

From the President

ILI AFTER 22 YEARS BY JARDA TUSEK

In December 2006, the International Leadership Institute celebrates its official birthdate of December 1984, making this our 22nd birthday. This is a good time to pause, look at the past and make some plans for the future.

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS: BUSINESS LEADERSHIP FORUM: USA

For most of those 22 years, ILI was focused on executive education and leadership development programs delivered to business and professional leaders in East and Central Europe. Beginning with programs for Czechs and Slovaks in 1990, the Institute's programs gradually expanded their scope to include programs tailored for business and professional leaders from Croatia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia and the Ukraine.

These executive education programs, based in Chattanooga, Tennessee and Jacksonville Florida, ranged from 10 days to three months in length, and featured internships and executive shadowing experiences in American organizations all over the country.

The Institute delivered its executive education programs in contractual joint venture agreements with such respected organizations as the University of North Florida, the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the US Department of State, through World Learning in Washington DC.

PROGRAM RESULTS

The East and Central European business and professional leaders who completed Business Leadership Forum: USA programs benefited three ways:

1. The opportunity to negotiate and conclude successful multi-million dollar business deals with American firms, and become acquainted with prospective American business partners;
2. The chance to experience the daily dynamics of the American economy at a time when the economies of the former soviet-bloc countries were making a major transition from closed, state-planned economies to open, free-market economies;
3. The opportunity to dramatically improve their fluency in English, while getting to know

Americans and making friends whom they could later invite into their own homes in Europe.

A VANGUARD OF KNOWLEDGE

The BLF: USA programs brought needed knowledge, strategies, skills and attitudes for change in a time of rapid transition. Exposure to American business provided a laboratory in which East and Central

European leaders coming out of state-run economies could experiment with new and quite different ways of operating an economy in an atmosphere of freedom and competition. These programs were successful and highly appreciated by the participants and their home companies.

REALIGNMENT OF VISION

Yet our vision has been turning away from helping to rebuild East and Central European countries economically,



Kutna Hora, Czech Republic: the cathedral of St. Barbara, built in High Gothic style in 1388 (courtesy Dr. Z. A. Tusek)

politically and socially after decades of state-planned economies and totalitarian political systems. This transition is well under way if not essentially complete; the acceptance of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, and Slovenia into the European Union testifies to their economic success.

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Now we shift our focus to the spiritual rebuilding of these countries, beginning in the Czech Republic. As U.S. President Woodrow Wilson noted in 1923, “our civilization cannot survive materially unless it is redeemed spiritually.” Pope Benedict’s recent trip to Turkey, where he made generous overtures of respect and friendship towards both Muslim and Orthodox Christian leaders, illustrates the crucial need for reconciliation and spiritual leadership in a world where vastly different values, heritages and beliefs rub shoulders in tight proximity.

The Czech nation has an unusually rich Christian heritage. Evangelized in the 9th century by Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Bohemia and Moravia were hotbeds of religious fervor throughout the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, some of this zeal was destructive, as in the Hussite wars and the Thirty Years’ war, followed by religious repression under the Hapsburg monarchy, leaving the average Czech skeptical of, if not repelled by the organized Church.

In the 20th century, Communism set out to destroy the Church in the Czech Republic not by forbidding it (which, as we see in China, usually causes it to flourish) but by discrediting it. The result is an indifference toward religion which has emptied the mighty cathedrals of the Czech Republic, except for tourists and musicians enjoying the beautiful buildings.

PROGRESS REPORT

Obviously we are not the first people to notice a spiritual gap in the Czech Republic. In our book *Three Things You Can’t Do in Prague*, the fictional Knut and Gudrun Peterson meet Olaf, a Lutheran pastor and missionary in Ruzyně Airport. Their closest friend is Markus, a German missionary serving as pastor at Betlémská Kaple, the Czech Evangelical Brethren church in Knut and Gudrun’s neighborhood of Zizkov. During my visits to the Czech Republic in 2006, I’ve met missionaries from many Christian denominations, coming from New Zealand, Canada, Norway, and Great Britain. Much hard work has been done already to revitalize the Christian church.



ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL IN PRAGUE, BEGUN IN 928
(COURTESY DR. Z. A. TUSEK)

ILI PLANS

This brings us to the Institute’s role in the spiritual revival taking place in the Czech Republic. In *Three Things You Can’t Do in Prague*, Knut and Gudrun are full-time missionaries in the Czech Republic, part of a joint venture, supported by their home church and international communion, and are given the task of church planting, along with the necessary resources for taking on such a large administrative task. Not only are they sharing the Gospel with individuals, but Knut and Gudrun are also working as part of a team to fulfill the many legal and financial requirements for registering and operating a non-profit organization in the Czech Republic. These requirements

are growing ever more rigorous as the European Union refines and increases its legal requirements for the member countries.

As “Knut and Gudrun,” Sara and I explored going to Prague as the spearhead for our communion’s expansion into Europe. But in light of the complexity of starting a new non-profit organization in Europe, and taking into account the enormous commitment of time, energy and manpower needed to establish a

new Christian communion in Europe, we have decided for now to pursue our European ministry in a different, more streamlined way. We will continue the kind of evangelism we have been practicing all along, the one-on-one kind, making friends and hopefully influencing people by our example.

Rather than the large-scale operation we had originally envisioned, we are seeing a much more intimate and low-key kind of sharing of the Gospel. We will work in the Czech Republic alongside Czechs while running the Institute’s publishing house, offering English lessons and bringing Czechs to the US in Travel-and-Learn programs, as we have been since 1990.

As Sara’s brother John noted after reading *Three Things You Can’t Do in Prague*, “God will surely use you, but He will not confine Himself to any plans you have made.” We see the wisdom of these words. Our new plan, strangely enough, is really our old plan again: helping people lead productive, meaningful lives. Please pray with us as we make practical decisions about establishing our new life in the Czech Republic.