



May 2008

Pilsen Commemorates End of War

The city of Pilsen once again pulled out all the stops for its annual May 6 liberation of the city by General Patton's troops at the end of World War II. Ambassador and Mrs. Graber attended a wreath laying ceremony at City Hall and hosted a lunch for U.S. and Belgian veterans at the new Marriott hotel. After lunch, the Ambassador visited an exhibit at a local gallery which highlights five years of cooperation between the University of Western Bohemia and Miami University of Ohio. The highlight of the day was the wreath laying ceremony at the "Thank You, America" monument, attended by numerous VIPs, veterans and their families, and citizens of Pilsen, many of whom still remember liberation and were visibly moved by their encounters with the veterans.



Ambassador and Mrs. Graber greeting citizens of Pilsen

Kwajalein Exhibition Opens



The American Center is exhibiting "Kwajalein – Life with the Radar," photos by three Czech journalists – Miroslav Konvalina (former Czech Radio senior correspondent), Martin Rusek (TV Nova correspondent), and Miroslav Faith (TV Nova cameraman). They personally traveled to the far-away Pacific atoll Kwajalein, where the missile defense radar proposed for the Czech Republic has operated for the past ten years. Kwajalein is part

of the beautiful, environmentally sensitive Marshall Islands in Micronesia. **The exhibition "Kwajalein – Life with the Radar" is open to the public every Friday from 1:00 - 4:00 pm until August 29, 2008, or by appointment (tel.: 257-022-336).**

Embassy Plants More than 1000 Trees in Sumava to Support Biodiversity



The U.S. Embassy community at work planting.

Czech and American Embassy staff members and their families financed and planted 1000 firs and 50 maples in Prasily, in cooperation with the Sumava National Park Service, on May 17. Their voluntary effort will help reforest an area that had suffered major damage from high winds and support biodiversity in these border mountains. Firs and maples also prevent the spread of the spruce bug which attacks monoculture spruce forests. "The trees were about 12 inches high. Finding soil that was neither too rocky nor already covered with root systems was probably the biggest challenge, but we had many hands and work went quickly," commented the Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission Mary Thompson-Jones.

Conference Highlights Link Between NATO and U.S. Missile Defense

"We are not debating whether we want MD or not; we are now focusing on how to make it as effective as possible. It is clear that the third pillar of U.S. missile defense [the other two are in California and in Alaska] will contribute to the security of many European NATO members," NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated May 5 in Prague, speaking at the opening of an international conference to discuss missile defense. U.S. participants included two U.S. lawmakers, Representative Jim Marshall and Representative Bud Cramer, as well as Under Secretary of State John C. Rood. Cramer told the media that the U.S.-planned missile shield in Europe enjoys majority support in the U.S. Congress. The conference, organized by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also featured speakers from Denmark, Germany, Israel and other nations. U.S.-Czech negotiations on a Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement concluded in April; however, negotiations related to a Status of Forces Agreement governing continue.

American Center Hosts Presidential Debate

The American Center hosted a mock U.S. Presidential debate April 29, providing insight into the campaign process. In addition, the event gave talented university students an opportunity to demonstrate their debating skills and political knowledge. The Association of International Affairs prepared university students for the role of U.S. presidential candidates. The students answered questions related to U.S. foreign policy, national security, economy, education and health care, reflecting the policy approach of the major American political parties. A jury of academics and journalists assessed each speaker's presentation and celebrated these winners.



Mary Thompson-Jones opening the mock debate.

Students Discuss Global Climate Change

The American Center also hosted an international student conference on Deliberating in a Democracy (DID) on April 22, where **40 Czech students discussed global climate change**. The U.S. NGO *StreetLaw, Inc.*, together with American, Czech and Azeri teachers, facilitated discussions on the topic. The students also conducted a poll of public opinion in local streets. Marek Louzek from the Center for Economics and Politics and Vojtech Kotecky from the Czech ecological association Hnutí Duha/Pratele Zeme also participated in the event, which was designed to share best practices in promoting democratic dialogue within a classroom setting.

Ambassador Announces Winner of Talented Student Award in Brno

Ambassador Richard Graber visited Brno on May 14 - 15. He was the guest of honor for the opening ceremony of the Honeywell Turbocharger Engineering Center and gave a lecture on the U.S. presidential elections at Masaryk University. The Ambassador also announced winners of the annual **Czech-American Award for Talented Students** while visiting the InfoUSA Center, located in the Moravian Library. The works submitted to the competition this year showed an extraordinary quality. The jury decided to present awards to two contestants: Martina Horakova, student of Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University, for her analysis of the biographies of North American and Australian female writers; and to Simona Hlavacova,

student of Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague, for her work on Islam in the U.S. On May 19-20, Ambassador Graber also traveled to Zlin and Kromeriz.



Ambassador with the award winners and (left) Hana Ripkova, head of the Czech Fulbright Commission

Prague Writers' Festival Attracts Outstanding U.S. Participants, PWF 2008 Focuses on 1968

Mark your calendars for the Prague Writers' Festival, June 1-5. The event promises to be an exciting conversation among international writers who lived the consequences of the turbulent events of 1968. They will discuss root causes of 1968 and debate their implications for future generations. Please read more about the Writers' Festival online at <http://www.pwf.cz/>.

On June 5, the American Center will host three noted contemporary American authors -- Paul Auster, Michael McClure and Paul Kahn -- to discuss the politically and culturally significant events occurring in the United States in 1968, and the reverberations of the Prague Spring for Americans and others. The event will take place Thursday, June 5, 5:00 pm. - 6:30 pm, at the American Center, Tržiště 13, Prague 1, 1st floor.

Upcoming Events

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| May 25 | Concert – Vanguard Orchestra – “Jazz at the Castle”, Prague Castle, 8 pm |
| June 5 | Discussion - “1968: USA” featuring U.S. writers Paul Auster, Michael McClure, Paul Kahn (moderator); in co-operation with the Prague Writers' Festival, American Center, 5 pm |
| June 19 | Pavel Kohout Exhibits Photos of the United States, Klientske centrum, Partners |

And everyday at
<http://prague.usembassy.gov>