

CZECH the NEWS

Newsletter of the Embassy of the Czech Republic

Vol. 3, 2009

President Klaus Travels to the US

The President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus, conducted two official visits to the United States. On September 20–21, 2009, President Klaus visited Washington, DC, where he presented his keynote address during the Cato Institute conference titled “*Freedom and Prosperity in Central and Eastern Europe: 20 Years after the Collapse of Communism.*” Following his speech at the Cato Institute, President Klaus met with World Bank President Robert Zoellick. Before his trip to the United Nations General Assembly in New York, President Klaus conducted an interview with the editorial board of The Washington Times.

The main topics addressed during his visit to the U.S. concerned the global economic crisis and depression. President



Ambassador Petr Kolar welcomes Czech President Vaclav Klaus during the State Reception at the Embassy of the Czech Republic.

Klaus emphasized that excessive regulation and involvement of government and regulatory measures are the main reasons for the economic downturn, rather than the collapse of the market on its own.

The second visit of President Klaus took place on November 4–7, 2009. During his stay in Washington, DC, President Klaus met U.S. Senate Republicans, in particular with Senators Inhofe (R-OK), Hatch (R-UT), Chambliss (R-GA),

Thune (R-SD) and Barrasso (R-MT). Following the meeting in the Senate, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden greeted President Klaus at the White House where they discussed Czech–U.S. relations and their future development.

President Klaus’ DC visit included his participation in The Washington Times conference “*Advancing the Global Debate over Climate Change Policy.*” After the event, he addressed approximately

350 students at Georgetown University, where he spoke on the topic of the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism in Europe, as well as other subjects related to post-communist development in Europe. During his visit to Georgetown University, President Klaus met with former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar.

President Klaus completed his visit to Washington, DC, with a wreath laying ceremony in front of the statue of President Tomas Garrigue Masaryk. Before his departure, he gave a keynote speech during the State Reception of the Embassy of the Czech Republic.

The visit of President Klaus to the United States concluded in Simi Valley, CA, where he participated at a conference hosted by the Ronald Reagan Library Foundation, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism in Europe. He also met with Nancy Reagan, as well as former Secretary of State George Schultz.

Contents:

Message from the Ambassador.....	2
Ambassador Tours States.....	2
Celebrations Mark the 20th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution.....	3
Tomki Nemec, Photographs of the Velvet Revolution.....	3
Czech Hockey Icon Gives Back to the Community.....	4
Barbara Podoski, Honoring a Czech Heroine.....	6
Czech Avant-Garde Photography Featured at The Phillips Collection.....	7
Avalon Theater Presents New Season of Czech Films.....	7
Czech Events in the U.S.....	7

U.S. Vice President Visits Prague

On October 23, 2009, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden visited Prague, where he met with President of the Czech Republic Vaclav Klaus and Czech Prime Minister Jan Fischer.

Among the main topics discussed during his stay included a new strategic concept for the missile defense shield in Europe. According to Vice President Biden, both parties spoke about the potential role of the Czech Republic in a new missile shield architecture capable of protecting not only the United States but also the Czech Republic and Europe.

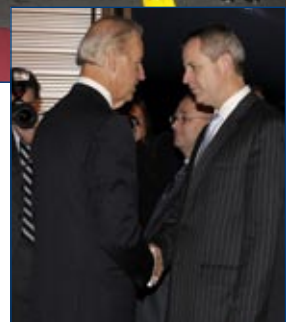
Prime Minister Fischer said, “The Czech Republic is ready to share in the design of a new architecture for anti-missile defense.” He pointed out that the system is now configured as a NATO



U.S. Vice President Joe Biden (right) meets Czech Prime Minister Jan Fischer (left) in Prague.

project.

Vice President Biden also acknowledged the achievements of the Czech provincial reconstruction team in Logar, Afghanistan, where Czech military units work closely with U.S. military forces.



Ambassador Kolar (right) greets Vice President Joe Biden in Prague.



Photo courtesy of Chad Wyatt

Dear Friends,
 Twenty years have passed since the Velvet Revolution in the Czech Republic, a dramatic and peaceful change in the development of the country. This revolution restored democracy and brought back freedom to our people. As we look back, we see an incredibly important milestone in the lives of the Czech people and a crucial moment of the 20th century in Europe.

Walls fell, wires were cut, fences disappeared, and people were allowed to see and experience the world that had been denied to them for decades. As we look forward, we see incredible opportunities, but also responsibilities.

Just as in 1918, when an independent state—Czechoslovakia—was established, the radical change of 1989 would not have been possible without the help of the United States of America. Owing to the tough and principled approach of President Ronald Reagan, the already corroded and corrupt communist regime in Europe collapsed. Our internal civic resistance (the dissident movements: Charter 77 in the Czech Republic and the Polish Solidarity, with people like Vaclav Havel and Lech Walesa) was also supported by the United States.

Even today, after 20 years, we still know that freedom is not guaranteed and that we have to work hard to maintain it. The Berlin Wall fell 20 years ago, but there are still many walls of ignorance and hypocrisy in this world to be torn down; there are still some people who would like the past walls to be rebuilt.

Again, in the process of maintaining our freedom, we are grateful to the United States for helping us to become a part of international structures that safeguard our freedom, democracy, and stability. For us, these structures mean mainly NATO and the European Union, which we joined 10 and 5 years ago, respectively. One year ago, we became a part of the United States' Visa Waiver Program and, with the first visa-free Czech tourist coming to the United States, the last relic of the Cold War disappeared.

We have come a long way since 1989. With ups and downs and occasional troubles, today we are a full-fledged democracy with respect for the rule of law and a reliable partner and ally to those who share the same values and principles. We are a real ally and a partner of the United States. We know that the United States takes our partnership seriously and that we can rely on it. President Obama said in Prague earlier this year to the Czech people, "The United States will never turn its back on the people of this nation. We are bound by shared values, shared history, and the enduring promise of our alliance."

We are well aware of our responsibilities and are determined and ready to participate in the solutions of global issues together with our allies. We have worked together with them in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Western Balkans, and have expressed our readiness to actively participate in missile defense.

Warm regards,

Petr Kolar



Ambassador Tours States



(Left to right) Daniel Novy, County Executive Scott Walker, Ambassador Petr Kolar, Ambassador Richard Graber, Consul General Marek Skolil

Photo courtesy of the Embassy of the Czech Republic

Ambassador Kolar and his wife Jaroslava kept up a busy schedule this fall, travelling to Alaska, New York, Illinois, Vermont, and Wisconsin to continue to build strong Czech-American ties and acknowledge the achievements of Czech leaders in the community.

In Alaska, Ambassador Kolar attended a Czech Gala where Czech Honorary Consul Francis J. Nosek was promoted to the position of Honorary Consul General. Ambassador Kolar also met with former Governor of the State of Alaska, Sarah Palin; Mayor of Anchorage, Dan Sullivan; Commissioner Notti, and local Czech academic and business communities.

At a luncheon organized by Alaska World Affairs Council/World Trade Center, the Ambassador presented his lecture "Europe and America: We Need Each Other." During his lecture, he spoke about transatlantic relations, Czech-U.S. relations, and the aims and achievements of the historically first Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

October 5, 2009

Ambassador Kolar travelled to Madison, WI, to meet with the director of the Institute of World Affairs, Doug Savage. He also participated in the TV interview "International Focus."

In Milwaukee, he met with the former U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Richard Graber and his wife, and County Executive Scott Walker. His program also included a meeting with representatives of Harley Davidson Motor Co., Badger Meter, Rockwell Automation, and Briggs & Stratton.

October 28, 2009

In New York, NY, Ambassador Kolar and his wife attended the



Jaroslava Kolarova, Sarah Palin, and Ambassador Kolar

Photo courtesy of Dan Novy

Czech National Day reception that took place at the Bohemian National Hall. The event was organized by the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in New York, and Bohemian Benevolent and Literary Association.

October 30, 2009

The Ambassador and his wife then headed to Middlebury College in Vermont to present his speech "Reflections on 1989: Twenty Years of Czech-American and Transatlantic Relations," and participate in a discussion with students.

November 10, 2009

In Chicago, IL, Ambassador Kolar attended a Gala Awards Dinner organized by the American Friends of the Czech Republic. The gala was organized with the purpose of supporting the return of the Woodrow Wilson Statue to Prague. During the Gala, Mayor of Chicago, Richard M. Daley, received the Civil Society Vision Award.

Ambassador Kolar completed his tour in Chicago, participating in the NCSML Rebuilding Open House, organized by the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library (NCSML). This event presented information concerning the reconstruction of the NCSML Museum in Cedar Rapids that was damaged by floods in 2008.

Celebrations Mark the 20th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution

The Czech Embassy hosted multiple events to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the 1989 Velvet Revolution.

The celebrations began with the State Reception at the Czech Embassy on November 4, 2009. More than 700 people attended the event with Czech President Vaclav Klaus. The event commemorated two important Czech National Holidays (October 28, declaration of an independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, and November 17, beginning of the Velvet Revolution of 1989).

On November 5, 2009, the Embassy of the Czech Republic hosted a concert of the legendary Czech group Psi vojaci (Dog's Soldiers), an iconic group of the Czech musical underground movement of the 1980s.

The celebrations concluded on November 6, 2009, with an international conference titled "Czechs and Balances: Twenty Years of Czech Freedom and Democracy."

Czech First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Tomas Pojar



Guests surround Czech President Vaclav Klaus (center) during the State Reception at the Embassy of the Czech Republic.



(Left to right) Peter Green, Ambassador Craig Stapleton, and Czech Ambassador to the UN Martin Palous

opened the conference. Martin Putna (chairman of the Vaclav Havel Presidential Library in Prague) offered in his keynote

address reflections on American roots of Vaclav Havel's spirituality.

The panel "Czech View from

Washington, American View from Prague" presented unique experiences of three Ambassadors: Martin Palous (Czech Ambassador to the U.S., 2001–2005), Craig R. Stapleton (U.S. Ambassador to the CR, 2001–2004) and Richard W. Graber (U.S. Ambassador to the CR, 2006–2009).

The last panel included Thomas S. Blanton (director of the National Security Archive), who based his view of the Velvet Revolution on recently declassified documents; Adela Gjuricova (Institute of Contemporary History, Prague); who analyzed myths and disillusionments of the Czech 1990s; and A. Wess Mitchell (President of the Center for European Policy Analysis, CEPA), who put the changes in Central and Eastern Europe into the geopolitical context of American foreign policy

The conference was moderated by Peter S. Green of Bloomberg News. He covered the 1989 events from Prague for United Press International (UPI) and Newsday.

TOMKI NEMEC

Photographs of the Velvet Revolution

In remembrance of the events that sparked the Velvet Revolution, the Embassy of the Czech Republic has on view photographs by Czech photographer Tomki Nemeč that reveal dramatic moments that forever changed a nation.

Nemeč selected 18 photographs to feature at the Embassy. The black and white photographs progress in mood from the grays of the Communist regime to the celebrations of a new nation. He begins the exhibition with a picture of the border between Czechoslovakia and West Germany. Two guards stand watch over the fields. Nemeč continues the series with a picture of Communist celebrations on May 1, 1988. A huge Communist symbol hangs on the wall as leader Gustav Husak peers down from a balcony.

Then, the mood begins to shift. Photographs show a crowd of people viewing a car from the West; students march in an anti-communist demonstration; and dissident Ivan "Magor" Jirous, poet and artistic director of the legendary music group Plastic People of the Universe, leaves a court hearing.

The pictures towards the end of the series show the people taking a stand for change. Candles separate demonstrators from the police; a man and woman secure a "Vaclav Havel" sign to a tram; and Vaclav Havel sits in his office waiting to present his inauguration speech as President of Czechoslovakia (1989–1992). He later became the first President of the Czech Republic (1993–2003).

The photographs are on view at the Embassy of the Czech Republic until January 30, 2010. For additional information about the exhibition, please call 202/274-9105. The exhibition can be viewed Monday through Thursday, 9 am–5 pm, and Friday, 9 am–3:30 pm.



Student Demonstration, November 17, 1989, Czech Republic

ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHER TOMKI NEMEC

After the fall of the Communist regime, Tomki Nemeč became the personal photographer to President Vaclav Havel. Nemeč devoted himself to taking photographs of Havel from the time of the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia to the break-up of the state and the birth of an independent Czech Republic and Slovakia. The numerous photographs he took of Havel revealed different aspects of Havel's personality as well as his ups and downs. In 1992, Nemeč joined the Regina Maria Anzenberger Agency, and has worked as a free-lance photographer from the end of that year onward.

Winner of two World Press Photo awards, Nemeč's work has been published in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, among many others. For more information about Tomki Nemeč, visit www.tomkin.cz or www.lightstalkers.org/tomki-nemec.



Patrik Elias

Czech Hockey Icon Gives Back to the Community

Last week, Patrik Elias of the New Jersey Devils (NJD) reached a career milestone—720 points (301 goals, 419 assists), making him the third most successful Czech player in NHL history. In March 2008, Patrik set the all-time franchise points record (702 points) for the New Jersey Devils. Combined with his summer award of the Golden Stick (Zlata hokejka) for the Czech Hockey Player of the Year, Patrik is currently not only the best Czech player in the NHL, but one of the best to ever play the game.

For Patrik, it is not just about the game. Adding to his extracurricular community activities off the ice and extensive duties he and his wife Petra have conducted for both UNICEF Czech Republic and UNICEF USA, Patrik Elias has become not only a role model for many young hockey players from all around the world, but also one of the most recognizable icons of today's sports community.

Patrik Elias's road to success originated in Trebic, Czech Republic, when he was five, but it took him over a decade to realize that playing hockey could turn from a hobby to a life-changing opportunity.

"I started to play hockey when I was five because my older brothers were playing as well. I joined the hockey team in Kladno when I was 14, in order to play at a higher level. That was when I first realized that the NHL (National Hockey League), the best hockey league in the world, exists. It ultimately became my goal to play in it. When I was drafted and picked by the New Jersey Devils, this was when I first realized that playing hockey could also turn into a career opportunity."

Although Patrik was growing up in Czechoslovakia, well-renowned for its incredible hockey success and many celebrity hockey players, Patrik did not follow any particular player from

Czechoslovak history and did not have a "hockey hero" or a favorite hockey team in particular.

"I didn't have any until I was 14, before then I only considered hockey as a passion and hobby. My first role models were always my brothers and older guys playing for my club. I wanted to be like them but I wasn't really looking around that much. Because I wasn't really informed about the NHL growing up, I

first started to be interested in teams from overseas when I started to travel around the world with the Junior National Team. Later on, I liked teams like Edmonton, Pittsburgh, Montreal, but I cannot say I had one favorite team among them."

Following the 1994 NHL Draft, Patrik settled in the United States, pursuing his hockey dream overseas.

"I came from a country that was just recovering from communism. America was different—large, free, a lot of people and cars everywhere, beautiful stores—everything was

leaving a great impression on me. The people were kind, polite. It also appeared that nobody was in a hurry and there was plenty of time for everything. During my first years, I was playing on the reserve team in the minor league. I cannot single out one person that helped

me the most because all of my teammates were a great support to me.

Even though the adjustment to a new lifestyle appeared with very little complications, Patrik elaborates further on the difficulties and challenges he had to overcome.

"The most difficult part was the language barrier, I couldn't speak a word of English. In AHL (American Hockey League), I



Patrik Elias, after receiving the Golden Stick (Zlata hokejka) for the Best Czech Hockey Player, stands with his wife Petra Elias.

was the only Czech player. I had to work on my English a lot, but it helped me tremendously and everybody on my team was very supportive. I missed my family, but since I lived without my family since I was 14 and moved to Kladno, I was used to taking care of myself and the transition wasn't as drastic. I was 19 and nothing seemed like a problem."

Patrik is well known not only for his accomplishments and success in the NHL, but also for his unparalleled patriotism and willingness to represent his country, the Czech Republic, on the international hockey scene. Despite the fact that some players choose to skip the international tournaments, Patrik explores further what playing for Team Czech means to him.

"Playing for my home country is a great honor for me. We cannot forget that our country and the people from our country allowed us to have the opportunity to become who we are now—our first steps started there. On the other hand, I understand that after a long and hard season that is the most difficult and longest out of all the professional sports, the players are mentally and physically exhausted and want to spend time with their families."

The number 26 on his jersey has become an icon in the hockey community. Unlike other players, Patrik doesn't assign any special

Continued on page 5

Photo courtesy of the New Jersey Devils

Photo courtesy of Barbara Reichova



Photo courtesy of the New Jersey Devils
Patrik Elias

Czech Hockey Icon Gives Back to the Community *(Continued from pg. 4)*

significance to it. *"It doesn't mean anything in particular; it is my fourth number that I have in NJD. Young players cannot choose their numbers, they have them assigned. The previous three numbers were always taken from me by older players. I like my number 26 right now. and we belong together."*

As well as Patrik and the number 26 now belonging together, his career is solely tied to one NHL team, although trades and playing on various teams is common in the NHL. *"About three years ago, I considered looking for a team that would suit me better. I came to the conclusion that my first opportunity to show my skills was given to me by NJD. I won the two most valuable trophies in hockey with NJD. (The Stanley Cup). Loyalty also played an important role in my decision to stay. After 13 years, I had many friends here and became accustomed to the environment around me, which is very important."*

Despite the fact that his career is filled with success and achievements, there were also times of doubt. In 2005, Patrik suffered a serious illness that nearly ended his promising hockey career. In his eyes, though, every obstacle and negative aspect becomes a challenge and a motivation. This has helped him to not only overcome his illness, but also to become involved in charitable and beneficial activities that help people around him.

"You eventually realize that there are more important things in life than sports, work, and career—health and family. Based on my experience with Hepatitis A, that nearly ended my career, I also realized that it is important to help those that had less luck and were less fortunate in their lives than myself. Thanks to my wife Petra, I came in contact with UNICEF. After two years of cooperation, they offered more intensive cooperation, which I value and appreciate very much."

Patrik said that the most im-



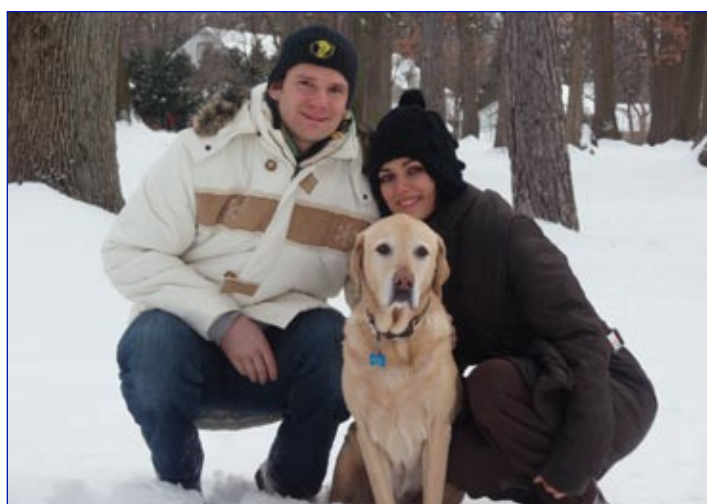
Patrik helps children throughout the world through his collaboration with UNICEF.

portant lesson he and his wife Petra learned during their involvement in UNICEF as the Czech Republic's Good Will Ambassadors is *"how important it is to help, and how little our help costs us!"*

"In today's modern world, 24,000 children die daily from hunger or easily preventable diseases. Our children are our future and this number is horrific. UNICEF managed to save in their 60-year history millions of children's lives. I try to help to increase the number of saved children's lives."

Patrik and Petra Elias are currently involved in various charitable projects, serving our community and improving the lives of people around them. *"We focus especially on educational and drinking water projects, and vaccination campaigns. The vaccination campaign is perhaps the closest one to my heart, since I have experienced a disease that I could have prevented by vaccination. I cooperate on this project not only with UNICEF Czech Republic, but also with UNICEF USA. We have recently organized, with the help of NJD, a huge event, that raised over \$15,000 in less than one hour. When you realize how many lives this money can save, it's a beautiful feeling."*

Back to his hockey deeds, Patrik is anxiously awaiting the beginning of the Winter Olympics, which will take place in



Patrik Elias and his wife Petra Elias

Vancouver, Canada in February 2009.

"The Olympic Games are a dream of every young kid, as well as the Stanley Cup. I participated at the Olympic Games two times, with two different experiences. In the 2002 Olympics, I was relatively young and enjoyed not only hockey, but also the atmosphere and the presence of elite athletes from other sports. In the 2006 Olympics, I unfortunately suffered an injury in the first game and that was the end of the Olympics for me. I firmly believe that the upcoming Olympics will be successful for our team and for our nation. It will for sure be an amazing experience, since it is taking place in the cradle of hockey—Canada."

Contemplating his hockey years spent in the Czech Republic, the United States and his brief period in Russia, Patrik offers his comparison of the environments. *"When it comes to my job, I have more anonymity, freedom and calmness for my work [in the U.S.]. People are more positively tuned. What I don't miss at all in the U.S. is typical Czech jealousy. Jealousy is not as negative in the U.S., here it is more of a motivating factor. What I miss in the U.S. is typical Czech skillfulness, vividness, humor, and a more complex level of "European like" culture. Both countries have their own specific magic, and I very much like them. Russia, however, is a chapter of its own. It is a country of huge potential—a very different lifestyle and mentality of people. There are huge differences in its society. Because I got infected*

Continued on page 8



Barbara Lee Podoski, Honoring a Czech Heroine

The Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, DC, celebrated and remembered the life of Barbara Lee Podoski, who passed away on August 16, 2009.

A memorial service for Barbara Podoski was held at the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, DC, on September 18, 2009. Over 100 friends and family members gathered to pay tribute to her life. Rev. Katherine Cartwright Knodel gave the invocation. Young Czech soprano Kristyna Gocova sang *The Lord is My Shepherd* from the Biblical Songs by Antonin Dvorak and a selection of Czechoslovak folk songs.

Juraj Slavik, the son of a former Czech Ambassador to the United States, read a poem that was written by his father for Barbara Podoski's wedding entitled *Tu Felix Barbara Nube*, and Katka Cartwright read *A Prayer for Tonight* by Karel Capek.

As part of the beautiful service, others offered their insights into the remarkable life of Barbara Podoski. Ambassador Petr Kolar spoke of her vivacious personality throughout his tenure at the Embassy and stated at the end of his speech, "She is my hero." Ambassador to the United Nations Martin Palous spoke of her brave and generous spirit as an example to us all. He described her as a dear friend who will truly be missed. Deputy Prime Minister and Czech Minister of Defense Martin Bartak honored her for her many years of service to the Czech Republic. Elizabeth P. McIntosh, formerly of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), described how she had met Barbara and formed a strong bond of friendship which lasted many years.

Barbara Lee Podoski, nee Bozena Hausorova, was born in Brno on April 22, 1914. She studied in France and Czechoslovakia and received her Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from Masaryk University in 1937. She immigrated to the United States in 1941 and soon thereafter was appointed by Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk to serve in the Czechoslovak Legation in Washington. On June 1, 1943, the day she became an American citizen, she enlisted in the U.S. Army and was assigned to the Office of Strategic Services, predecessor of the CIA. She served with the OSS in North Africa and Italy, where she earned the Bronze Star "for meritorious achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy."

Some of her work remained secret until last year, when her OSS records were declassified. While in Italy, she wrote propaganda material and interrogated German prisoners of war. Under questioning in 1944, a Nazi sergeant revealed that Czechs and Slovaks were serving in German units as service troops performing menial tasks. After learning this, she drew up pamphlets in the Czech and Slovak languages urging these men to change sides. Within a week, 600 Czech and Slovak soldiers crossed the Allied lines and surrendered, many of whom had her leaflets in their pockets.

After the war, she helped organize the first Salzburg Music Festival. She worked for twenty years as a research analyst at the Library of Congress and subsequently for nine years in Vienna for the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees and the Tolstoy Foundation. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and up until her death on August 16, 2009, she was of invaluable and often

Photo courtesy of Mary E. Fetzko



Ambassador Petr Kolar and Barbara Podoski



Barbara Podoski on the Charles Bridge in Prague, Czech Republic



Barbara Podoski receiving the Gratias Agit Award at the Embassy of the Czech Republic



Ambassador to the United Nations Martin Palous



Deputy Prime Minister Martin Bartak



Elizabeth McIntosh



Barbara Podoski and Czech President Vaclav Klaus



Barbara Podoski, former Czech President Vaclav Havel, and Ambassador Kolar



Funeral Services at Arlington National Cemetery. Daughter of Barbara Podoski, Marina Lee Bragg, accepts the American flag. Seated next to her is Podoski's granddaughter.

indispensable assistance to the Czech Embassy and its staff.

In 1999, she received the Gratias Agit award from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the occasion of her 95th birthday this year, she was presented with a Presidential Medal.

Barbara Podoski was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on September 22, 2009. She will be greatly missed.

The Embassy would like to thank Charlie Kern for contributing to this article.

Photo courtesy of Mary E. Fetzko

Photo courtesy of Mary E. Fetzko

Photo courtesy of Venonika Lukavova

Czech Avant-Garde Photography Featured at The Phillips Collection

The Phillips Collection currently has on view until February 7, 2010, the exhibition *Object as Subject: Photographs of the Czech Avant-Garde*.

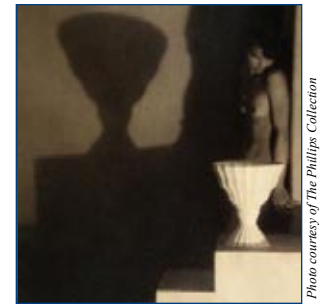
Some of the most innovative approaches to photography were pioneered by the Czech artistic avant-garde in the early decades of the 20th century. After the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, a vibrant cultural life sprang up around Prague, fueling the minds and imaginations of a generation of photographers, including Jaromir Funke, Jaroslav Rossler, and Josef Sudek.

Object as Subject: Photographs of the Czech Avant-Garde examines the important role of objects in the Czech avant-garde's exploration of the formal concerns of abstraction. It presents 30 photographs by 10 Czech photographers, from abstract compositions of the 1920s by Funke and Rossler to surrealist photographs of the 1930s by Adolf Schneeberger and Frantisek Vobecky.

Departing from conventional approaches to still life, Czech photographers experimented with dramatic effects

of light and shadow, bold geometries of line and form, and unusual perspectives.

The American expatriate Man Ray had a profound influence on his Czech contemporaries. Man Ray's radical experiments reached Czechoslovakia in 1922, a time of growing Czech interest in abstract art. Ultimately for the Czech avant-garde, objects provided a laboratory for formal investigations of abstract principles of light, shadow, geometric planes, and space. Within this framework, objects functioned as vehicles for



Frantisek Dritkol,
Nude with Vase, 1927

abstract expression, affirming their powerful role in the creative process.

For additional information, please visit www.phillipscollection.org.

Avalon Theater Presents New Season of Czech Films

The Avalon Theater, in its fourth year of collaboration with the Embassy of the Czech Republic on the *Lions of Czech Film Series*, remains committed to bringing award-winning Czech films to the Washington, DC community. The upcoming selections include an eclectic mix of Czech filmmaking, from a tragic love story that tests a man's strength, to a documentary about two friends exploring their harrowing past, and a film noir about a serial killer. The series runs on the second Wednesday of every month and gives the community an opportunity to view Czech films that are popular hits in Europe. Most of the films have received the prestigious Czech Lion Award, the Czech equivalent of an Academy Award. All of the films have limited distribution in the United States.

January 13, 8 pm



Guard No. 47
Hlidac c. 47

Railway guard Josef Dousa returns from World War I hoping to forget all the horrors of his recent experiences. One day he saves the life of a young man who is about to jump under a train. The man falls in love with Dousa's wife and arouses her passion. Under stress, Dousa is hit by a bout of deafness. When his hearing returns, he does not admit it to anyone—not even his wife. Only with superhuman effort does he withstand the sufferings he must face when, as a “deaf” man, he has to listen to the caustic remarks made by people about him and his wife.

The film is based on motifs from the novel by Josef Kopta, a 20th century Czech writer. (Director: Filip Renc, 2008, 108 min., in Czech with English subtitles)

The Avalon Theatre is located at 5612 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20015. Tickets may be purchased at the box office 30 minutes before the start of the show or online at www.theavalon.org.

February 10, 8 pm



Fighter
(Bojovník)

Fighter follows Jan Weiner and Arnost Lustig, survivors of Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia, as they return to Europe. What Director Bar-Lev first envisions as a historical documentary soon becomes the personal story of the battle between two very different men—one, the bitter, angry fighter, the other, the wise and cynical philosopher. Each has a very different way of dealing with memories of the Holocaust. As they retrace the steps of Weiner's escape from the Nazis, they regale one another with thrilling exploits, revisiting scenes of romance, humor, narrow escapes, and life-or-death confrontations.

(Director: Amir-Bar Lev, 1991, 91 min., in English)

March 10, 8 pm



Normal, The Dusseldorf Ripper
(Normal)

Set in pre-war Europe, 1931, an economic crisis has propelled society into chaos. Young ambitious lawyer Justus Wehner gets his first big case—the defense attorney for brutal serial killer Peter Kurten. Wehner is certain that Kurten suffers from a serious mental disorder. To prove his theory, he decides to sink deep into Kurten's past motivations and psyche. Kurten's beloved wife Marie tells Wehner she doesn't believe her husband could be a violent murderer. Kurten and Marie then slowly begin to manipulate Wehner into participating in a final crime. Wehner will have to fight for victory in a difficult case and for his own soul.

(Director: Julius Sevcik, 2009, 95 min., in Czech with English subtitles)

Czech Events in the U.S.

January 30, 2010
(Boston, MA)

The Second Czech and Slovak Gala Ball will be held at the Fairmont Copley Plaza. For more information, visit www.czskboston.org.

January 31, 2010
(Milwaukee, WI)

Milwaukee Sokol will feature Czech and Slovak Film Series at the Norway House. For more information, visit www.sokol-milwaukee.org/events.html

February 6, 2010
(Oak Brook, IL)

The 52nd Representative Ball will be held at Druhy Lane Oak Brook. For more information, visit www.unitedmoraviansocieties.org/events.html.

March 4–21, 2010
(New York, NY)

The Czechoslovak Marionette Theater will perform “Revolution” at the Theater for the New City. This performance examines revolutions throughout history as a backdrop for the peaceful 1989 Velvet Revolution. Visit www.czechmarionettes.org for more information.

For additional Czech events in the community, visit www.czechevents.net.

Czech Hockey Icon Gives Back to the Community

(Continued from pg. 5)

by Hepatitis A in Russia, I don't have a very fond memory of my stay there."

When asked about his future plans and places where he and his wife would like to settle, he elaborates. "Both my wife Petra and I are huge patriots and our home will always be the Czech Republic, but who knows. It is always nice to have a choice of where we want to settle. The truth is, the older we get, the more attracted we are to returning to our

families and friends in the Czech Republic."

Patrik said that his wife, his family, and friends are his most essential support. They have helped him to achieve his success.

"I was fortunate to be always supported by my family, my wife, and my friends. I am very grateful for their support."



Patrik Elias waits for a pass during a game against the Anaheim Ducks.

Photo courtesy of the New Jersey Devils

SPECIAL THANK YOU: The Embassy of the Czech Republic would like to thank Patrik and Petra Elias for all the work they have done for charities and children throughout the world, as well as for taking the time to share their life story with us through this article.