

Presentation of the Dignitary from Czech Republic before UVU students

On January 27, 2015, the Consul General for the Czech Republic, Michael Sedlacek came to UVU to give an overview of his country. He shared a brief historical outline of events that led to the current Czech Republic as we know it today, including talking about the struggles that the country had under Soviet control after World War II and the peaceful dissolution of the then country of Czechoslovakia into the two separate counties of the Czech Republic and Slovakia on January 1, 1993. He touched on entering NATO in 1999 where the country helped in operations with a chemical unit in case Saddam Hussain used chemical weapons upon the people of the Middle East, as well as joining the European Union in 2004.

Questions were asked from those who participated; the majority had to do with domestic issues within the country as well as differences the Consul saw between growing up under Communist rule and now. The Czech Republic GDP relies heavily on trade (80%) and 20% on domestic. The Consul made special note that 60% of all trade is done with Germany; who continues to pressure the Czech Republic to switch their currency from their Czech koruna to the Euro. Mr. Sedlacek states that by 2020 the country has plans to bring the Euro to use within the country, though he personally feels it will take 10 additional years. He also made mention that currently the GDP per capita for the country stands at 90% of the EU's GDP. According to the Consul, the German supply chain relies heavily on Czech industry.

The country has a strong industrial sector, with three major car factories including the Skoda which he stated was over a hundred years old and is survived because Volkswagen purchased the company. This particular brand of car is popular all over the world, but because Volkswagen owns the company they will not allow the popular car to move into the United States. The other two factories are Toyota and Hyundai. The Czech Republic also is a large producer of turbines four nuclear power as well as other heavy industry. The country imports everything, but no one specific thing is imported more than another because of the open borders of the country with other EU Nations.

Mr. Sedlacek spoke about how the Czech people are very suspicious by character, thus many continually questions EU policies. While it was noted that domestically, 70% of new laws have their beginnings in the EU, they are always careful to apply those laws to the circumstances within the country. He also made mention that the Federalists within the EU view those who have a tendency to ask questions (which in the Czech Republic is many) as trouble makers. The Consul stated that the people of the Czech Republic like to discuss things in a very democratic manner.

The final question asked was how the people in his country felt about what was going on in Ukraine. Mr. Sedlacek said that the Czech people deeply sympathize with the Ukrainians, as it was not that long ago that the Soviet's invaded Czech territory. He mentioned that in 2009

political asylum was granted too many political figures from Ukraine. He also mentioned that like the rest of the EU passports from individuals living in Crimea are not accepted because they are Russian passports.

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