Committee on Resources,

Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands

parks - - Rep. Joel Hefley, Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6207 - - (202) 226-7736

Witness Statement

STATEMENT BY
MICHAEL NOVAK
GEORGE FREDERICK JEWETT CHAIR
IN RELIGION AND PUBLIC POLICY
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
CONCERNING
H.R. 1161, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MEMORIAL TO TOMAS G. MASARYK IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. Chairman,

My name is Michael Novak. My grandparents were immigrants from the Slovak Republic, which until recently was one of the two states in the Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia, whose first president was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937). In 1981 and 1982, I served as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva; in 1986 I served as U.S. Ambassador to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and from 1983 to 1993 I served as a member of the Board of International Broadcasting, one of those responsible for moving the headquarters of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty from Munich to Prague. Through all these activities and through my writings, I have remained quite close to the peoples of Eastern Europe. Each summer for the last ten years I have been teaching a Summer Institute for students from that region and American students in Krakow, Poland, and this summer I will open the first week-long Summer Institute on the free society in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Four years ago, the Slovak government awarded me the highest honor they can give to a foreign citizen, and last year President Havel conferred upon me the Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk Award, the highest award the Czech government can bestow on a foreign citizen. Since I was born in 1933, just four years before the death of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, I can say that my whole life has been lived in the wake of the love for liberty he helped to generate in the land from which my family hails. Indeed, when I was at Harvard during the early 1960s, one of the most highly esteemed professors on campus, David Riesman, the sociologist, told me that I should read deeply in the writings of Masaryk, who had written more wisely about Communism, he said, than any other man and whose writings on democracy were among the most profound in any language. Professor Riesman told me that Masaryk was a political leader with the keenest philosophical mind he had ever encountered among political leaders.

There is one more accident of time and place that tied my imagination to the life of Masaryk. When Mr. Masaryk came to the United States in the early spring of 1918, there was no such nation as Czechoslovakia. However, at that time there were more Czechs living in Chicago than in any city in the Czech Republic except Prague, and more Slovaks living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, than in any city in Slovakia. But by the

time Masaryk left for Europe in November of that year, he had drafted the first joint Declaration of Independence of Czechoslovakia from the Austrian empire, presided over the writing of its initial Constitution, and become its first President. These achievements in America took place mainly in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, not far from my birthplace in Johnstown; and they were duly impressed upon my memory from an early age. From his youth, Masaryk had been a champion of American ideas of limited government under a democratic republic, with the protection of individual rights and the right of association, and of the pluralism and humanistic moral commitments of the West. With similar great spirits in Poland and Hungary, he was a broadcaster of the ideas of liberty and human rights eastward, to all the peoples of Eastern Europe. Among Western leaders, not only in France and Britain, but especially in America, he was very highly esteemed, not least by President Woodrow Wilson, who from a very early period pledged to support the independence of Czechoslovakia.

While still in his twenties, Masaryk traveled for the first time in the United States, and it was here that he married his wife, Charlotte Garrigue, from Brooklyn, New York, in 1878. For the rest of his life, he carried her name as his own. From early years, his scholarship and writings were widely recognized in the United States, and he was invited many times to lecture in our major universities, and to visit many of our institutions. Long before there was any physical image of him in our public squares, he was a fixture in the American imagination and spirit of inquiry.

Masaryk was born in Moravia in 1850, and at the age of 14 was apprentice to a blacksmith. In his twenties he studied at the University of Vienna, writing his thesis in philosophy on the nature of the soul. He first met his American wife while he was working as a private tutor in Leipzig, and journeyed to America to marry her here the next year.

In 1887, Masaryk made his first journey to Russia for discussions with the great novelist Leo Tolstoy, with whom he continued to meet over the next twenty years. In 1891 he was elected to the Parliament in Vienna as a member of the Young Czech Party. However, more and more, his mind turned to thinking and writing about the nature and destiny of Czech culture, and its place in the history of liberty, and so during the last five years of the nineteenth century, he published nearly a book a year on the moral and religious foundations of the politics of his people.

In the year 1899, a famous trial of a Jewish man accused of murdering two Christian girls led to several anti-Semitic demonstrations, and prompted Masaryk into public campaigns against racial prejudice and especially to fight against flagrant superstitions about Jews. On this and other occasions, he came several times to the public defense of Jews in central Europe.

In 1900, Masaryk established what later became the Progressive Party in the Czech lands. Just before World War I, he was again elected to Parliament for two consecutive periods, but with the outbreak of World War I, fled to America. He was condemned *in absentia* as a traitor for leaving in the teeth of the War. Masaryk□s earlier writings on freedom, the consent of the governed, self-determination, and respect for rights made it unavoidable, however, for him to join the Allied powers in the fight against Austro-Hungary and Germany.

In 1917 began one of Masaryk□s greatest adventures. He traveled extensively through Russia, consolidating the scattered remnants of the Czechoslovak army in the months after the Bolshevik Revolution, and leading it across nearly the whole country on a legendary march. Masaryk had a chance to see what the imposition of Bolshevik power meant in the outermost regions of the countryside. Frequently, he observed, it meant that the more thuggish elements of society practiced violence upon others. Even after Masaryk left for

America in 1918, the Czechoslovak Legion remained behind in Siberia, controlling the entire Siberian Railway until 1920.

Late in 1918, the revolutionary National Assembly in Prague elected Masaryk the first President of the new Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia. In nearly the same month, Masaryk□s new book, *The New Europe*, offered an outline of what a new free and democratic Europe would look like.

In 1920, Masaryk was again elected President according to the new Constitution, and then re-elected again in 1927 and 1934. He was obliged to resign from the Presidency for reasons of health in 1935, and died not quite two years later in 1937 in central Bohemia. Even during his Presidency, he continued to publish books that were widely read around the world including, in 1925, *The Worldwide Revolution (Svetova Revoluce).*

It is hard to think of a figure in all of Europe who wrote so broadly of the vivid ideological struggles of the twentieth century, and charted his way through them with a clearer vision of liberty, limited government, and the democratic republic. The depths of his thought and his resistance to extremes, combined with a warm and universal sense of humanity, help today to explain the power and the beauty of the □velvet revolution□ of 1989, the career of President Václav Havel, and so many other of the great and humanistic Czech and Slovak leaders of the last ten years. The passion for truth that continued under Soviet domination, and the love of liberty, owes many of its intellectual roots to Masaryk.

Not only because of his marriage to an American woman, but even more because of the marriage he made between the most humanistic of European traditions and the American discoveries about limited government and democratic rights, Masaryk is a figure likely to live in the 21st century, and even to become better known. Moreover, his light still extends eastward to the other Slav lands and the lands of Asia. Meanwhile, the equilibrium he kept and the depth of his commitments offer a model to Western Europe and even to our own fellow citizens. He refused to be blown too far either to the left or to the right, steering his compass by what is true, just, and most profound about the human soul □ the subject of his philosophic thesis at the University. Even before his death in 1935, he had warned Europe about the fate that might befall it under the Nazis who came to power only in 1933. He read the danger quickly and accurately, but was spared from living through it. He was 87 when he died.

The statue of such a man would fit very well with the other statues of this great city, so many of which represent heroes and liberators from many nations. (It should be added that a bronze statue of Masaryk had been created for a prominent place in the city of Prague, but was removed under the occupation first of the Nazis and then of the Communists, and was kept in this country for safe keeping down through the decades, first in California, later in Iowa.) Not only would a statue of Masaryk be at home here in the United States; the original one, intended for Prague, has been here for almost fifty years.

President Washington observed that one day the nations of the world would repair to America as a model for what human nature promised their own citizens. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was one of the many, like Don Luigi Sturzo of Italy, Konrad Adenauer of Germany, Jean Monnet of France, and many others who implanted the ideas of this nation in the hearts of other nations. By the power of his own philosophical mind, Masaryk deepened some of the ideas he learned from this nation. Americans have much to learn from him. This is a man our children should be encouraged to study.

What happened in his country in 1989, as the Berlin Wall came down, was one of the great, dramatic events of all history. 1989 is a date school children will have to memorize in the future. One of the great forerunners of that event, whose history they should know of, is Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, and this statue in

downtown Washington will issue that invitation to many young minds for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Novak

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