and regulatory environment, availability of skilled labor, quality of infrastructure, cost effectivity, and incentives for investment," says David Pirner of Facility, a management consultancy.**

The country is well-known for its location in the heart of Europe, making it an ideal place for headquarters and distribution centers within the enlarged European Union. It also offers good transportation and telecommunications infrastructures. The most valued asset for investors, however, is the high concentration of an educated, professional, skilled, and cost effective workforce.

Several recent studies prove that the Czech Republic continues to be a good place to do business. For A.T. Kearney, the country was the most attractive offshore location in Europe in 2004, and fourth in the world, after India, China, and Malaysia. Also, the Economist Intelligence Unit's business environment rankings put the country at first place in the region of Central and Eastern Europe for the forecast period 2005–2009.

Apart from the location and

business environment, investors also are attracted by the active support of government investment projects, which in recent decades has developed a comprehensive strategy for attracting foreign investment to the country. Investors are offered free assistance from the CzechInvest agency, which includes information collection, tailor-made visits, business properties and supplier identification, consultancy on accessing EU structural funds, and many other services. The government also offers investment incentives in the form of corporate tax relief, job-creation grants, and training and retraining grants.

The right mix of conditions affects the changing nature of investment projects. In the area of investments with high added value, which are the most fiercely sought after on the international scale, the Czech Republic further increases an already high level of success. Several examples of large investment projects in recent years can be named in research and development, shared services, and high technology. A global business software supplier SAP has pooled its human resources, finance, and administration under one roof in Prague in one of the largest shared service centers in the world. DHL opened its European IT Service Center to process all its business transactions, and Mercedes Benz is relying on the technology center in Plzen for its development and design. Bang & Olufsen, the manufacturer of high-end audio-visual technology, has its only foreign production facility in Koprivnice in Northern Moravia.

Major American companies have long been present on the Czech market and are further expanding their activities. IBM, on the market since 1991,

launched its Global Services Delivery Center in Brno 5 years ago, and is gradually consolidating its operations in Europe to this single location. Rockwell Automation established its only research center located outside of the United States in Prague, where Motorola also has its design center. In July 2004, ExxonMobil opened its Business Support Center and GE Money is ready to launch its customer service center with 500 qualified staff members in Ostrava.

In March, the Czech government approved another major project—collaboration between Czech scientists at St. Anne hospital and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. The International Clinical Research Center in Brno will introduce the largest platform for medical and biotech research in the EU in the largest Czech-American research project since the World War Two.

"This demonstrates that the pessimistic scenarios, which predicted a loss of interest from investors and their tangible business to cheaper countries, were not realistic. On the contrary, last year we noted the opposite trend. Existing investors are not only further expanding and enhancing production, but are establishing shared-services centers and transferring their research and development activities to the Czech Republic," says Vaclav Petricek, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade.

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Prague, Czech Republic

Photo courtesy of the Czech Tourism

## Skoda Auto Launches Roomster

Coming off a record year in 2005, driven by strong sales of its Octavia and Superb models, Skoda unveiled its first multipurpose vehicle at the International Motor Show in Geneva at the end of February. Based on low price, comfort, and functionality, the Roomster is presented as a car for the young generation with a fresh design, generous storage space, and flexible seats.


Skoda Auto, the biggest Czech exporter, remains at the forefront of popularity in Europe and elsewhere. The new Skoda Octavia has been named "best import" in Germany's annual Auto Trophy poll. The prize is announced by the motoring magazine *Auto Zeitung*. This year, more than



Photo courtesy of Skoda Auto

90,000 readers of the magazine voted in the poll. Skoda Auto has been part of the Volkswagen Group since 1991. The new Octavia model was named 2005 car of the year in the Czech Republic, where it is manufactured, as well as in Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Lithuania, Serbia and Montenegro, Ukraine, and Great

Britain.

The carmaker plans to increase annual production to 800,000 cars within 5 years. One quarter of the cars would be produced outside the Czech Republic, in countries such as India, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. New plants will be built in China and Russia. 

## Czech Republic Reveals New Logo


A jury of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, comprised of leading experts on design and high-ranking foreign policy officials, has selected a winning proposal for the new logo of the Czech Republic. The graphic logo is the work of Tomas Machek, Ludek Kubik, and Karel Haloun, a team from Prague-based design studio Side2.

The new logo symbolizes openness, diversity, and the many colors of the Czech



Republic. Its unique design, which its authors epitomized in the concept of the "speaking logo," allows for further creative work with the concept, so that the characteristic bubbles can be used separately and filled with

pictures or words delivering an intended message.

The logo will represent the Czech Republic on official materials, during cultural and sporting events, and for other occasions. 

## Ambassador Delivers Lecture at AU

Ambassador Petr Kolar addressed a diverse audience of students, compatriots, and other attendees at an event jointly organized by the School of International Service of American University (AU) and the Association for International Affairs, a Prague-based think tank. The Ambassador commented on issues ranging from the favorable economic situation in the Czech Republic to its role in the European Union. He emphasized the need for transatlantic partnership between the United States and Europe to face the challenges of the modern world.

Replying to the lecture topic, *Czech Republic in the EU. Good News for America?*, the Ambassador stated, "It is excel-

lent news for the U.S.," and "it is good news for the Czech Republic and its citizens. For sure, it is good news also for the EU." EU membership has helped the Czech Republic "speed up positive development and create a prosperous, booming, and healthy economy and a self-confident civic society." He added that membership also has allowed the country to "influence international affairs more than ever before and have an impact on internal affairs of the EU...It is good for us, the EU, and the transatlantic partnership."

Turning to Czech priorities, within the European Union, Ambassador Kolar stressed the importance of fostering the transatlantic cooperation, which

he considers to be "the only way to face new challenges and threats that jeopardize our civilization, threaten our way of life, and the democratic values that we all share." As another traditional priority of Czech foreign policy, the Ambassador called for support of democracy, freedom, and human rights in countries in transition and for active engagement in the world ranging from development aid and disaster relief to peace-keeping missions. "We know that the best way to preserve and secure our own liberty and future, is to build democracy in our country and help and support democracy to emerge in other countries," stated the Ambassador. 

## News Brief

### Havel Decorated in the U.S. for Asserting Religious Freedom



Photo courtesy of Petr Janousek

Former Czech President Vaclav Havel received the 2005 Annual First Freedom Award from the U.S. organization First Freedom Center. The prize was conferred in Richmond, VA, on the occasion of the U.S. Religious Freedom Day. Czech Ambassador to the United States Petr Kolar accepted the award on Mr. Havel's behalf. Havel made a video speech for ceremony participants in which he said that one cannot calculate whether his effort to do good will bring success. Mr. Havel warned against group obsession and fanaticism that threatens humankind, especially in relation to terrorism. Previous prize winners include British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

### Seventh Anniversary of the Czech Republic's Accession to NATO

On March 9, 2006, the Czech Republic celebrated the seventh anniversary of accession as a full NATO member. The treaty was signed, along with Poland and Hungary, in Independence, MO, in 1999 by Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and government representatives of these first three post-communist countries to enter NATO since the end of the Cold War. The Czech Army today is a full and effective member of the military structures of NATO and participates in several NATO and UN missions in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Afghanistan.

## News Brief

President Klaus  
Commemorates  
T.G. Masaryk

President Vaclav Klaus, his wife Livia, and 200 participants paid tribute to the memory of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia (1918–35), at Lany cemetery on the 156th anniversary of Masaryk's birth. Masaryk's ideas of morality, truth, justice and humanity have become the basis of Czechoslovak statehood, and they have survived the long years of Nazi and communist dictatorships.

Putin Recognizes  
Moral Responsibility

Russian President Vladimir Putin recognized moral responsibility for the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops. After talks at Prague Castle with President Klaus he told journalists that Russia did not bear any legal responsibility, but it felt moral responsibility for the tragic events. Klaus said he appreciated Putin's words as a clear and understandable statement, perceived by the Czech Republic.

Lower House  
Approves Bulgaria  
and Romania's  
Accession to EU

The lower house of Parliament has agreed to support the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union. This is the first time that the Czech Parliament has voted on EU enlargement since the Czech Republic joined the Union in May 2004. The earliest possible date when Bulgaria and Romania could join the European Union is January 1, 2007. None of the deputies present voted against the two countries' accession; one deputy abstained from the vote.

Governors of the Czech and Slovak National  
Bank Meet in Philadelphia

The Global Interdependence Center (GIC) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization of world citizens that recognizes the increasing interdependence of nations. Dedicated to global excellence, the center believes the potential for productive interdependence is enormous. Key areas that are critical to productive global interdependence are: political, economic, social/cultural, scientific and technological, which include medical and environmental. GIC was created to uphold the principles of the Declaration of Interdependence, which mentions these key areas.

On February 10, 2006, GIC hosted the Governor of the Czech National Bank, Zdenek Tuma and the Governor of the Slovak National Bank, Ivan



(left to right) Martin Dvorak, Victor Danielis, Zdenek Tuma, Ivan Sramko, Josef Dvoracek, and Peter Rafaeli

Sramko. The two Governors gave special presentations detailing the economic success stories of their respective countries. The meeting was also attended by Viktor Danielis, Commercial and Economic Counselor at the Czech Embassy in Washington, Martin Dvorak, his deputy, Tomas Bican, Commercial Counselor at Slovak Embassy in Washington, and Josef Dvoracek, Commercial Consul at the Czech Consulate General in New York. This most informa-

tive meeting was also attended by Peter A. Rafaeli, Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic in Philadelphia who led the two Governors as well as the Czech and Slovak diplomats on a tour of historic Philadelphia as it relates to Czechoslovak history.

Stops included the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall (where T.G. Masaryk spoke in October 1918), the PA historic marker highlighting T.G. Masaryk, and Masaryk Place, which leads into the Bellevue Hotel where Masaryk stayed in 1918 with his delegation from the Mid-European Union which he chaired.

For questions, call:

(215) 646-7777 or E-mail:  
philadelphia@honorary.mzv.cz  
For questions on the GIC, visit:  
www.globalinterdependence.org  
Special by Peter A. Rafaeli

## World Bank Graduates the Czech Republic

On February 28, 2006, the Czech Republic officially celebrated its graduation from the World Bank. The formal celebration at the Congress Center of the Czech National Bank in Prague was presided over by World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, with Minister of Finance Bohuslav Sobotka and other high officials, businessmen, and journalists in attendance. The Czech Republic thus closed one part of its transformation since the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

Former Czechoslovakia was one of the founding countries of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but, in 1954, the communist regime withdrew the country's membership, which was renewed in 1990. The Czech Republic received three loans totaling \$626 million from the World Bank.

Graduation means that the country officially changes its status from beneficiary to donor of World Bank funds. The process of graduation was initiated by the Czech government in 2004 and officially finished by an exchange of letters affirming the country's graduation in April

2005 between Minister Sobotka and the Vice President of the World Bank for Europe and the Central Asia region, Shigeo Katsu. The process of graduation confirmed the already existing status quo. In the last years, the Czech Republic has not been borrowing from the World Bank but, on the contrary, has been a donating country.

World Bank representative from the Czech Republic, Pavel Frelich, summarized what graduation will mean for the country. "With the graduation, the Czech Republic agrees to increase its financial participation on development cooperation and to strengthen its role as a partner in development assistance—multilateral and bilateral." Frelich also noted that as a new member of the European Union, the Czech Republic committed itself to gradually increase the Official Development Assistance to 0.17 percent of its GNP in 2010 and to 0.33 percent in 2015.

While in Prague, Wolfowitz also visited the Institutional Foundations for Sound Finance Forum organized by the World Bank and the Czech government. During an inter-



Vaclav Havel and Paul Wolfowitz

view with Czech Television, Mr. Wolfowitz expressed his appreciation for the progress the Czech Republic has made since 1990. "The Czech Republic has really pioneered some very important innovations that I think the whole world will benefit from," he said.

Frelich concludes that the whole process of graduation is, "the recognition from an independent and prestigious institution such as the World Bank that we have reached a certain level of economic development which should lead to higher interest in the Czech Republic among potential foreign investors and, at the same time, to improvement of conditions for using financial resources on the world financial markets."

## Community Celebrates

### 22nd Annual Louisiana Czech Heritage Day

An estimated 450 people from throughout Louisiana and surrounding states came to the Czech festival in Libuse (close to Alexandria, LA) to celebrate Czech heritage on March 18, 2006.

The program in the Czech Community Hall highlighted performances of Louisiana Czech Heritage Dancers, accordion music, a talent show, Easter egg demonstrations, crafts exhibitions and sales, and much more. The audience also had several opportunities to dance with a group of professionals led by Jitka Bonusova from Prague. During the festivities, participants not only enjoyed the music and dancing, but also tasted Czech delicacies such as sausage with sauerkraut and dumplings, and traditional pastries including kolaches. After enjoying Czech flavors, visitors could delve into the Czech history of Rapides Parish thanks to displays of historic photos and documents, and expert guidance of local historians, Frances Hazmark and Dr. Rosie Walker.

Libuse (as well as Kolin, the second Czech colony in



Photo courtesy of Ivo Broskevic

Rapides Parish) was founded in 1914 by Czech immigrants who came here in search of affordable land and opportunities to make use of their skills and handicrafts. Several dozen families claiming Czech descent live in this area. Tombstones at Czech cemeteries in Libuse and Kolin are further evidence of their past and present. Additionally, Czech House (Cesky domov) and Konkinsky Memorial Museum present exhibits of the Czech past in this part of Louisiana, preserved with exceptional care by George and Helen Konkinsky, active members and officials of the Louisiana Czech Heritage Association.

Pam Funderburk, current President of the Louisiana Czech Heritage Association,

colleagues Carolyn Tuma, Dr. David Holcombe, and Wally Sanson, to name only a few of the many officials and volunteers, deserve credit and applause for what they have achieved. Their hard work, dedication and personal engagement were praised by all guests of the festival, including Ken Zezulka, the Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic in New Orleans.

The festival has its followers and admirers among children and teenagers. The devotion of younger generations is crucial to continue cherishing and preserving Czech heritage. 🇨🇪

Please mark your calendars for next year's Czech Heritage Day on March 17, 2007.

Special by Ivo Broskevic

## Documentary Wins Christopher Award

### Nicholas Winton—The Power of Good

On March 16, 2006, in New York City, the creators of the Emmy Award winning documentary *Nicholas Winton—The Power of Good*, led by Director Matej Minac, received the prestigious "Christopher Award."

Father James Keller, a Maryknoll priest who believed that every individual has the power and responsibility to change the world for the better, founded The Christophers in 1945. Rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition of service to God and humanity, The Christophers embrace people of every nation, religion, and age level.

First presented in 1949, the Christopher Awards acknowledge that the role of the media is unique and its influence far-reaching. The Awards were established in accord with the

principles of their parent organization to salute media that "affirm the highest values of the human spirit." The Awards are noncompetitive and their goal is to encourage men, women, and children to pursue excellence in creative arenas that have the potential to influence a mass audience positively. Christopher Award winners celebrate the humanity of people in a positive way.

Matej Minac does not rest on his laurels. He created in the Czech Republic an International Educational Project, which received the auspices of Dr. Cyril Svoboda, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He wrote a small book about the creation of his two highly acclaimed films, *All My Loved Ones* and *Nicholas Winton—The Power of Good*. His book titled *Nicholas Winton—The Lottery of Life* was

published in the Czech Republic. Since then Peter A. Rafaeli translated the book into English, and Dr. Curtis Keim, Dean of Moravian College in Bethlehem, PA, edited the English translation.

American Friends of the Czech Republic volunteered their services with publishing the English version, which will soon be possible with the generous support of the Czech Government. The assistance of the Consul General of the Czech Republic in New York City, Ales Pospisil, is hereby gratefully acknowledged. 🇨🇪

For more information, visit: <http://www.christophers.org/awardsmm.html> or call (215) 646-7777

Special by Peter A. Rafaeli

## News Brief

### Czech Republic Will Help Belarussian Students

The Czech Republic was among the strongest supporters of the imposition of European Union sanctions on the regime of President Lukashenko in Belarus due to the suppression of opposition demonstrations which started after elections held on March 19, 2006. Czech Prime Minister Paroubek offered several relief programs for opponents and regular Belarussian citizens oppressed by Lukashenko's regime. One of the programs will offer college students suspended from school because of their participation in demonstrations an opportunity to finish their studies at Czech universities. The demonstration broke out after the opposition had accused the government of election fraud. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Secretary Vit Kolar said that the Czech Government is preparing up to 25 programs, from scholarships to printing informational materials.

### Tourists in the Czech Republic Reach Record 6.4 Million in 2005

Tourists arriving in the Czech Republic rose by an estimated 6 percent year-on-year to a record 6.4 million in 2005. Foreign visitors' spending increased to CZK 108.7bn (approximately USD 4.72 bn) last year from CZK 107.1bn in 2004. Tourists most frequently visited Prague, the Karlovy Vary region in West Bohemia, and South Moravia. Most visitors were from Germany, Great Britain, and Italy. In 2006, CzechTourism expects the number of foreign tourists coming to the Czech Republic to grow to 6.6–6.7 million.



## Jewish Ties


*Continued from page 1...*

Also in March 2006, Press Secretary Daniel Novy attended a memorial service for Czechoslovak Jewish Victims of Nazism, conducted by the Society for the History of the Czechoslovak Jews at the Congregation Habonim in New York City. Mr. Novy presented greetings of the Czech Embassy to Rabbi Norman Patz and his congregants and reiterated the Czech Republic's commitment to the ideals of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk's civil society, and its determination to combat anti-Semitism and all other forms of ethnic, racial, and religious hatred.

## Jan Figel Receives Award


**A**t a special ceremony at the Slovak Embassy, hosted by H.E. Rastislav Kacer, the president of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences Dr. Miloslav

Rechcigl presented the Human and Tolerance Award to Jan Figel, Slovak EU Commissioner for Education. The award, designed to "honor those whose life and work have

been guided by tolerance and compassion," was presented for the third time this year. Past recipients include Father Anton Srholec of Skalica and the Reverend Tomas Halik. 

## New Consulate General Opens


**T**he new Consulate General in Chicago opened to the public on February 15, 2006. The jurisdiction of the Consulate General covers the territory of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The Consulate is located in the Michigan Plaza Building near the Millennium Park. Mr. Marek

Skolil has been appointed as Consul General. Hours of operation are 9:30 am-12 noon, Monday through Friday. 

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## World Cup Draw Puts Czechs in Group with the U.S.

**T**he Czech Republic will face the U.S. in its first match at this year's World Cup in Germany. The Czechs play against the United States on June 12, 2006. The Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, DC, will screen the match. 

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