

Leaders to Follow

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International Leadership Institute
Providing Leadership Development Services and Programs in the US and Europe since 1985

INSTITUTE READY FOR NEW LEADERSHIP ROLE

Czech Take their Place

The Czech Republic has good reason to be optimistic about the future. As its economy continues to grow, the Czech Republic takes its rightful place in the “New World Order” of developed nations. No longer oppressed, repressed or suppressed, the Czechs are reclaiming their heritage of industry, creativity, athleticism, artistry and exuberant living.

From the “Golden” reign of Charles IV in the 14th century, through the reexamination of Christian practices by Jan Hus, on to the industrialization program of the Habsburg empire, and the birth of the Czechoslovak nation-state in 1918, the Czech Republic (comprised of the ancient kingdom of Bohemia, Silesia, and Moravia) has held a tradition of intellectual excellence, careful craftsmanship, and ex-

acting technical proficiency.

From 1918–1939, Czechoslovakia was among the top ten economies in the world, with leadership roles in glass and ceramic production, precision machinery, textiles, engineering and armaments. In fact, the country’s industrial production and well-known work ethic was a major motivating factor in WWII German dictator Adolph Hitler’s decision to invade and take control of Czechoslovakia in 1939. He gained access to its natural wealth (including uranium and coal) and its impressive manufacturing capacity, giving him resources for waging war against the rest of the world.

Yet another megalomaniacal leader, USSR’s Josef Stalin, grabbed Czechoslovakia after its three short years of normalcy following WWII. In 1948 a Soviet-engineered coup d’etat left Czechoslovakia once again ruled by a selfish sociopath, whose murderous

regime decimated the country, turning it into a reverse colony in which manufactured goods were shipped from Czechoslovak factories to the product-starved Russians.

Change upon Change

With the 1989 collapse of state-sponsored communism, the Czechoslovak nation faced an unnervingly uncertain future. In one swift stroke, the nation lost its major trading partner (the USSR), its artificially-protected economy (1989 income per capita was about 980 crowns, less than \$40.00), and its main unifying factor, the dominance of the USSR.



The International Leadership Institute

- WAS FOUNDED IN 1985 IN PRINCETON, NJ
- REMAINS DEDICATED TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
- HAS RUN MORE THAN 40 EXECUTIVE EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE US, FOR EUROPEAN CLIENTS
- HAS PARTNERED WITH THE US DEPARTMENT OF STATE, THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA, THE JACKSONVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND MORE THAN 700 OTHER BUSINESSES, UNIVERSITIES, RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, PRIVATE CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Slovak part of Czechoslovakia “asked to be excused,” creating two separate nations in January 1993, dividing every part of the federal government, from the military to the monetary to the social service sector. All of these rapid, enormously far-reaching changes were played against a background of 1990’s world economic restructuring, where this month’s “tiger” was next month’s moth-eaten stuffed cat.

To p. 2

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New Leadership Role *continued from page one*

No one politely stopped to let the Czech Republic onto the global economic merry-go-round of developing a manufacturing niche, finding reliable trading partners, raising capital for new investments, coping with mass movements of people in search of a better life, and coming to terms with the myriad of religions, languages and ethnic tensions that so characterized the 1990's.

Yet get on the merry-go-round they did. The Czechs, with typical grit and rather grim determination, got down to work. The government became resolutely capitalist, in spite of protests from many who were overwhelmed that their neat little lives had been turned upside down by something mysteriously known as "the market."

What had been free, and taken for granted, became either virtually unavailable or expensive (examples being previously "free" health and educational services, which were increasingly seen as antiquated and were then bought, at relatively high prices, in the private sector.)

The Institute's First Leadership Role

The International Leadership Institute had a modest role in these years of transition. From 1991–1997, our Executive Education programs for high-level business and government leaders brought more than 300 executives to the United States for short business courses and internships. We partnered with the Czechoslovak Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, the University of North Florida, and a host of US-based businesses (including such firms as CSX, Westinghouse, Allied Signal and Barnett Bank) to deliver these programs, which focused on developing the skills needed for economic success in an international market.

Through participants in these Institute programs, productive business relationships were established between Czech and American companies, with more than \$1 billion of international trade. It would be fair to say that the Institute met its goal of assisting Czech leaders in their transition to a market economy operating in a free political system. In a sense, we led the leaders as they led the country.

The culmination of the Institute's participation in the Czech economic transition was symbolized during the December 1995 visit

of then-Prime Minister (now President) of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus, to the Jacksonville area. Klaus was selected by Jacksonville University, another Executive Education program partner, for its prestigious "Institution for World Capitalism" award. Prime Minister Klaus spoke at the dinner that honored him about the economic strides made by the Czechs, sharing the very good news that the Czech Republic had completed its restructuring to democratic capitalism and was no longer in need of economic aid from its Western counterparts. The Czech economic transition was now complete.

The Institute's New Leadership Role

With the Executive Education programs having fulfilled their goal of helping in the Czech economic transition, we at the Institute began to rethink our relationship with the Czech Republic. We were happy to see the rapid growth of the new economic and political structures; we applauded the privatization of key government-owned industries; we were delighted to see the crown gain in value vis-à-vis other currencies; we were impressed at the changing face of Prague, with its new hypermarkets and fine imported goods.

Yet we felt a bit flat. It had been exciting to be part of an era of monumental, almost revolutionary change. It was inspiring to see people throw off old hindrances and remake their lives. We missed the urgency and vitality of those years in the early 1990's.

And our own lives changed as well. We were becoming ever more certain that the spiritual side of life is at least as important as the economic or political. We agreed with the quote from American President Woodrow Wilson (who was instrumental in the founding of Czechoslovakia after WWI): "*Our civilization cannot survive materially unless it is redeemed spiritually.*"

Treading Softly

So it is with humility and some trepidation that we embark on a new leadership adventure. To lead spiritually, we are finding, is an exercise in discovering our own weaknesses and frailties. We know that, as humans, we are very fallible spiritual leaders, and we will try to point the way to the One Who can lead, and does lead, without failure. This is our new leadership role in the Czech Republic.