



AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Summer 2005

Newsletter

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Wall of Honor Moving Ahead

AFoCR announced plans to move forward on the Masaryk Memorial Wall of Honor. The Wall of Honor was established to recognize those who contributed significantly to the Masaryk Memorial, dedicated by President Havel in September 2002.

The Wall of Honor is being placed at the Embassy of the Czech Republic through the joint efforts of the Czech Embassy and AFoCR with assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previously delayed due to a major Embassy renovation project, the Wall of Honor is now moving ahead and is on schedule for installation in fall 2005, with a formal dedication ceremony set for October 28, 2005.

New contributions will continue to be accepted and will be included in determining eligibility for recognition on the Wall of Honor. New contributions will be combined with previous contributions to the Masaryk Memorial to determine the level of recognition. New contributions to the Masaryk Memorial Fund will support educational grants for students, young leaders and university organizations cooperating with AFoCR's Masaryk Educational programs.

The contribution recognition levels for placement on the Wall of Honor are as follows:

- *Legionnaire Level* (\$2,000)
- *Liberator Level* (\$5,000)
- *Presidential Level* (\$10,000)
- *Ambassador Level* (\$25,000)
- *Century Level* (\$100,000)

Contributors at each level can specify a special dedication name or statement (e.g. in memory of...) or a logo symbol (for corporate contributors). See the AFoCR website, www.afocr.org for details and contribution forms.

It is not too late to add contributions to bring any contribution (personal, organization or company) up to any one of the levels indicated. Should you have a question as to which level you qualify for at this point in time please send an e-mail inquiry to TGMWall@juno.com or call AFoCR at (202)413-5528.

Please send additional contributions to:

**American Friends of the Czech Republic
C/O Harleysville National Bank
P.O. Box 428
Spring House, PA 19477**

AFoCR at Ten Years

This past spring, the American Friends of the Czech Republic celebrated the tenth anniversary of its founding. It has been a remarkable ten years for the organization.

When the idea for this organization came about, Michael Zantovsky was the ambassador to the US from the Czech Republic. It was less than half a decade since the collapse of the socialist system in the Czech lands. Bill Clinton was in the White House, Madeline Albright was the Secretary of State, and there appeared to be a chance that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO could expand into the former Soviet world in the east. The need was seen for a group that could work on behalf of the US and the Czech Republic to bring about awareness in the US that including the Czech Republic in NATO was a good idea.

Robert Doubek, the founding president of AFoCR, rose to the challenge presented by Ambassador Zantovsky for such a group and convened a meeting that would culminate in the creation and incorporation of The American Friends of the Czech Republic as a 501(3)(c) tax exempt organization.

Not wishing to be yet another ethnic group or club, there were enough of those in the US, from the outset the plan was for AFoCR to be a group for Americans of all backgrounds who saw the value and wisdom of close ties and cooperation with the Czech Republic.

The first task of AFoCR ten years ago was to help bring about NATO expansion. Money was raised, awareness was raised, letters were written and in 1999 the Czech Republic along with Poland and Hungary became members of NATO. The security of the Czech Republic was assured, and the ties that had linked the Czech people and the people of the United States for over one hundred years were once again affirmed. AFoCR had its first major success. Ambassador Alexandr Vondra who succeeded Ambassador Zantovsky felt strongly in the need for AFoCR to continue its work on behalf of the ties between the US and the Czech Republic. The decision was made that AFoCR would not end its work with the success of NATO expansion, but continue to move ahead.

In September of 2000, AFoCR hosted a Gala Celebration in New York City at the Plaza Hotel. President

Vaclav Havel presented to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright AFoCR's first **Civil Society Vision Award** recognizing the work that Ms. Albright had been doing to spread democracy, freedom, and civil society around the world.

An idea emerged that Washington, DC was an ideal setting for a statue to honor a man who had taken many ideas about freedom, democracy, and the rights of mankind from America, a man who created a democracy on the ruins of a despotic monarchy having looked to Washington, Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson for inspiration. That man was Tomas G. Masaryk, the founder and first president of Czechoslovakia. Plans were made, money was raised, laws were passed and signed by President George Bush, a statue of Masaryk was found in Prague. In September 2002, the statue of Tomas G. Masaryk and a park named in his honor were dedicated by President Havel along with Ambassador Craig Stapleton representing President Bush. Also present were former Slovak President Michal Kovac, Madeline Albright, and Ms. Charlotte Kotik the great-granddaughter of President Masaryk. This fantastic accomplishment, a park and statue erected in Washington in less than two years, was done under the leadership of Milton Cerny, the second president of AFoCR.

During Mr. Cerny's presidency, AFoCR's second Gala Celebration was held in Washington as part of the dedication of the statue and park. With people in attendance from all over the country, the celebration was held at the World Bank Building in Washington, DC. During the Gala Banquet, three Civil Society Vision Awards were presented: to The World Bank and its president James D. Wolfensohn by William S. White of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; Eugene Cernan presented Maurice "Hank" Greenburg of AIG, Incorporated with the Award; and Czech American businessman Fred Malek received the Award from the hands of Judy Baar Topinka, Treasurer of the State of Illinois.

Events were to give AFoCR a very different course for the next president, Phillip Kasik. Incredible floods devastated large portions of the Czech lands, and it was clear that according to its mandate to be a bridge between the US and the Czech Republic something had to be done, and AFoCR could do it! Financial help was needed to help repair the damages nature had wrought. Because of its tax exempt status, AFoCR was able to be the collection agent for donations large and small. Lists of worthy causes were submitted by the US Embassy in Prague, the Czech Embassy in Washington, and other charities in the Czech Republic. AFoCR's Flood Committee screened the requests and established criteria that would assure that the money would be put where it was needed and would not be squandered. Over \$ 350,000 was raised and distributed in various parts of the Czech Republic.

In 2004 under the leadership of Phil Kasik, AFoCR held its third major Gala, to honor Vaclav Havel with the Civil Society Vision Award. The evening would also celebrate the Year of Czech Music marking the hundredth anniversary of the death of Antonin Dvorak as well as the Czech Republic's inclusion into the European Union. Health concerns prevented

President Havel or his wife from being present in Washington for the actual event, but it was a remarkable evening none the less.

The American Friends of the Czech Republic has started its new decade firmly committed to the goals and mission set out earlier. One of the major areas of concern presently is the visa issue that creates a problem for Czech wanting to come to the US. AFoCR is a major force in these discussions.

We invite you to continue to be a part of AFoCR and the important work that it is doing. On the back page of this newsletter is a form that you can use to make your donation that will allow AFoCR to continue the outstanding work that has been its hallmark for the last ten years, and will be into the future.

Michael G. Rokos,
President

Congratulations

Peter and Vera Bisek were among the recipients of this year's *Gratias Agit* Award given each year by the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic. Peter and Vera published *Americke Listy* in New York. It is a popular Czech and Slovak language newspaper circulated throughout the country. Mr. Bisek is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Friends of the Czech Republic. Previous winners of this prestigious award have included Peter Rafaeli, vice president of the AFoCR and the American Friends itself presented the award several years ago.

An American Advocacy Organization Assisting the Czech People to Rejoin the West

The American Friends of the Czech Republic (AFoCR) was founded to educate government leaders, media and other opinion makers across America about the goals and aspirations of the Czech people. AFoCR fosters closer ties between the United States and the Czech Republic in the areas of business, trade, culture, law reform, and education. Since its founding in 1995, AFoCR has been a voice for the American constituency that supports the Czech Republic.

The Mission of AFoCR is to:

Create new initiatives

for trade and commerce.

Develop opportunities

for cultural exchange and appreciation of Czech heritage.

Establish educational programs

that promote trade, culture and understanding between the US and the Czech Republic.

Advocate actions

to promote mutual US and Czech Republic national security goals.

Promote development

of a civil society in the Czech Republic based upon democratic ideals.

Provide tangible assistance

to the Czech people during time of hardship.



L-R: Milton Cerny, Phil Kasik, Robert Doubek, Michael Rokos, Vratislav Janda, Peter Rafaeli at 10th Anniversary Dinner

AFoCR Co-Sponsors Visa Issue Forum on Capitol Hill.

American Friends of Czech Republic (AFoCR) joined Friends of Slovakia (FoS) in cosponsoring an event organized jointly with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in organizing a Visa Issue Roundtable on Capitol Hill. The highly successful event was held on February 11, 2005 with a capacity crowd attending.

Speakers included prominent Washington lawyer and expert on the Visa Waiver program, Mark Brzezinski, Pavol Demes, Director for Central and Eastern Europe of the German Marshall Fund of the U.S. in Bratislava, and Dr. Ivan Gabal, a well known Czech political science expert who heads the Gabal Analysis and Consulting organization in Prague. A large turnout of Congressional staff, Executive Branch representatives, members of the press, the diplomatic corps and NGOs heard a clear and eloquent exposition from the speakers and from the Czech and Slovak Ambassadors of the pressing need to facilitate enhanced exchanges between the U.S. and Central European allies. This Roundtable is seen by AFoCR and Friends of Slovakia as the first in a series of initiatives to highlight the visa issue and encourage positive measures to resolve it. The timing of the event was perfect in view of the upcoming visit of President Bush to Central Europe and a summit in Bratislava.

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Donor's Signature

Date

Your support is greatly appreciated, and your gift is tax deductible.
The IRS has ruled that AFoCR is tax exempt under Sec. 501(c)(3).

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