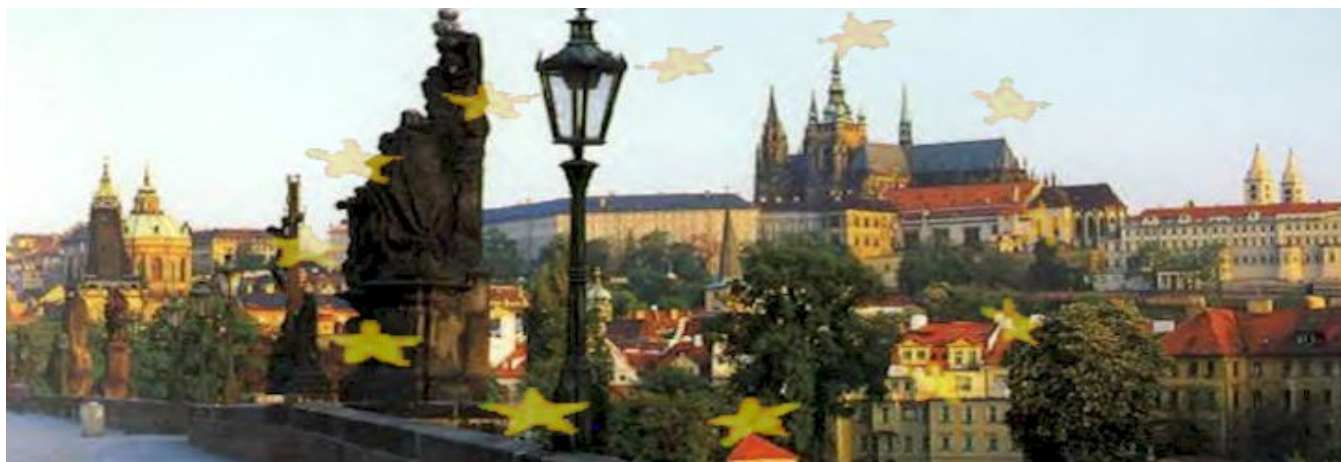




First Global Conference
REDEFINING EUROPE
Federalism and the Union of European Democracies
 Prague, Czech Republic, March 26-30, 2004



Success!

At the end of March, 2004, scholars from across Europe and America joined politicians, students, officials and others to consider the importance of federalism in the new EU constitution and to evaluate the role federalism could play in the expanded European Union.

The setting of the sessions, a beautiful conference room within the parliament of a newly democratic country ready to enter the European Union, was highly symbolic and helped ensure

that the topic was relevant.

On Friday, first day of the conference, welcoming speeches by Dr. Rob Fisher, Dr. Joe Drew, and Ashburn Institute president Bob Frantz were followed by moving speeches by Mirek Topolánek, elected senator and Vice-President of the Czech Senate about the future of the EU Constitution and by Dr. Jiří Payne, former member of parliament, head of both Defense and Foreign Affairs Committees and Deputy Defense Minister about his role in the negotiations that led to the break-up of Czechoslovakia and the difficulties a federal system poses to the European Union.

Saturday's session began with a major speech by Dr. Maiken Umbach, and associate professor at the University of Manchester and at the Harvard University Center for European Studies. Her topic, "Federalism in Europe—History and Future Options", provided an intellectual basis for the rest of the discussions. Paper presentations and panels followed on various themes such as "Democracy and Security Issues", "Cultural Identity in the New Europe",

"European Civil Society and Cooperation", and "Constitutional Law and the EU".

Throughout the conference, working sessions were punctuated with high level keynote speeches and international youth videoconferences. Dr. Marc Weiss, Chairman of the Board of the Prague Institute and renowned urban development specialist, gave a very well-received address on urban development in the world and in the new Europe. Two international videoconferences—one at graduate level, the other at high school level illustrated the importance of technology in promoting dialogue and understanding.

The papers given, speeches and comments they elicited as well as conference side-events resulted in a poignant and multi-disciplinary dialogue on the importance of federalism in Europe.

The conference on Redefining Europe was a complete success from beginning to end. Participants expressed their interest in organizing follow-up conference and in turning "Redefining Europe" into an annual event.

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Making History

Every conference needs a hero. In Prague, we had two. Throughout the conference, Jiří Payne and John Bok, two colorful personalities both instrumental in the events leading to the fall of communism and later the split of the Czechoslovak Federation, regaled participants with their vivid recollection of moments which made history.

Jiří Payne, a former member of parliament, head of both Defense and Foreign Affairs Committees, and a Deputy Defense Minister, played a key role in the negotia-



Jiří Payne (left) and John Bok (right)

tions that led to the break-up of Czechoslovakia and the creation of two new countries, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

John Bok, a former dissident and anti-Communist activist, led demonstrations during the Velvet Revolution and called former Czech president Vaclav Havel to power. Today, he continues fighting for liberties as the head of the

Salamoun Society, an organization investigating miscarriages of justice in the Czech Republic.

Proponents of the EU, yet convinced that it needs to become more democratic and more understanding of federalist principles, they founded together EuroAtlantis, an organization seeking closer cooperation between European – mostly Central countries and the United States.

Jiří and John are true symbols of the fight for freedom and democracy. Their engagement, support, and enthusiasm brought a distinct energy to the conference. ■

Youth Without Borders

Academic conferences often overlook the participation of youth. In Prague, youth was an essential ingredient, blending together with academics and politicians in an interactive and cross-cultural fashion.

The opening event of the conference was the Semi-Finals of the National Public Speaking Contest for Schools featuring students from all over the Czech Republic. With the theme “a borderless world”, this was the perfect beginning for the conference.

Shortly after, AUD President Bob Frantz introduced the students who

had been selected to present an essay pertaining to the main topic of the conference: Redefining Europe. Priyanka Ghosh, Kalin Ivanov, Rebecca Rogers, and Joelle Schmitz, the four winners of the essay contest, fulfilled this task brilliantly.

The next day, some of the conference attendees had the opportunity to observe the finals of the video-conference debates by graduate students from the United States, Poland and Ukraine. The students debated EU enlargement and transatlantic relations by trying to solve a theoretical problem related to Turkey, the U.S., Iraq and military intervention.

Finally, a second videoconference –part of the “Globalization and Democracy” series (see our article in this issue of UNITE!) enabled interaction between a panel of European academics gathered in Prague and high school students from the U.S., Mexico, Canada, the Dominican Republic, and the Czech Republic. Once again, technology proved successful in bridging people and increasing cross-cultural understanding.

Omnipresent youth turned the conference into an efficient tool to empower future generations of leaders into embracing the ideals of freedom and democracy through union. ■

United and Free

Emotion filled the room at the closing event of the conference -a dinner sponsored by AUD and the Ashburn Institute, when Captain Tom Hudgens, former AUD Chairman, took the floor.

In the presence of his daughter-in-law and grandson, Tom introduced participants to Clarence Streit’s famous book *Union Now* and alluded the history of the Association to Unite the Democracies. He then recounted his own wartime experiences; how he had lost three colleagues at flight school, how his brother, an aviator, had been shot down after sorties against the enemy in World War II and how, after

the war, he determined that he would oppose war whenever he could.

Tom then shared his belief that uniting the democracies would alleviate the causes of war. He added that the United States should seek ever closer cooperation with the European Union to eventually form a union and that, eventually, this union should encompass India, the Philippines, South Africa, and other freedom-loving democracies.

Finally, he asked those present and especially youth to join him to work for a better world, one in which advanced democracies cooperate for the benefit of all. ■



Captain Tom Hudgens

A COMMON PURPOSE

By Joelle Schmitz*



Joelle Schmitz

“Hi”, I mumbled, stumbling into my room at the Lunik Hotel Prague after 12 hours overnight above the Atlantic. I was greeting Pri, another AUD essay contest winner, similarly destroyed by a week of travel. “Hi”, she said, looking up. After a few words, we agreed to sleep, then talk.

We awoke, several hours later, somewhere in the middle of dinner with Bob Frantz, Joe Drew and of course Marielle near Wenceslas Square.

To be in Prague – a city founded on intellectualism – on a trip surrounded by supportive new friends who shared a love for the city and for academic activism – was a once in a lifetime experience. I had been to a dozen conferences in my fledgling career, but this was different.

This was special.



Essay contest winners Barbara Jaworek (Poland), Rebecca Rogers (US), Kalin Ivanov (Bulgaria), and Priyanka Ghosh (US)

The AUD Redefining Europe conference in Prague was unique first and foremost, in what it lacked. Noticeably absent was the oppressive air of many academic events – that in which one can become lost among the hundreds of eyes seemingly fixated upon: (1) the affiliation on your nametag and (2) the more important scholar just behind you. In protest of this repressive dynamic, I had refused to label myself with a magic-marked “Harvard” for years. When I arrived, I had been expecting a similar scenario in Prague and was already looking forward to getting back home.

But the Ashburn conference was instantly different. The difference was only adequately explained as a function of the individuals involved (in alphabetical order): Bob, Captain Hudgens, Joe, Marielle, Martin, Rob – arguably the most unpretentious and genuine intellectuals I’ve ever known. Then there was Mariuz, Mitchell, Marc – it soon began to occur to me that everyone associated with AUD and the Ashburn Institute seemed to have fulfilled a “brilliant... yet, nice” prerequisite to association. The astonishing Jiří Payne and John Bok, the astonishingly polished contest winners and extraordinary delegates from all parts of the world – individually and collectively represented a rare and felicitous combination of intelligence, hubris

and vivacity. Indeed, it was that synthesis which afforded us a uniquely effective intellectual and intercultural exchange.

And exchange, we did. Regaled by first-hand accounts of the Velvet Revolution by real-life heroes John and Jiří. Engaged by the truly original ideas from

“For all of our widespread diversity, we shared one thing in common: belief in the ideals of federalism, of unity among nations, of the pursuit of truth as a mechanism of conflict avoidance.”

the United States, Poland, England, Canada, France, Italy, and the Czech Republic. Inspired by the noble example of our leaders and the humble dignity which with they directed their lives. Moved by Captain

Hudgens accounts of families and friends lost to war. Motivated by Bob, Joe, John, and Jiří’s implicit sacrifices to upheaval. In consequence, it was the fastest I had witnessed any group “gel”. Our expedited association was manifest in the high quality of our intellectual exchange as we struggled to further the field. Standing metaphorically upon each others shoulders within the delegate’s room at the Prague Parliament, we amassed the thoughts of nations towards the ideals of global unity. The Prague Parliament, which had housed the discourse to advance a nation, now in a more humble sense housed a discourse to advance the world. Young and old, experienced and inexperienced, far and wide: unified toward a collective aim in an incredibly unique atmosphere and an incredibly inspiring environment.

On Tuesday, I sat on the plane home realizing that I was asking myself why? What was special about the Ashburn Institute, that it could collect such remarkable people to produce such a unique experience? It occurred to me then, that it is *purpose*. For all of our widespread diversity, we shared one thing in common: belief in the ideals of federalism, of unity among nations, of the pursuit of truth as a mechanism of conflict avoidance. In the final analysis, these are enlightened aims which will continue to attract enlightened thinkers and forever afford us a unique capacity for genuine exchange, within the microcosm of our conference, and the macrocosm of our world. ■

**Joelle Schmitz, a former Frank Fund Recipient, is a Fulbright Scholar at McGill University in Montreal. She attended the conference as one of the four outstanding winners to our “Redefining Europe” Essay Contest. Joelle has also recently joined both AUD and the Ashburn Institute and has contributed since then to developing our programs. With her belief in pro-active approaches toward world peace, her dynamism, and her commitment to our mission, she truly represents the next generation of Ashburn Institute leaders.*

HIGHLIGHTS



The Czech Parliament building, where the conference was held



Dr. Fausto Capelli, president of the European College of Parma, Italy (left), and Dr. Joe Drew, AUD Vice-Chairman and president of the Anglo-American university of Prague (right)



Conference participants Dr. Christina Gheorghie (Romania, left) and Dr. Isabel David (Portugal, right)



AUD President Bob Frantz's closing address



Conference after-hours

ONWARD!

Speakers, those who gave papers, and those who simply attended the conference to learn, many requested that the conference be held again next year, about the same time, in magical Prague, to focus on a "report card". How has the enlargement of the EU worked out? What unanticipated problems or successes can be seen a year later? Many expressed the hope that this would be the subject and that a questionnaire could

be circulated to plumb reaction to the first year anniversary from political leaders across Europe, scholars of the subject, and others.

In the meantime, keynote speeches and papers presented in Prague this year will be edited and published both in an e-book (with a direct link from the Ashburn institute website <http://www.iaud.org>) and in a hard copy book to be published as an ISBN book by the Inter-Disciplinary Press. ■

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The Parliament door

**"Redefining Europe" on the web:
check out reports, videos and
pictures of the Prague Conference at
<http://www.iaud.org>**

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