

## AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Fall 2007

NEWSLETTER

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# Visa Waiver Bill Signed into Law

## Further Work Remains to Achieve Visa Waiver for Czech Citizens

On August 3, 2007, President Bush signed Homeland Security Bill H. R. 1, "Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007." This bill contains new legislation for Visa Waiver Program (VWP) participants and increases U.S security.

The H. R. 1 bill establishes a new electronic travel authorization system to improve the security for visitors for the 27 members of the VWP and will do so for any future members.

The bill will potentially permit the Czech Republic to be a member through a clause of exception to the Visa Waiver Program requirements. The Secretary of Homeland Security is permitted to allow countries to become members without meeting the current requirements if the country meets four other requirements that are stated in the bill. *Continued on Page 5.*

# Czechs Honor Sir Nicholas Winton

## AFoCR is Co-Organizer of Events for Unsung Savior of Czech Children

A memorable and highly emotional visit by Sir Nicholas Winton to Prague occurred October 6-12, 2007. Winton, now 98, as a 29-year-old private British citizen organized the rescue of 669 mostly Jewish Czech children immediately before the outbreak of WWII. His achievement was unrecognized until 1988 when his wife found lists of the children in an attic.

Winton's visit to Prague, accompanied by his daughter and son, came at the invitation of Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg. He was also invited by former President Václav Havel to attend Forum 2000 as the sole Guest of Honor. In addition he was received by Czech President Václav Klaus and Prague's Lord Mayor Pavel Bém and was decorated by the Czech Minister of Defense Vlasta Parkanová.

On a visit to Prague in late 1938, Winton saw first hand the plight of refugees, predominantly Jews from Germany and the Sudetenland, and organized the "Czech Kindertransport." Back in London, he raised funds, recruited foster parents, and obtained entry permits for the children. *Continued on Page 5.*

# Woodrow Wilson Returns to Prague

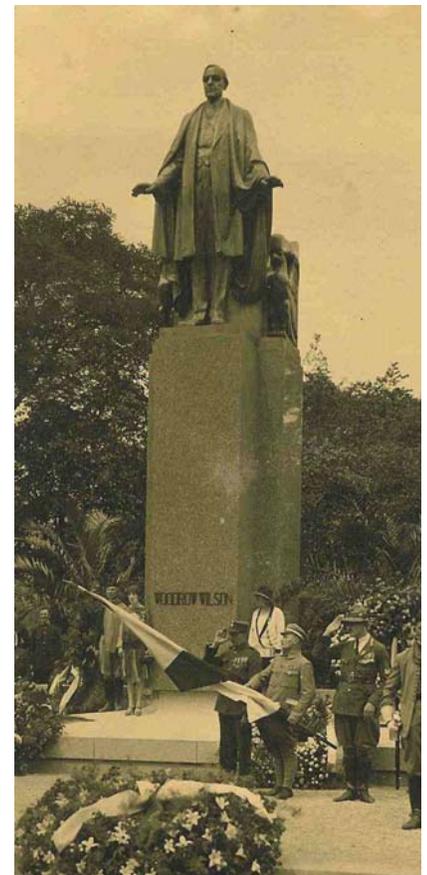
## AFoCR to Rebuild Monument Destroyed by Germans in 1941

AFoCR initiated and is leading a campaign to reestablish the monument to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson in Prague. The monument once stood facing "Wilson Station", Prague's main train station. Assisted by Czech Ambassador Petr Kolař, AFoCR in June 2006 proposed the project to Prague Lord Mayor Pavel Bém, who responded enthusiastically. The Prague City Council approved the restoration plan in August 2007 and designated AFoCR to work with the city to accomplish it.

"We want to rebuild the monument for many different reasons. Firstly, because of our respect for Woodrow Wilson, and, secondly, because of respect for our friends in the United States and for our emigrants," said Mayor Bém.

The original monument, dedicated on July 4, 1928, by President Tomáš G. Masaryk, was initiated and funded by Americans of Czech descent, led by Thomas Capek of New York. It was rendered by Albin Polasek, the Moravian-born sculptor who headed the sculpture department at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1920 to 1950. The larger-than-life-sized bronze stood on a granite base inscribed with the Wilson quote, "The world must be made safe for democracy" in both Czech and English.

Upon the Pearl Harbor attack and the U.S. declaration of war on Germany, the monument was destroyed during the night of December 10, 1941, on the order of the infamous Reinhard Heydrich, the "Reich Protector" of Nazi-occupied Czech territory. *Continued on Page 5.*



Wilson Monument Dedication  
July 4, 1928

## A Message from Ambassador Kolář

Dear American Friends,

Czechs and Americans have a long history of excellent relations. The United States was present at the creation of our first Republic, and subsequently helped liberate us from oppression. America also has been a refuge for Czech immigrants during difficult times in European history. Those immigrants helped build the United States into the country it is now. In short, Czechs and Americans are more than friends, we are family. Today, our nations are close allies, sharing the same values and jointly upholding the principles of democracy, freedom, and human rights.

In this new era when our shared core values are being challenged, never has there been a more important time to expand and strengthen Czech-American ties than now. American Friends of the Czech Republic (AFoCR) is essential to creating new connections and reaching out to friends in communities all across America. I applaud and support the AFoCR effort to enlarge its national membership to include many new and diverse members who represent all facets of the U.S.-Czech connection. With its new national initiative to expand the family of American friends, AFoCR is the platform where we can all meet and share our close community. Diversifying and growing the ranks of AFoCR will enrich our personal, cultural, and business partnerships while reinforcing the Czech-U.S. friendship.

Thank you for supporting AFoCR in its new outreach to all members of our Czech-American family. Your efforts help strengthen the very precious bond shared by our two nations.

Warm regards,

Petr Kolář



AFoCR Director Phillip Kasik, Czech Embassy DCM Jaroslav Kurfürst, AFoCR Director Robert Doubek, and Czech Ambassador Petr Kolář (l to r)

## Message from Peter Rafaeli AFoCR Vice-President

Dear Friends of the Czech Republic!

This extended newsletter details for you some of our recent successes and also tells you about our plans for the future.

Our future plans are outlined in the article "A New Vision for the American Friends of the Czech Republic," which sets our goal to become an expanded national organization. Some of us describe it as the "de-Washingtonization" of the organization by enlisting our supporters in the various regions of the U.S. We plan on having regional representatives, some of whom will serve on our Board as well as the Executive Committee, which plans and runs our day-to-day operations.

This year's Board Meeting will be held in Washington, DC on October 25<sup>th</sup>, which coincides with the Czech National Holiday reception hosted by Ambassador Petr Kolář at the Czech Embassy. At the meeting, the Board will elect officers for the coming year.

Michael Rokos resigned as AFoCR president as of June 30, 2007, and we hope to elect a new President soon. We thank Michael for his many years of service to AFoCR, and we are looking forward to his continued Board membership.

Some of our activities in recent times include: continued care and maintenance of the T.G.Masaryk Memorial in Washington, DC, ongoing educational efforts in support of visa-free travel to the U.S. for Czech citizens, support of the formation of a "Czech Caucus" in Congress, facilitation of financial support for a number of charitable efforts in the U.S. and the Czech Republic (creation of a monument to victims of Communism in Washington, DC, and Czech projects supporting soup kitchens, Charles University, Jewish Museum in Prague and others). We are coming to a successful conclusion on the U.S. version of the Nicholas Winton Educational Project.

We are also cooperating with the City of Prague on re-erecting President Wilson's Monument at the main railroad station in Prague, also known as "Wilson Station". For details on the Wilson Statue Project please visit our web site at

[http://www.afocr.org/event/wilson/wilson\\_project.pdf](http://www.afocr.org/event/wilson/wilson_project.pdf).

We look forward to your continued support of AFoCR. We hope that you will be able to assist in us becoming a more national proactive organization as well as expanding our programs in support of charitable causes. Thank you!

### Amb. Graber Speaks at Reception in Milwaukee

Ambassador Richard W. Graber, visiting in his native state, spoke at a reception held at the University Club in Milwaukee in August. Sponsored by the Law Firm of Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren S.C., prominent Wisconsin political and business leaders attended, including Mayor of Milwaukee Thomas Barnett. The Ambassador's speech was entitled "Business and Political Update on Center Europe". During his remarks, Ambassador Graber highlighted several major areas as being most critical to the Czech-U.S. relationship.

The first issue involved the U.S. request to install a radar system in the Czech Republic. Though the missile delivery system would be located in Poland, this initiative would include installation of a radar system in the Czech Republic to detect missile launches from the Middle East. Czech concerns arise from basic interference with day-to-day activities in the proposed areas as well as objections to having U.S. troops based on Czech soil.

The second issue is the visa waiver program, which the Ambassador sees eventually becoming a reality. The first step towards improving the situation for the Czechs will be to raise the rejection criteria

### Beyond the

which should make it easier to qualify for the Visa Waiver program,

### Conference and Exhibit on 1968 to Be Held in Cedar Rapids

In recognition of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Prague Spring, the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library (NCSML) announces a conference March 6, 7 & 8, 2008 titled *1968 – 1980: Prague Spring*.

## Winton Recognized in Congress

On July 31, 2007, the Office of Congressman Tom Lantos conducted an open forum in the U.S. Congress to honor Raoul Wallenberg and Nicholas Winton, two men who saved the lives of thousands of European Jews before and during World War II. Raoul Wallenberg saved an estimated 100,000 Hungarian Jews while Sir Nicholas Winton saved 669 Jewish and non-Jewish Czech children from Nazi persecution.

The Forum included a 20-minute screening of the documentary "The Power of Good," depicts the story of Nicholas Winton saving the 669 Czech children as well as highlights the lives some of them went on to live.

Some of the guest speakers included: Mr. Peter Rafaeli, Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic in Philadelphia, PA and Acting President of AFoCR, Jaroslav Kurfurst, Deputy Ambassador of the Czech Republic, and people who Wallenberg and Winton saved: Alice Masters, Nejamin Abeles, and Kayla Kaufman.

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs unanimously approved House Resolution 583 to honor Nicholas Winton and those who helped with his rescue effort. Congress passed the Resolution on September 17.



Congressman Lantos, Mrs. Alice Masters, a Winton Child, and Peter Rafaeli at ceremony on Capitol Hill.

*Photo by Congr. Lantos' Staff*

House Resolution 583 states that:

"The House of Representatives commends Sir Nicholas Winton and those British and Czechoslovakian citizens who worked with him, for their remarkable persistence and selfless courage in saving the lives of 669 Czechoslovak Jewish children in the months before the outbreak of World War II, and urges men and women everywhere to recognize in Winton's remarkable humanitarian effort the difference that one devoted principled individual can make in changing and improving the lives of others."

## Masaryk Commemorated

On September 18, a memorial ceremony commemorating the life and death of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk was held at Masaryk Memorial in Washington, DC. The ceremony honored the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Masaryk on September 14, 1937. The ceremony consisted of wreath-laying by Ambassador Petr Kolař and Slovak Ambassador Rastislav Kacer as well as flower laying by Peter Rafaeli and Robert Doubek.



Ambassador Petr Kolař at Masaryk Memorial

*Photo by Daniel Novy*

## Czech Caucus Created

This month through the efforts of Ambassador Petr Kolar and Congressmen, a Congressional Czech Caucus has been established in Washington. The Caucus has been created to promote stronger relations and cultural connections between the United States and the Czech Republic, as well as to strengthen the alliance between the two countries. U.S. Representative Joe Barton stated, "The Czech Caucus allows us to formally recognize the influence of Czech culture on our nation, while enhancing our relationship with the Czech Republic."

## Potomac

*Normalization, and Charter 77.* This is the fifth in a series of Czech and Slovak History and Culture Conferences examining the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Retrospect that has been organized and presented by the NCSML since 1999.

The conference is in conjunction with an original exhibit entitled *1968*, scheduled to open March 6, 2008 through January 25, 2009.

The *1968* exhibit will explore that

extraordinary year in the former Czechoslovakia, set in the context of a chronology of major events throughout the world. This is the only exhibition in the United States devoted to Prague Spring on its 40th anniversary.

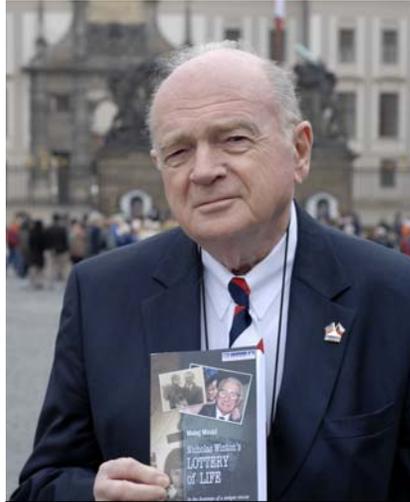
To be placed on the conference mailing list, please email [Jan@NCSML.org](mailto:Jan@NCSML.org). You may check the NCSML web site for more details: [www.NCSML.org](http://www.NCSML.org).

## Historic Czechoslovak Agreement to be Displayed at Pittsburgh's Heinz Museum

On September 9, the Slovak League of America presented the original Pittsburgh Agreement to the Heinz History Center for permanent display. The Pittsburgh Agreement which permitted the Slovaks and Czechs to form their own democratic state was signed in downtown Pittsburgh in 1918. AFoCR Vice-President Peter Rafaeli and Director Mike Rokos attended the ceremony held to mark the occasion.

# Winton Book Published and Distributed in U.S.

Several years ago, AFoCR decided to establish the Nicholas Winton Educational Project. The two goals of this project were to import from the Czech Republic to the United States the highly successful Winton Educational Program and to inform all levels of the U.S. government about the actions and achievements of Nicholas Winton in Prague during the years 1938-39.



Peter Rafaeli, translator of "Lottery of Life", the story of Nicholas Winton's Heroic Effort to Save Czech Children  
*Photo by Petr Matička*

Since the creation of the Nicholas Winton Educational Project, those goals have been met and much more. The first achievement was the translation into English by AFoCR of the Czech study book "Nicholas Winton's Lottery of Life". The book focuses on WWII, the Holocaust and Winton's heroic efforts in saving the lives of 669 Jewish children. The book also focuses on 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the Czech Republic and Europe.

Next came the effort to raise funds to print sufficient copies of the book, so that it could be distributed to educational institutes

throughout the United States free of charge, except for shipping. Those funds were raised through the generous efforts of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and concerned Americans, so that publication is now underway for 17,000 copies.

**If any education institution is interested in obtaining copies of the book, "Nicholas Winton's Lottery of Life", please contact Peter Rafaeli at: 215-646-7777**

# A New Vision for AFoCR

In August 2007, the AFoCR Executive Committee developed *A New Vision for American Friends of the Czech Republic*, which outlines a number of changes in the focus and goals of the organization. In the vision, it is noted that AFoCR is the "only American organization specifically devoted to promoting Czech-U.S. ties and advocating for the Czech people." The key change in the AFoCR vision lies in developing a national scope for the organization.

In describing the change, AFoCR founding Director Robert Doubek noted that since its creation in 1995, AFoCR has been Washington-based. With the new vision, AFoCR will establish chapters throughout the U.S. that are led by Regional Representatives. AFoCR, having built its strength and reputation in Washington, D.C., now needs to expand to all of the U.S. to fulfill its mission of education and advocacy.

AFoCR will continue to maintain a website, publish a newsletter, provide Washington representation at the Embassy and Capitol Hill, and pursue major projects such as the Masaryk Memorial and the Wilson Monument in Prague, but AFoCR will expand its initiatives to the national stage. The website will provide local state contact and advocacy. The organization will also support events throughout the country.

Recognizing that the Czech Republic is now a thriving, prosperous country and a vital U.S. friend and ally, it is time for its American friends and supporters to unite under a common umbrella in order to strengthen the relationship and gain the benefits of exposure to Czech history, culture, business and society. American Friends of the Czech Republic is the organization that is poised to realize this exciting vision.



Peter Rafaeli presenting a Pennsylvania Senate Congratulatory Message in Prague, with copies of the book published by AFoCR  
*Photo credit: ČTK*



Sir Nicholas Winton in Prague with Czech Children, President Klaus Ambassador Petr Kolář and AFoCR Vice-President Peter Rafaeli gathered in his Honor  
*Photo credit: ČTK and, Zuzana Mináčova*

## Visa Waiver Initiative

*Continued from Cover Page.*

To be considered for the exception, countries applying must submit a viable plan to meet the current requirements within three years, have made significant progress in reducing its nonimmigrant visa refusal rate in the previous two years, prove that waiver of the requirements will not compromise U.S. security or welfare, and continue to fully cooperate in counterterrorism and information sharing initiatives.

The Washington embassies of the six members of the Coalition for Visa Equality released the following joint statement:

“The Embassies of the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia appreciate the bipartisan efforts of the U.S. Administration and Members of both chambers of Congress to modernize and expand the United States Visa Waiver Program through provisions in H. R. 1, “Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007,” recently signed by President Bush.”

The Czech Republic and the five other members of the Coalition for Visa Equality plan to continue to work for a visa policy that acknowledges their common goals as well as their strong alliance with the United States.

## Winton Honored

*Continued from Cover Page.*

From March through August 1939 he brought eight trains. A ninth train with 250 more children, scheduled to leave on September 3, 1939, was blocked when Britain that day entered the war. A documentary about him, “The Power of Good,” directed by Matej Mináč, won the Emmy Award in 2002. Mináč also made a feature film about him called “All My Loved Ones” in 1998. One child saved was a cousin of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

AFoCR’s activities in the U.S. on the part of Winton led to a special letter to him from President Bush in July 2006 and passage of H.R. 583 by the U.S. House of Representatives in his honor. AFoCR Vice President Peter Rafaeli translated from Czech the book by Matej Mináč, “Nicholas Winton’s Lottery of Life,” and AFoCR is publishing it and distributing 17,000 copies free of charge to educational institutions nationwide.

Activities in Prague also included a two-hour event attended by over 3000, including 2700 school children, at the Prague Congress Center. The program, with performances by two orchestras and a large children’s choir, was carried by Czech Television nationwide. The following day Winton was hosted at a luncheon by British Ambassador to the Czech Republic Linda Duffield. Attendees included some of the former “Winton children”, Matej Mináč and AFoCR’s Peter Rafaeli. That evening a dinner was hosted by Grand Hotel Bohemia. The visit was covered by all major Czech newspapers.

On Thursday, October 11, U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic Richard Graber hosted a reception at his residence, where he presented Winton with an original of H.R. 583 and read a letter from Congressman Ron Klein (FL), the bill’s lead sponsor. Peter Rafaeli then presented a congratulatory proclamation from the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and copies of the U.S. edition of “Nicholas Winton’s Lottery of Life.”

It was a remarkable and emotional week. AFoCR is proud to bring the Nicholas Winton Educational Program to the American public.

## Woodrow Wilson Monument

*Continued from Cover Page.*

Heydrich was later assassinated by Czech commandos flown from England.

On July 4, 1946, at a ceremony addressed by Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, a plaque was installed on the monument’s base. In both Czech and English, it read: “From 1928 there stood on this place a monument in honor of Woodrow Wilson, President of the U.S.A. This monument was destroyed by the Germans in 1941 and will be re-erected by Americans of Czech descent in U.S.A.” The monument was completely removed after the 1948 communist coup.

The new statue will be an exact replica of the original, but the base, pedestal and location may be different because the original site was altered by construction in the 1970’s. AFoCR currently is working with the city to find an appropriate site and will shortly issue a request for proposals to American and Czech sculptors for the work of recreating the statue.

The budget for the project is \$1,000,000, and it is scheduled to be ready in 2009, upon completion of the renovation of Wilson Station, which is currently under way. It is being guided for AFoCR by Director Robert Doubek, who was project director for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. More information is available on the AFoCR website.



Sir Nicholas Winton, Czech President Václav Klaus, and AFoCR Vice-President Peter Rafaeli (l to r). Photo by Zuzana Mináčová



Praha, Prag, Prague.

Wilson Station and the Woodrow Wilson Monument  
From 1928 to 1941

Photo courtesy of City of Prague