

Leaders to Follow

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*International Leadership Institute
Providing Leadership Development Services and Programs in the US and
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Uz je to tady

In November 1989, the streets of Prague resounded with this statement, made while shaking one's keys: "Uz je to tady"—"it is already here." In typical ironic Czech fashion, the people of Prague (students, housewives, pensioners, and the like) were politely telling their communist leaders that the time has come for them to leave, because "it" (freedom) is already here.

Just weeks before, East Germans had encamped in the German Embassy in Prague, on their way to the other half of their divided country. These "escapees" from communism went by train to West Germany,

where they were received as prodigal sons.

And just weeks later, disgraced Romanians would execute their tyrannical president and his wife, leaving their bodies in biblical fashion in the streets for three days, so all would know they were really dead.

The Czechs, though, took a different path. They neither fled nor murdered. They sim-

ply shook their keys, a gentle reminder that it's time to get going. And the erstwhile invincible communist leaders left with, not a bang, but a whimper.

And Then . . . What happened next in Prague has been examined in detail, from various angles, in political and economic journals around the world. Almost immediately the new Czechoslovak government dismantled the old communist power structure, privatizing state-owned property, giving each citizen an economic stake in the country through an innovative voucher system, and building new trade relationships in Europe and the world.



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Changes since 1989

by Jarda Tusek

From the time I emigrated from Czechoslovakia, in 1966, to the next time I returned, 1990, is 24 years. That seemed a long time—yet now it's been 17 years, almost as long, since Czechoslovakia returned to freedom. The changes since 1989 are impressive and heartening. It seems that even 40 years of "demolition derby" economy couldn't destroy the creative and industrious character of the Czech nation.

I have just returned from 24 days in the Czech Republic and have to say that Prague, although still uniquely beautiful, is now indistinguishable from any large Western European city in many important ways. Tourists still abound, creating a city center full of restaurants serving international cuisine, 4 and 5 star hotels, and crowds being led in and out of gorgeous churches and magnificent cathedrals by umbrella-wielding guides. The streets are full of pedestrians enjoying

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the views of Romanesque and Gothic bridges, towers and buildings.

Whatever you want to buy, you can buy in Prague. Whatever music you like, you can hear in Prague, on the street, on Charles Bridge or in a Gothic cathedral.

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Uz je to tady *continued from page one*

Some of the more startling changes were sudden:

- 1) the cordial division in 1993 of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with its amicable dividing up of resources and people;
- 2) the rapid freeing of market restraints, led by President Havel and Prime Minister Klaus;
- 3) the entry into NATO (a rich irony, as NATO was formed in response to the expanded communist presence in Europe after WWII, when Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Hungary all “went red”);
- 4) the entry into the EU, where Czechs almost immediately assumed important leadership roles.

In fact, by becoming part of the European Union, the Czech Republic has joined a body whose size and wealth rivals that of the US. Some interesting statistics from the eurunion.org website indicate the following trends:

- Taken together, the European Union and the US account for about half the world’s commerce.

- More than 461,000,000 people make up the European Union (compared with 300,000,000 US citizens).
- In 2003, the US gross domestic product was 8.2 billion euros, while the EU GDP was 11.2 euros.
- While the EU share of the world export rate is roughly equal to that of the US (13%), the US import rate is much higher than the EU (22% vs. 13%), indicating that the US imports almost twice what it exports, while EU trade is balanced.
- The population density is about four times greater in the EU than in the US, accounting for a higher population, and thus a higher GDP, in a much smaller land area (roughly 4,000 sq km in the EU vs. 9,600 sq km in the US).

And Now . . . It’s clear, then, that the collapse of communism in 1989 released a country more than eager to resume, and improve, its place in world affairs.

The key-shakers in Vaclavske namesti were more prophetic than they knew: not only was it true that “it (freedom) is already here,” it was true that the Czechs were already primed to show the world that they were players in the unofficial league of free market economies operating in a democratic society.

For 10.2 million people to build a balanced, fully-functioning country that has provided troops, medical personnel and supplies to various disasters and political insurgencies, has made a name in highly-competitive sports such as ice hockey, tennis and soccer, and has continued its tradition of rigorous scientific and educational standards in spite of limited funding and a significant “brain drain” after 1948 and again after 1968 is an outstanding accomplishment.

The traditional Czech values of craftsmanship, careful precision and pride in a job well done, however large or small, is the foundation of the rapid changes since the keys were shaken. “It is already here” describes the new Czech presence in the world.

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And now, for the first time since the First Republic the period between WWI and WWII, you can choose from a spiritual cafeteria of churches, charities, assistance centers and house churches of every denomination and creed.

I was amazed at the highly visible and successful missionary efforts underway from Christian organizations from Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand, Ireland, Poland, Russia, Norway, Slovakia, Germany and Switzerland. And I was even more amazed to find that I was being perceived not so much as one who could minister from the US to the

Czechs, but vice-versa: the Czechs thought I might be an effective missionary for them in the United States!

Many of my ideas about the state of Christianity in the Czech Republic were shaken during this trip, as I talked with close friends and observed the massive changes taking place before my eyes. Far from being the bestower of good news, I found myself the receiver. Seventeen years is long enough for seeds long dormant to sprout and grow. The seeds planted by Czechs so long ago have sprouted and are bearing fruit.