

CO JE NOVÉHO?

News from the Czech & Slovak Club of Greater Kansas City

Fall 2002

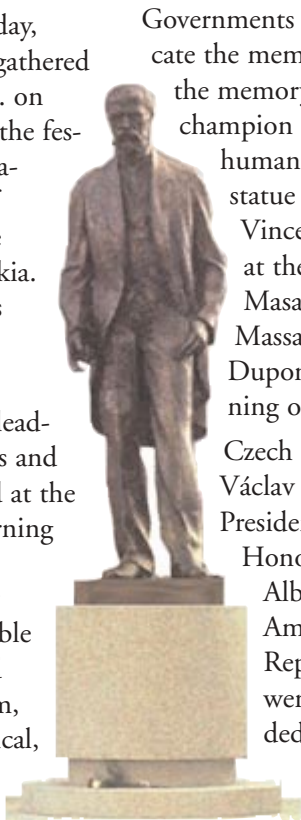
Vol. 1, No. 1

Czechs & Slovaks Honor Memory of Masaryk

On a beautiful sunny day, Czechs and Slovaks gathered in Washington, D.C. on September 19 to take part in the festivities surrounding the dedication of a statue in memory of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia. The dedication ceremony was the middle of the three main events held that day.

Current and former political leaders, honorary consuls, scholars and business leaders were on hand at the Hotel Washington in the morning for the first annual Tomáš Masaryk Symposium. Former secretary of state, the Honorable Madeleine Albright facilitated the morning panel-style forum, which included talks by political, business and academic leaders from the U.S. and Czech and Slovak Republics. The half-day forum culminated in messages from former President Michal Kovac of the Slovak Republic and President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic.

Over 600 Americans of Czech and Slovak descent, along with representatives of the Czech, Slovak, and U.S.



Governments came together to dedicate the memorial statue and park to the memory of Masaryk, a worthy champion of democracy and human rights. The 20-plus foot statue of Masaryk, sculpted by Vincenc Makovsky, is located at the newly created T.G. Masaryk Park on Massachusetts Avenue near Dupont Circle at the beginning of "Embassy Row."

Czech Republic President Václav Havel, Former Slovak President Michal Kovác, the Honorable Madeleine K. Albright and U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic Craig Stapleton were all participants in the dedication program.

Albright, who is Czech-born and American raised, was in high clover. More than once during the day, Albright beamed

"The best part about my life is that I'm both [Czech and American]." Guests and dignitaries were entertained by the 35-piece U.S. Navy band that performed the Czech, Slovak, and U.S. anthems as well as some of

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Holiday Celebration of the Three Kings

With the timing of our Czech and Slovak Club dinner and dance on November 2, the annual St. Mikulas Christmas celebration will not be held in December as is typical. Instead, the

club will hold a celebration in January, close to the time for a celebration of The Three Kings. Look for more information in a future edition of *Co je noveho*.

Election Results Are In for the Republics

Czechs elect Spidla

Vladimir Spidla, new chair of the Social Democrat (CSSD), the center-left party, emerged as the winner of the general elections in the Czech Republic on June 15. Spidla and his 17-member cabinet were appointed by President Vaclav Havel on July 15.

The Social Democratic Party won 70 seats, equal to 30.2 percent of the vote in a 200-seat Chamber of Deputies.

The second party in the government, the centrist Twin-Coalition of the Christian Democrats and the Freedom Union – DEU, gained 14.28 percent of the vote and 31 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

Senate Elections in the Fall

The first round of elections to the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic is scheduled for Friday, October 25 and Saturday, October 26, 2002. New senators will be elected in

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More on Masaryk dedication, September 19, 2002

Several events and celebrations occurred in concert with the Masaryk dedication. Folk dancers entertained attendees at both Czech and Slovak embassies; Madeleine Albright led the morning symposium and helped unveil the statue; President Havel spoke at both events as well, and at the evening reception and gala; and the embassies opened their doors to visitors. This page provides a few visual highlights of the events.

Madeleine Albright and President Havel take turns at the podium during the statue unveiling.



Masaryk continued from cover page

President Masaryk's favorite songs, Tece, Voda, Tece and Ach, Synku, Synku.

An enthusiastic crowd gathered for an evening reception and dinner at the World Bank to continue celebrating all things Czech and Slovak. The day concluded with a dinner for 250 given by American Friends of the Czech Republic. VIPs included World Bank President James Wolfensohn, former Slovak president Kovac, Homeland Security head Tom Ridge, Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Craig Stapleton, and honorees Fred Malek and Maurice Greenberg.

The event raised \$875,000 for the memorial and programs supporting Czech flood relief efforts. Importantly, our local club helped make the statue and dedication possible by raising \$500. Our efforts were noted and appreciated by American Friends of the Czech Republic.

Saint Paul Czech & Slovak Folk dancers

Members of the Saint Paul (MN) Czech & Slovak Folk Dancers troupe gave a number of lively dances for the appreciative attendees at the September 19 Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk statue dedication in Washington, DC. The group was formed in 1961 to display Czech and

Slovak culture through dance. Their costumes or kroje represent the dress of a number of different villages throughout both the Czech (Bohemia, and Moravia) and the Slovak Republics. To see more pictures (in color), visit their web site at www.tancuj.org.



Folk dancers performed at the Czech and Slovak embassies

U.S. Navy band performs at Masaryk dedication



Honorary consuls from across the U.S. meet with President Havel

Historic Flooding in the Republics

Historic floods have ravaged the Czech and Slovak Republics and Central Europe this summer. The Czech minister of culture, Pavel Dostal, warned that it could take up to a century to restore the city and its cultural treasures to their former glory.

The term "apocalyptic" was used many times in the ensuing days following the flooding. In the worst floods seen in Prague for 175 years, tens of thousands of people were evacuated from their homes and hotel rooms, among them Sean Connery, in town to shoot *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. The film's sets were badly damaged, and so the Scottish actor turned his attention to recording television spots in a quest to gather funds.

Defunct freezer facilities have been reopened across the country and ice-cream sellers have stoically offered up their vans to allow storage of the hundreds of thousands of items that have fallen foul of the flood. Nationwide appeals have been made for vacuum chambers, freeze dryers, blotting paper and even boxes. The flood has done more damage to the city than the Nazi and Soviet invasions combined, say old Praguers.

Also flooded and severely damaged are three southern bohemian towns of Ceske Budejovice and Cesky Krumlov - a Renaissance jewel and the second most favorite tourist location in the country - on the Vltava River and the town of Strakonice on the Otava River.

Americans with ties to the Czech and Slovak Republics are coming together to make contributions and in some way assist in the disaster relief efforts to help rebuild the Republics. Our club will hold a dinner and dance on November 2 to contribute to the recovery efforts. Look on the back page for additional details of the November 2 event.

New Member Profile: Marshall Smith



I am Marshall Smith and I joined the club last February. As far as I know I don't have a drop of Czech or Slovak blood in me; I'm of German and Scotch-Irish descent. However, I have had an interest in the Czech and Slovak culture since I was a teenager. I grew up in Michigan near Swartz Creek and Owosso, both heavily populated by Czechs and Slovaks. There was an hour-long radio show every Saturday morning that played primarily Bohemian music, and I listened to it every week. I enjoyed this music even more than German music.

When I moved to Kansas, I found out about the Czech Festival in Wilbur, Neb., and have attended it several times. In 1998, I took a train from Bavaria to Prague and toured the city with some friends. The view from the bridge over the river near the palace is one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen.

I learned of the club last February from Mike Kalny and Sharon Valasek, while attending the Germania Club's Maskenball. I joined that night, attended the annual meeting, and am looking forward to the Nov. 2 dance.

How to Help

You can help by attending the fund raiser on Nov. 2. Funds raised at the event will be split between the Czech and Slovak Republics.

The Czechs will donate funds to:

Committee of Good Will - Olga Havlova Foundation (Vybor dobre vule - Nadace Olgy Havlove). Account No. 100530578/0300. CSOB - Ceskoslovenska obchodni banka.

Internet : www.vdv.cz <www.vdv.cz>

Friends of Slovakia (FOS) has designated a small community in Slovakia where funds will be directed to help them rebuild from the devastation. FOS is located at PMB 220, 4401 A Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington D.C. 20008, or find out more about contributing to FOS's flood relief project online at:

www.guidestar.org/partners/networkforgood/donate.jsp?ein=52-2313422.

If you cannot attend the event and are willing to help, send a check to Marcel Janda at 8842 Glenwood Ct., #3004, Overland Park, KS 66212. Specify donation for flood recovery and specify which country you wish to donate: Czech or Slovak. If you have questions, contact Marcel Janda at 913.642.7184.

About our club

The Czech and Slovak Club of Greater Kansas City was organized in 1984 by immigrants and those of Czech and Slovak descent and their families. Our mission is to share, preserve and perpetuate the traditions and customs of the Czechoslovak people. We want to teach the younger generations about the history, language and culture of the homeland. Our heritage is shared at meetings through food, fellowship, music and educational programs for the entire family.

Our quarterly newsletter informs members about upcoming programs, local and regional-related activities and business, political and social events and trends within the Czech and Slovak Republics. Our club participates in Kansas City's Ethnic Enrichment Commission and upon request, provides cultural programs at local schools.

(See back cover for membership information.)

(Election continued)

27 electoral districts where the mandate of the senators is about to expire.

For more information on the elections, please see the Czech Embassy web page at www.mzv.cz/washington.

Election Results in the Slovak Republic

As a result of the elections on October 16, 2002 Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda, leader of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union will continue in his position for a second term. The government is made up of 16 members coming from 4 center-right parties.

For more information, please visit www.government.gov.sk

Parliamentary Elections held in Slovakia

On September 21-22, 2002 Slovakia held its parliamentary elections. The highest number of seats on the 150-member Parliament was secured by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) party. The party captured a 19.5 percentage of the vote.

The elections, the third ones since the independence, were free and fair. No incidents or irregularities were reported. The election turnout was high - 70.06% of total 4,157,802 registered voters cast the ballot. In the last election a record 84.24% of the Slovak electoralship voted.



Valasek Named Honorary Consul Designate of the Czech Republic

Sharon K. Valasek, President of the Czech & Slovak Club, has been appointed to the position of honorary consul designate for the Czech Republic. Sharon will be responsible for the Midwest region of the U.S.

Honorary consuls (HCs) serve to foster greater cultural, educational and business ties throughout the U.S. The position is one of volunteerism. The role of HCs representing the Czech Republic is to support the work of the ambassador in Washington and the consul offices in L.A. and N.Y. Because they serve locally, regional consuls can better meet the needs of local Czech interests.

Typical functions of an honorary consul include: a) promote the relations between the Czech Republic and the receiving State in the sphere of science, economy, culture, education, and sport, b) help and assist Czech nationals in cases arising in the consular district, c) safeguard the rights and interests of Czech nationals, d) further tourism and human contacts, e) accept applications by Czech nationals for alterations to be made in their passports and forward them for processing and f) accept applications for Czech visas and forward them for processing.



Sharon's appointment has been approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague and is awaiting approval by the U.S. State Department. The appointment is expected to be finalized by the end of this year.

C A L E N D A R

November 2002

- 2 Dinner-dance fundraiser at St. Thomas More Church Hall
- 28 Thanksgiving

December 2002

- 6 St. Mikulas Czechoslovakian Christmas Holiday
- 25 Christmas

January 2003

- 11 Club celebration of Three Kings holiday (tentative)
- 19 Kroje exhibit ends at the National Czech & Slovak museum and library (Cedar Rapids, IA)

February 2003

- 21-23 Winter Genealogical Symposium in Phoenix

“Doing Business in the Czech Republic” Program Fills KC Chamber

“Doing Business in the Czech Republic,” was the subject of a half-day presentation held October 8 at the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce offices.

Designed for those interested in business trade in the emerging Central and eastern European markets, the event was sponsored by the Chamber, Bob Gillis of R.D. Gillis Company and Sharon Valasek, honorary consul designate of the Czech Republic. Jana Sevcikova and Hana Lasslerova, representatives from Czech Trade and Czech Invest in Chicago and Jiri Kulis, economic advisor from the Czech embassy in Washington D.C., collaborated to help deliver key messages.

The 30-plus attendees represented a variety of business, political and educational sectors. After the seminar, all were invited to sample Czechvar, a Czech Beer new to the Kansas City market.

If you were unable to attend and would like to know more about doing business in the Czech Republic, contact Bob Gillis at 913.491.0572 or rdgillis@rdgco.com.



Jiri Kulis, economic advisor from the Czech embassy, presents information on economic conditions.

Czech Republic Economic Indicators

- GDP volume approx. \$ 50 bil.
- GDP per capita 62% of EU average
- GDP growth 2001+3.6%
- Industrial production +7.0%
- Retail sales +5.0%
- Construction output +6.5%
- Inflation rate (CPI) 4.7%
- Unemployment rate 8.4%
- State budget balance: 22.6 bil. CZK (2000, 46.1 bil. CZK), 2.5% of GDP
- Exports growth +16.2%, imports growth +15.6 %
- Current account balance: \$ 1.1 bil., 4.3% of GDP
- FDI inflow \$ 2.6 bil. (1998), \$ 6.4 bil. (1999), \$ 4.6 bil. (2000), \$ 6.4 bil. (2001)
- Gross foreign debt \$ 21 bil., 38% of GDP
- Average exchange rates in 2001
CZK/EUR 35.0, CZK/USD 37.0

Source: Czech embassy, October 2002



Hana Lasslerova describes benefits of investing in the Czech Republic.



Sharon Valasek and Bob Gillis present strategic alliance information.

