

CZECH the News

Newsletter of the Embassy of the Czech Republic

Summer 2005

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Havel Promoted Human Rights While in the US

Former Czech President Vaclav Havel and his wife Dagmar stayed two months in the United States on a stipend, granted to Havel by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Even though the primary purpose of his visit was to study and work on his new book, he attended a number of events, informal dinners with U.S. officials, met with dissidents and gave an impressive speech on human rights at the Library of Congress.

During his visit, the former Czech President met, among others, with the President of the United States, George W. Bush,



Vaclav Havel receives a standing ovation at the Library of Congress

former U.S. President Bill Clinton, and President Victor Yushchenko of the Ukraine. On another occasion, Vaclav Havel and former U.S. Secretary of

State Madeleine Albright were joined by students at Georgetown University for an afternoon session of political, (Continued on page 3)

EU Constitution Put on Hold

Just recently, the largest economic bloc in the world set out to accomplish what would have been its greatest feat to date: unifying all 25 European Union Member States under one Constitution. Although many member states had already approved and ratified the new Constitution, the forward progress came to a halt when the French and Dutch citizens voted against the ratification of the Constitution via popular referendum. The European Union's goal of ratifying its first Constitution by 2006 quickly became obsolete; upon reflecting on the rapid developments of the EU in the past year, the bloc was forced to reexamine its priorities and focus on other pressing issues.

The European Constitution was the EU's first, solid attempt to streamline decision-making in an expanded Union, allowing for a more visible role in international affairs. That said, the new Constitution also endeavored to simplify and consolidate all prior treaties, make the institution more transparent and more democratic, leaving a

larger role for European and national Parliaments, as well as promoting the citizens' right to ask the EU to launch new initiatives.

The proposed Constitution merges the three pillars of the former treaties and amendments into one treaty. Included are the Charter of Fundamental Rights and enhanced efforts toward cooperation or structured cooperation in the field of defense. Adjustments in the institutional framework include clarifying respective roles of the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission. Setting Parliament representation to "digressive proportionality" and guaranteeing each Member state at least 6 (up to 96) seats out of the 750 total, defining voting rules, updating the field of Justice and Home Affairs, and increasing transparency and democracy are some general points that are emphasized. The Constitution also outlines the rights of EU citizens, inviting them to petition and be present at legislative Council proceedings, among many others.

The Constitution requires that all 25 member states approve and have ratified the Constitution within their respective States in order for it to "enter into force." The Constitutional Treaty was approved in Brussels on June 18, 2004 and signed by the Member States in Rome on October 29, 2004, with the candidate countries of Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania only signing the Final Act; however, each Member State had yet to ratify the Constitution in their respective country. To do so, each Member State was given two options: to ratify the treaty by referendum or by ratification in national legislatures.

Two types of referenda exist – binding and non-binding. The French decision to reject the Constitution was based on a binding referendum in which the people voted and the outcome was the final decision (69% voter turnout and 55% voting against). In the Netherlands, however, the citizens voted in a non-binding referendum; the (Continued on page 4)

Message from the Ambassador

Dear readers,
The summer season has slowly, but surely prevailed over the spring. For many of my colleagues at the Czech Embassy, this time of the year will mean the "completion of their tour of duty," as we say in our "diplomatic jargon." As a matter of fact, I myself have arrived in Washington almost four years ago, therefore my own posting as Ambassador to the United States will, over some time, also come to an end. My departure, although, is not as imminent as my other colleagues' journey back to the Czech Republic.

Vratislav Janda, who has served as the Deputy Chief of Mission, is bound to return to

Prague at the beginning of July. He will be replaced by Jaroslav Kurfurst, who has previously served as the Head of the Department of Security Policy, where he arrived from his first posting in Moscow. I certainly thank Mr. Janda for his work and achievement toward strengthening and enhancing Czech-American relations, and I wish Mr. Kurfurst good luck in his new endeavor as the second highest ranking Czech diplomat in Washington.

The Head of the Administrative Section, Eduard Metela, is scheduled to leave in the fall. He also deserves a sound "thank you" for all he has done during his tenure. From the Cultural Section, Jakub Skalnik

will soon complete his assignment and leave for Prague. At the Foreign Ministry, he will rejoin the Cabinet of the Minister in a senior position. On top of these senior officials I have mentioned, several other members of my staff are scheduled to leave during the summer and the fall. To everyone leaving the Embassy, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and to all those who are coming to replace them, I sincerely wish good luck and success.

For you, our readers, we have prepared the Summer 2005 edition of Czech the News, featuring highlights of the spring and summer season in bilateral relations, EU events, political



Photo courtesy of Petr Janda

and economic news and also some light reading fit for the next couple of months.

I wish you an enjoyable summer and refreshing vacation.

Yours,

Czech Republic Has a New Government

After the resignation of Stanislav Gross in April, the new Premier, Jiri Paroubek, became the third Social Democrat to head the Czech government since the last parliamentary elections in 2002.

The 52-year old economist has pledged to ratify the new EU constitution and reduce the budget deficit to less than 4 percent of GDP next year to keep the country on track in adopting the Euro (common EU currency) by 2010. Political analysts see Paroubek as a pragmatist ready to cut deals in order to be able to push through his party's legislation.

The center-left Social democrats (CSSD) and its coalition partners, the Christian Democrats (CSL) and the Union



Photo courtesy of Petr Janda

Foreign Minister Svoboda remains in the new government of Prime Minister Paroubek

of Freedom (US), agreed that the new cabinet would include four new names, but that all key ministers remain in their posts.

Current Cabinet of the Czech Republic		
Jiri Paroubek	Prime Minister	www.vlada.cz
Cyril Svoboda	Minister of Foreign Affairs	www.mzv.cz
Bohuslav Sobotka	Minister of Finance	www.mfcr.cz
Zdenek Skromach	Minister of Labor and Social Affairs	www.mpsvc.cz
Pavel Nemecek	Minister of Justice	www.justice.cz
Milan Simonovsky	Minister of Transportation	www.mdcr.cz
Karel Kufnir	Minister of Defense	www.army.cz
Frantisek Bublan	Minister of the Interior	www.mvcr.cz
Milan Urban	Minister of Industry and Trade	www.mpo.cz
Petr Zgarba	Minister of Agriculture	www.mze.cz
Milada Emmerova	Minister of Health	www.mzcr.cz
Petra Buzkova	Minister of Education	www.msmt.cz
Libor Ambrozek	Minister of the Environment	www.erc.cz
Pavel Dostal	Minister of Culture	www.mkcr.cz
Radko Martinek	Minister of Regional Development	www.mmr.cz
Dana Berova	Minister of IT	www.micr.cz
Pavel Zarecky	Minister of the Government	www.vlada.cz
Martin Jahn	Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs	www.vlada.cz

Czech Senator Schwarzenberg Expelled from Cuba

On May 19, Cuban authorities expelled Czech senator Karel Schwarzenberg who arrived there for a meeting organized by the Cuban Association for the Support of Cuban Civic Society (APSC), a dissident umbrella group, devised to push through democratic reform in Cuba. Schwarzenberg said that the police had fetched him in the

hotel, took him to the airport and placed him on a plane. It was the conduct of a totalitarian country, he added. It is unbelievable that one is expelled from a country without having violated the law, Schwarzenberg said.

It is unbelievable that one is expelled from a country without having violated the law, said Schwarzenberg

The Czech senator affirmed that he would continue pushing for human rights in Cuba in spite of his expulsion from the country.

He also said that compared with the fate of Cuban prisoners, of which he

heard during his stay, his expulsion was a trifle.

Schwarzenberg met several dissidents, including Oscar Espinosa and Oswaldo Paya in Cuba. "They are absolutely not extremists, but very reasonable people who work for civic society," he said.

Vaclav Havel Speaks at Library of Congress

“The Emperor Has No Clothes”

As one of the highlights of his visit to the USA, Vaclav Havel addressed a distinguished audience on May 24, at the Library of Congress, with his speech, entitled “The Emperor has No Clothes.”

The former Czech President spoke about his dissident years in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia and about the fight that he and others carried out against the totalitarian regime:

“We took our country’s constitution, its laws and international treaties – and among them, chiefly the Final Act of the Helsinki Agreement – very seriously and we began to demand that the government respect them.”

That was how not only Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia did it, but also Solidarity in Poland, the Helsinki Committees in the Soviet Union, and other opposition groups in the communist countries. Those in power were surprised and caught off guard, and it was hard for them to justify the persecution of those who demanded nothing more than that the authorities respect the rules that they themselves had set. And so a mere appeal to truth began to win out over the police and the

army.”

Vaclav Havel shared his conviction that “we must support in every possible way the people who stand up to dictatorial regimes by taking them at their word and who draw public attention to all the contradictions between words and deeds that are part of these regimes’ daily practice. Such courageous people exist in North Korea, in China, in Belorussia, in Cuba, in Burma, and in other countries as well. We all admire the courageous Aung Sung Su Chi, who believes in democracy and peacefully speaks out against its violent suppression.

Recognition is also due to the remarkable work of the Cuban dissidents, who – to name only one initiative among others – have managed to gather tens of thousands of signatures in support of the Varela project, which takes the law seriously and, in a legal way, demands respect for formally declared principles. Likewise, the Belorussian critics of Lukashenko’s rule deserve both moral and material support. Many such citizens who confront dictatorial regimes, in these peaceful ways, are active on the home front; many others work abroad, and many more are



Vaclav Havel with Pedro Fuentes Cid (left) and Harry Wu (right) at the Library of Congress.

in prison.”

Havel also acknowledged the presence of freedom fighters from the aforementioned countries and concluded by saying that mankind today is “living in a time when a single global civilization embraces our planet, and when the fate of every human being and every society is, more than ever before, the fate of us all. If we care for others, we are, at the same time, caring for ourselves and our children. As someone who years ago experienced first hand the arbitrary rule of a dictatorial regime, but then lived to see better times – to a large extent because of the international solidarity extended to us – I appeal to all those who have the opportunity to act against such arbitrary behavior and to express their solidarity with people and nations who to this day live in a state of unfreedom.”

Havel Promoted Human Rights (Continued)

(Continued from page 1)

cultural and artistic discussion. While in the U.S., Havel also met with World War II veterans, representatives of The American Friends of the Czech Republic and Czech-Americans and Czechs living in the USA.

On May 24, Vaclav Havel gave a lecture on human rights entitled “The Emperor Has No Clothes” at the Library of Congress. The former President spoke about the contradiction between proclamations on human rights and the reality in certain countries in our world.

He criticized the poor human

rights record of nations such as Burma, Belarus, China, Cuba and North Korea, and urged democratic governments around the world to openly support political dissidents in these countries. Following his speech, the Czech Ambassador, Martin Palous, hosted a dinner in honor of Vaclav Havel at the Czech Embassy. Participants at the dinner included several members of U.S. Congress, prominent dissidents from the aforementioned countries, human rights activists, foreign diplomats and other important

figures.

Although very active in Washington’s social and political circles, Vaclav Havel spent most of his time studying and writing at the Library of Congress. He wrote some 150 pages of his new book, which he would like to finish during the summer.

The Havels left the United States with a great feeling of two months well spent and declared upon their departure, that they would love to come back to the USA sometime in the future for another long visit.

News Brief

Czech Republic to issue biometric passports

Czech Republic, along with other EU countries, should be issuing new, the so-called “biometric” travel documents within two years. In two years, biometric data will be included in all newly issued travel documents. These will feature a digital photograph and a fingerprint.

According to the Czech Ministry of the Interior, biometric travel documents are necessary in order to cooperate with foreign countries in monitoring and combating potential terrorist activities. Biometric passports are also required for entry into the USA for countries participating in US Visa Waiver Program.

Bush thanks Klaus for Czech presence in Iraq, Afghanistan

U.S. President George W. Bush thanked Czech President Vaclav Klaus for Czech participation in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan at a reception marking the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in Moscow.

Klaus said that Czech-U.S. relations are very good and that the meeting with Bush was held in a friendly atmosphere. “[Bush] was grateful for the participation of the Czech Republic in a series of activities, especially Afghanistan and Iraq,” Klaus said.

News Brief

Mosnov airport launches regular flights to Munich

Regular international flights from Mosnov airport near Ostrava, North Moravia to Munich were launched in May. There will be two flights between the cities daily and one flight on Sunday. These flights will be operated by Cirrus Airlines in cooperation with Lufthansa and will take about 90 minutes. Mosnov airport is the second largest airport in the Czech Republic after Prague's Ruzyne airport and has been managed by the regional authorities since 2004. The authorities plan to modernize the airport at a cost of about CZK 160 million (USD 6.4 million). The Ostrava-Munich flight is the second direct international flight from an airport other than Prague-Ruzyne.

Government approves 700 mil. crowns in foreign aid for next year

The government approved the use of 700 million (USD 28 million) crowns for foreign aid next year. That is 100 million crowns (USD 4 million) more than was spent this year, according to Prime Minister Paroubek. The aid will be mainly used for example for financing of education programs in Angola, Zambia, Vietnam, Mongolia, Yemen, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Czech Republic, upon joining the EU, promised to gradually increase the amount of foreign aid to 0.33 percent of GDP in 2015.

Czech Republic Has New Envoys at the World Bank and IMF

Just recently, Pavel Frelich was appointed as the new Czech Republic representative to the World Bank. He serves as Senior Advisor to the Executive Director of the group of countries under the Belgium constituency, which includes Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Slovakia and Turkey.

According to Frelich, the unique cooperation with the World Bank that was set up by his predecessor, Jana Matesova, was very successful. His goal, therefore, is to continue in this partnership and to promote further cooperation especially in the priority areas and reforms that are still in progress. Czech Republic has recently "graduated" from borrower status with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and is now in transition from being a recipient of the World Bank's financial and technical assistance to being a relevant partner and provider of development assistance. Pavel Frelich will be responsible for establishing this new relationship with the Bank. Frelich also emphasized his other objective, which is to enhance the flow of information to the Czech exporters and consultants about the possibilities to participate in the World Bank projects and tenders and to make sure that the information will always reach its recipient and boost their chance of success.

Frelich graduated from the Czech Technical University in Prague with an MA degree in 1995. After several years as an economist and financial analyst, he gained a Master's degree in Monetary Economics and Finance at the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom. From 1998 until 2004, he headed the Financial Organizations Unit, International Organizations Department at the Ministry of

Finance of the Czech Republic.

Last winter, Stanislav Polak replaced Jiri Jonas at the International Monetary Fund. Jonas worked at the Fund from 1991 until December 2004. His successor, Polak, now serves as one of the Senior Advisors to the Executive Director of the group of countries under Belgium constituency (organized similarly as in the World Bank).

Stanislav Polak is providing advice on issues of multilateral surveillance, including discussion of the world economic outlook and global financial stability, as well as individual country Article IV consultation. This core activity of the Fund provides the foundation for the members' cooperation in promoting of financial stability and growth of global economy. The current discussion is focused on global economy imbalances and their resolution. Additional aspect of the multilateral surveillance are monitoring capital markets, assessing driving factors of capital flows and evaluating vulnerabilities of financial sectors. His duties also include close participation in bilateral surveillance of the Fund with the Czech Republic. This implies regular and intensive discussion with the Czech authorities within the Article IV consultations.

Since 1990, when he first joined the Czech National Bank (CNB), Polak has gradually acquired experience in the area of monetary policy and macroeconomic analysis. He worked as an Economist, Advisor to the Czech National Bank Board, and Director of the Economic Modeling Division. In 2002, he became the Director of the



Pavel Frelich is the new Czech Republic representative to the World Bank.



Stanislav Polak is a Senior Advisor to the Executive Director of the IMF.

International Economic Analysis Division at the Czech National Bank. Stanislav Polak holds two master's degrees - in Economics (University of Economics in Prague) and a Master's degree in International Affairs from Columbia University in New York.



EU Constitution (Continued)

(Continued from page 3)

Dutch Parliament had agreed that they would respect the will of the people if at least 30% of the eligible voters voted in the referendum and would cast their vote accordingly.

Approximately 62% turned out for the Dutch referendum and nearly 62% voted against ratifying the Constitution; therefore, the Dutch government rejected the Constitution as the official Dutch decision. On the other hand, many countries chose to allow their respective governments to speak for the people without a referendum. Austria, Belgium, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Slovenia all approved the Constitution via their national legislatures; while Spain and the Netherlands utilized a non-binding referendum and France's decision was based solely on a referendum. All other Member States have not yet ratified the Constitution.

Czech Ice Hockey Team

Wins World Championship

Ice hockey, no doubt, is the most popular sport among Czechs. The Olympic tournaments and World Championships are celebrated as if they were national holidays. The streets are abandoned and quiet. Meanwhile, homes, bars, and pubs are packed, and every single TV set is turned on. All Czechs keep their fingers crossed for their national team.

This year, though, has been even more special. The last time the Czech Team won the tournament was four years ago, in 2001 (see Czech the News, June 2001).



Former President Vaclav Havel, Ambassador Martin Palous, and dozens of fans watch the final match of the ice-hockey world championship at the Embassy.

The Czech Republic beat Canada and secured the gold.

On Sunday, May 15, the Czech Republic won the world ice hockey championship in Vienna, Austria. More than 30,000 people gathered at Old Town Square in Prague to watch

the final game on a giant screen. As the Czech players triumphed over Canada, everybody around the country rejoiced and praised the players, who instantly became icons for many young boys who would like to become sport stars one day as well.

At the Czech Embassy in Washington, almost 200 people gathered to watch the final game. Former President Vaclav Havel, who happened to be in Washington at that time, joined the crowd in watching the game and celebrating the victory. This year's title is the fifth for the Czech Republic during the last ten years.

History of the Czech Olympic Movement

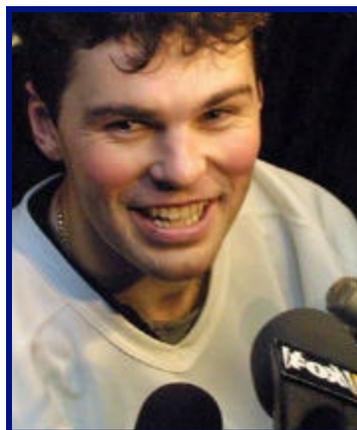
Although the Czech Republic is not a large country, we have had many successes at the Olympic Games. Probably the best known Czech Olympians are Emil Zatopek, who triumphed in Helsinki, and a seven-time gold medalist, outstanding gymnast Vera Caslavská, who became world-famous after the Games in Tokyo. The most valuable contemporary Olympic victory is by all means the triumph of our ice hockey team in Nagano in 1998.

The Czech Olympic Committee was founded at the end of nineteenth century. Jiri Guth, a high school teacher in the south Bohemian town of Klatovy met Pierre Coubertin, the founder of modern Olympic Games, while he was on a study trip to Paris. The two soon became life-long friends. Coubertin invited Guth to take part in the congress founding the first Olympic Games, but initially the Czechs failed to grasp the

importance of the emerging Olympic movement, and did not attend. Seeing individual nations' flags raised high, Guth realized the mistake they made. He returned home and founded a permanent Olympic Committee. At that time, the Czech lands were still part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Committee was still Czech, nevertheless, because until 1914 athletes competed along the lines of ethnicity, rather than state.

During World War I, Guth and others were pressured to disband the Olympic Committee. In 1921, three years after the founding of Czechoslovakia, the Committee was reinstated and existed until the beginning of the next war. During WW II, the Committee was dissolved again.

The Committee was reinstated once again in nineteen forties. Unfortunately, the communists abused Olympic values and made sporting victories a



Jaromir Jagr is probably the best known Czech ice-hockey player in the world of all time.

showcase of their regime.

Finally, 50 years later, in 1989, the Czech Olympic Committee was restored to its full authority. Today, it is more dedicated than ever and Czechs can still boast some of the best athletes in the world in both winter and summer sports. The Czech Olympic Committee has today one major goal – to run for the Games and to host the Summer Olympic Games in Prague.

News Brief

Ceska zbrojovka to launch a control system to prevent arms reexports

The Czech arms producer Ceska zbrojovka Uhersky Brod is considering the launch of a control system that would prevent potential reexports of arms to customers or countries other than those appearing on the license issued by the Czech Republic. Before signing a contract the client will have to agree with potential checks to prove the ownership of arms or further trade. Consent with the checks would apparently be required from larger customers in problem regions. Ceska zbrojovka, a major world producer of fire arms, exports products to about 100 countries on all continents.

Czech National Museum launches an internet portal about the most notable Czechs & Slovaks in history

The National Museum launched a new portal entitled "People for Europe" (www.peopleforeurope.cz) featuring on-line information and interactive features that bring notable Czechs and Slovaks to life in Czech, Slovak, English or Italian. The National Museum is hoping it will prove a useful tool for both students and fans of history alike. The site also features virtual exhibits from the National Museum, as well as affiliated organizations, which can be easily viewed through the so-called FSI viewer, allowing 360 degree rotation. Clearly the project has great potential and is a first significant step by organizations like the National Museum to enter the digital age.

Business Buzz

Czech GDP to grow over a 4 pct in 2005, 2006

In May, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has published its biannual outlook for Czech Republic. The experts expect the Czech Republic's GDP growth at 4.1 pct this year and 4.3 pct in 2006 (against 4 pct last year). In the document, the OECD calls for speeding up of structural reforms and an improvement of the business environment in the country. Unemployment rate will remain at 8.3 pct and fall to 8.2 pct next year, while the inflation should rise to 2.5 pct this year and 2.8 pct next year (compared to 2 pct last year). Exports should continue to grow at a fast pace; the OECD predicts a growth of 12.2 pct for this year and 12.4 pct for next year. Investments will grow by a strong 8 pct annually.

Czechs meeting Maastricht criteria but growing slower

The Czech Republic was the only one of the four new central European EU members to meet three of the four Maastricht criteria for the adoption of the EURO. As a result, Czechs posted a slower growth, the Czech Statistical Office says in an analysis of macroeconomic development released. Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary grew faster although their inflation was also faster. On the other hand, the Czech Republic has succeeded in maintaining stable prices, met the criterion for interest rates and last year cut public budget deficit under 3 pct of GDP, from 12 pct the year before.

Prague, Sixth Most Visited City in Europe

Tourism is a huge industry in Prague and the rest of the Czech Republic.

Millions of people from all around the world visit the city every year - almost three and a half million in 2004, according to figures just released by Czech Tourism. Prague was the sixth most visited city in Europe last year.

For many years, the largest number of tourists was pouring in from neighboring Germany. In 2004, though, they were overtaken by the Brits, almost 600,000 of whom visited the "city of a thousand spires". This change is being attributed to the wide availability of inexpensive flights to Prague from many British cities.



Photo courtesy of the Czech Tourism Authority

Prague Named Best 'Region' for Business

An independent London-based consultancy firm, the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), has said Prague tops its rankings as the most attractive place to do business in Europe. The CEBR index evaluates economic growth prospects for each of the

233 regions in Europe, the level of education of each region's population and its market size. Eastern European regions score generally well above the EU average in terms of growth prospects and in offering investors a plentiful supply of highly skilled labor.

Culture: Sokol Slet in Chicago

On June 21 - 25, 2005, the American Sokol in Berwyn, Illinois, hosted the XXI. "American Sokol Slet" in the Chicago area. The organizers of this international physical fitness and gymnastics competition ("slet" means "gathering" in Czech) invited participants from all over the world to take part in festivities at Morton West Hoffman Stadium, Berwyn, IL, Palos Park and in the Oak Brook area of the state of Illinois. Events included artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, swimming, fitness challenge, team calisthenics, running, volleyball, games and plenty of other activities. All of these activities were open for public view. And of course, social events, such as banquet and awards ceremony, were organized as well.

American Sokol Slet is organized once every four years. In 2005, the American Sokol celebrated their 140th anniversary in the United States. This year's festival of gymnastics and sport in the "Chicagoland" area proved to be a success, thanks to the effort of organizers and thanks to the enthusiasm of more than 500 participants of

the Slet as well as spectators, who joined the sportsmen and sportswomen in their gathering.

American Sokol is a multi-faceted organization guiding its members throughout life, from early youth through maturity, to physical and moral health, good citizenship and responsible patriotism, combined with continuous self-improvement. This goal is pursued through general physical fitness activities, gymnastics and sports, as well as varied cultural and social activities.

Sokol was founded in 1862 in the Czech lands which later became Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic and Slovak Republic). The Sokol organization continues today in the United States as a vital, thriving entity. Based on founder Dr. Miroslav Tyrš' credo of "A Sound Mind in a Sound Body" the member units of the American Sokol offer physical training in gymnastics and other athletics, as well as providing cultural awareness and family oriented activities. Sokol's first unit in America was started in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1865.

If you are looking for a safe



place for children to learn personal discipline, physical fitness and gymnastic skills, song and dance, Sokol is ready and waiting for them. Sokol units offer gym classes and social activities for teenagers, too! Still feeling competitive in your 20's, 40's or 60's? Sokol has a place for you, too! Instead of going over the hill, you can be going over the vault. Sokol activities vary from unit to unit. Most offer a wide range of classes in the gym and some have dance, twirling or language classes. Sokol units sponsor dance groups, volleyball teams, gym classes, dinners, dances and other activities for adults. No one is too old for Sokol.

Next summer, Prague will host the XIV. "All-Sokol Slet" in the Czech Republic, birthplace of the Sokol movement.

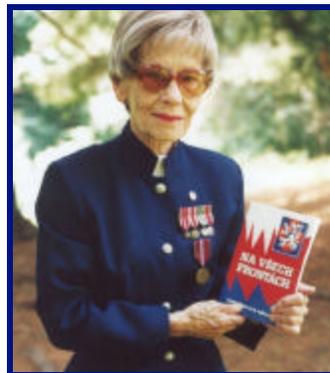
Liberation of Plzen by US Armed Forces, 1945

Thanks to the 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia people of Plzen can again raise their beer mugs – toasting the American Army that liberated their city in May 1945. And the US Forces were quite ready to do more: an OSS team headed by Lt. Eugene Fodor came all the way to the country's capital where he was approached by the military commander of the Prague Uprising against the Germans. The commander asked for US help – so Fodor took him to USHQ in Plzen to meet general Patton. Patton listened, then consulted with his superiors, General Bradley and General Eisenhower. But that request for “green light” to reach the Czech

capital was denied – the US Forces “halt line” through Plzen was declared mandatory.

In May 1990 Eugene Fodor was a guest of Plzen's mayor Loukota – and so was another OSS veteran, Barbara L. Podoski. The city in those days was flooded with US Armed Forces veterans wearing insignia of their World War II units. And 5 years later, Plzen was at it again – this time festivities took place around two monuments erected to express Czechoslovak people's gratitude – one reads “Thank you, America,” the other “Diky, Ameriko.”

In the year 2000 and this past May, 2005, the city of Plzen paid tribute to America again – huge crowds of local residents



Barbara Lee Podoski

gathered around the two monuments, joined by thousands of visitors, all sharing respect, gratitude and love for the USA. Washingtonian OSS World War II veteran Barbara L. Podoski was one of them.

Exhibit:

Commemorating 60th Anniversary of Western Bohemia by US Armed Forces

Contributed by: Peter Rafaeli

Spring House, PA, June 2, 2005: The Consulate General of the Czech Republic-Philadelphia in cooperation with the Czech Center in New York City, the Czech & Slovak Heritage Association and the International House in Philadelphia will open a photo exhibit titled “...and along came freedom.” The exhibit will be open from June 10 until July 8,

2005 at the lobby of International House, 3701 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA.

The exhibit depicts scenes from 1945 when U.S. and Belgian armed forces, under the command of U.S. Army General George Patton, liberated Western Bohemia, including the cities of Plzen, Cheb, Domazlice and Rokycany from Nazi occupation which began about six years earlier. The neg-

atives of many, if not all, of the photographs on display had to be hidden between 1948 and 1989 from the Communist Secret Police. The Communist government of Czechoslovakia wanted to give the impression that all of Czechoslovakia was liberated by the Soviet Army. All monuments erected in honor of the Americans, except one, were demolished.

Remembering Jan Werich, 100 Years After His Birth

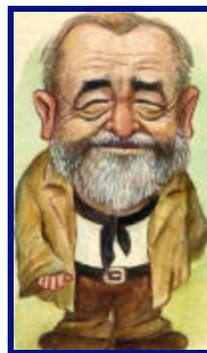
Jan Werich, a legendary Czech actor, is best known for his theatre performances, but he also appeared in many films and wrote a number of books. Werich would have turned 100 in February. Looking back, Werich's life and work seem to have faithfully mirrored the twists and turns of history that the whole Czech nation went through in the 20th century.

Jan Werich was born in Prague in 1905. In school he met his future stage partner, Jiri Voskovec, with whom he wrote many plays from absurd drama to grim political satire between 1927 and 1938, when the two actors and writers were forced into exile. They left for the United States together with the

talented composer Jaroslav Jezek who wrote music for their plays. Jaroslav Jezek died in 1942, Jiri Voskovec returned back to the United States after the war and Jan Werich decided to stay in communist Czechoslovakia.

He found a new stage partner, Miroslav Hornicek, who took over the parts previously played by Voskovec. The pre-war satires were no less relevant in the communist days and even took on new meanings that the audiences understood and appreciated.

After the Soviet invasion in 1968 Jan Werich had limited opportunities to perform in public. After he signed a pro-reform manifesto in 1972 he was completely banned from the public life. In the end, Werich suc-



Caricature of Jan Werich

cumbed to communist authorities pressure. In 1977, three years before his death he appeared at a meeting of artists condemning the Charter 77 human rights manifesto. Despite his controversial political stances, in modern-day Czech mythology Jan Werich became a symbol of anti-communist resistance through wit and intelligent humor.

Business Buzz

Cesky Telecom sold to Spain's Telefonica



The Czech government sold its controlling stake in Cesky Telecom to Spain's Telefonica in a deal that was finalized this June. The price - 3.5 billion US dollars - was considerably higher than expected, which reflects the confidence of the buyer that the Czech Republic and the telecom market in the Czech Republic and central Europe is going to prove to be profitable. The sell-off is the last major privatization of the post-communist era.

Czech car industry raised sales

Domestic producers of cars and car components raised their sales by 14 pct last year to \$15bn, a growth of 50 pct since the year 2000. As soon as the Toyota Peugeot Citroën Automobile (TPCA) car plant in Kolin, Central Bohemia begins to operate at full capacity, the Czech Republic will join Belgium as Europe's leading car maker by per capita output. This year, the Czech Republic will have an annual production capacity of 800,000 cars, of which Skoda Auto produces 500,000 and TPCA manufactures 300,000 units. Bus makers Karosa and SOR Libchavy, and truck makers Tatra and Avia are other big players in the sector. The car industry has a share of 20 pct in Czech exports.

Congratulations!

2005 Gratias agit Award laureates!

Vera and Petr Bisek
(New York)

Jerry Elzner
(Corpus Christi, Texas)

Czech Komensky Club
(University of
Nebraska-Lincoln)

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Celebrating their Anniversary

40 years
Moravian Cultural Society
(Chicago, IL)

Journey: A Novel of America

About Czech Immigrants in Chicago and Frontier Montana

Journey: A Novel of America is the inspiring and sprawling story of a Czech-American family's determined struggle and unforgettable odyssey – from the hunger and hardship of Eastern Europe at the turn of the century, across the cold and gray Atlantic in steerage, and on into America's growing cities and isolated farms.

The Novaks survive and grow through love and loss, peace and war, epidemic and depression, in a strange and wondrous new land far from home – a young and raw America immersed in the restless throes of change.

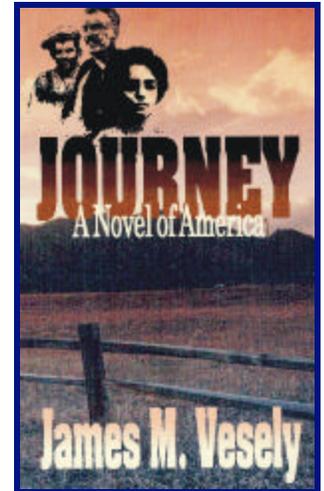
“Journey” is a great, new family saga of turmoil, heart-break, and humor – with characters as vivid and colorful as the rich, American landscape of the last hundred years.

New Mexico author, James M. Vesely's most recent novel is a historical novel covering nearly a hundred years in the fortunes of a Czechoslovakian-American immigrant family.

“Journey” tells the courageous and inspiring story of the Novaks, a closely-knit Czech family who immigrate to America at the turn of the century. Most of the Novaks settle in Chicago, but their oldest son, Ondrej, leaves the big city to homestead a farm in frontier Montana.

The author set most of his novel in the old Czech neighborhoods of Pilsen and Lawndale in Chicago, where he was raised, as well as on the banks of the Marias River, north of Fort Benton, and near the fictional small settlement of New Edom, Montana.

The novel can be ordered



at: Barnes & Noble or Borders Books & Music as well as the Internet at:

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