



September 2020

NEWSLETTER

Czech-Liechtenstein Society

Member of Europa Nostra



INSIDE NEWSLETTER

- We welcome new members of the Board
- CLS became a member of Europa Nostra
- Federal Cross of Merit for Daniel Herman



Chairman's Address

Dear members and friends of the Association,

The Liechtenstein legacy has outlasted more than 800 years in our territory. Not only for this reason am I sure that the Czech-Liechtenstein Society can definitely withstand a few months or even years of discomfort which the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have imposed on its activities. Yes, many of the planned events have already been cancelled. We are most likely facing further restrictions. But, as we assured each other at the Board meeting and the subsequent Members' Meeting of the Association on September 8, 2020, we will continue our activity, focused on promoting education about the Liechtenstein legacy and helping enhance relationships between the Czech Republic and Liechtenstein, even in these difficult circumstances. The Board has decided to start publishing a regular newsletter in order to help members maintain mutual contacts and to facilitate information sharing. In the issue we are presenting now,

you will learn primarily about the conclusions of the Members' Meeting, about the expansion of the Board, about the Czech-Liechtenstein Society's plans for the nearest future, as well as some interesting current news. Our ambition is to publish this information magazine four times a year, and we are calling on all of you to participate in creating its content as well. If you have any information from the field of our interest which you would consider useful for the other members, please let us know. Wishing you good spirits and sound health in particular!



JUDr. Jiří Balašík, Chairman of the Association



Members' Meeting of the Association in the Hoffmeister

■ We are growing: the Board expanded by two new members

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, Tuesday, 8 September was recorded as an important day for our Association: a meeting of the Board followed by a Members' Meeting of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society took place in the Hoffmeister Hotel in Prague. Our thanks go to everybody who came along at this difficult time! We considered matters that are important to the Association's future and adopted several changes, including an amendment to the statutes:

The Board proposed the possibility of expanding from the current five members up to nine and the Members' Meeting finally agreed on seven Board members for the next term. Zuzana Holendová and Petr Svoboda were then elected as new Board members. Zuzana Holendová lives in Vienna where she works in the local branch of the princely bank LGT; she would like to focus her Board work on maintaining contacts with our international

members and developing relations with the Austrian-Liechtenstein Society. Petr Svoboda, a former top manager in the pharmaceutical industry in Prague, the UK and Finland, nowadays mainly dedicates his time to the area of cultural heritage. He is the vice-president of the Czech Association of Castle and Manor House Owners and is active within Europa Nostra - The European Voice of Civil Society committed to Cultural Heritage. Europa Nostra is the organisation our Society was accepted as a member mid-September. Petr Svoboda also has a very strong personal tie to the Liechtenstein family: for many years, his grandfather was a legal counsel and later the managing director of the Liechtenstein Central Administration based in Olomouc.

As is usual in the life of associations, there are always more changes to report. Given that Richard Svoboda, vice-chairman of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society, resigned from his position for health and work reasons (however, he remains on the Board), the Board elected a new vice-chairman. They chose Petr Svoboda for the position. To sum up the changes, until the next election the Board will be composed as follows: **Jiří Balašík (chairman), Petr Svoboda (vice-chairman), Jana Tepperová, Zuzana Holendová, Richard Svoboda, Martin Plachý, Pavel Juřík (members).**

The program of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society for the next term and the membership fee for 2020 were other themes for discussion. It is regrettable, but we must face up to having lost a lot in terms of the programme: the event in Velké Losiny, a visit to the Garden Palace in Vienna and several educative public lectures in Prague, Opava and Velké Losiny. The Board will do their best to organize all these events for 2021 and 2022 and many other events are being prepared, for example a visit to the Liechtenstein castles in Styria and Carinthia, a trip to Liechtenstein and many more educative public lectures. Bearing in mind the effort we would like to the Association's events after the coronavirus crisis is over, but also with respect to the fact that many members have already paid this year's fee, the Members' Meeting agreed to keep the membership fee at the same level as last year, i.e. CZK 1,200. We will create a reserve for investments in the programme for 2021. The deadline for paying this year's membership fee was postponed to the end of November.

To ensure this report covers all ground, we should add that the Members' Meeting also approved all legal requirements, i.e. the annual report on the activities and financial management of the Association. The new statutes can be found on the website of the Association or can be sent to you upon request.



■ Getting together for the **Lednice-Valtice Music Festival.** For the third time.



Synagogue in Břeclav



It's become a tradition, and a rather fine tradition, that in the autumn we get together to visit the Lednice-Valtice Music Festival – a unique cultural event that draws on the Liechtenstein heritage in Moravia. This year, we will go to Břeclav to hear traditional

Jewish music. On Sunday, 4 October 2020, the Ostrava Klezmer Band will give a concert in the local synagogue. Love, family, eternal wandering and searching for one's own fate – themes explored by the emotional lyrics of Jewish songs that will resound in Břeclav. Soprano Johana Černožorská, a Jewish music and Yiddish graduate from the Jewish Music Institute in London, will be a concert soloist.

■ **Federal Cross of Merit for Daniel Herman**

On 7 September 2020, Daniel Herman, honorary chairman of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society, was awarded the Great Cross with Star of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (Grosses Verdienstkreuz mit Stern) by Christoph Israng, Ambassador of Germany to the Czech Republic.

Federal President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier bestowed him with this high federal award for an outstanding contribution to the process of Czech and German reconciliation. Jiří Balašík and Zuzana Holendová, on behalf of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society, took part in the event at which the bestowal was performed.

Daniel Herman, a former Czech Minister of Culture, a politician and secular theologian, born in České Budějovice, has been interested in Czech-German issues since his youth. In the 1990s, he co-founded the Czech-German Discussion Forum and he has served on its board ever since. Since 2014, he has been presiding over the Ackermann-Gemainte in the Czech Republic, an association that works to support Czech-German dialogue and friendship. In 2015, Daniel Herman, as the Czech Minister of Culture, and Ludwig Spaenle, his Bavarian counterpart, signed the Czech-Bavarian Cultural Agreement to support cooperation between Czech and Bavarian cultural institutions. As the Minister of Culture, Daniel Herman also participated in the Czech-German Cultural Spring, organised in 2017 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Czech-German Declaration.

It is our honour to have such a distinguished person among us, a person who is not afraid of promoting certain ideas in which he has faith. Even despite the fact that these ideas are not seen as popular by majority society.



From left: Ambassador of Germany to the Czech Republic Christoph Israng and Daniel Herman



■ Meetings planned for November

November 18 – A lecture organised in cooperation with the Czech-Swiss Chamber

Thomas Zwiefelhofer, Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic in Liechtenstein and a former Vice-Premier of Liechtenstein, will speak in Prague about business and the economy as regards the Alpine principality. We hope we will be able to organize the event despite the complicated situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The exact time and venue will be specified on the website of the Association.

November 26 – Advent party in Grand Cru

If the situation permits, we would like to meet before Christmas in the beautiful Grand Cru Restaurant & Bar in Lodecká street in Prague 1. Mr. Tomáš Melich will guide us through a selection of excellent wines.

■ We have become a member of Europa Nostra

On a long-term basis, the Czech-Liechtenstein Society strives to improve and enhance the Czech-Liechtenstein relationship, but that cannot happen without a deeper understanding of our common cultural heritage. Our Association has made an important step in becoming a member of Europa Nostra, a pan-European federation of cultural heritage NGOs. We joined organisation recognised as the largest and the most representative heritage network in Europe, bringing together organizations of the civil society from across the whole Europe, at the beginning of September when the Executive Board approved our application.

On the European level, Europa Nostra, seated in The Hague in the Netherlands, promotes the protection of cultural heritage throughout Europe. Annually, it selects seven most endangered heritage sites in an attempt to mobilise resources to save them. This year, its selection included e.g. the National Theatre in Tirana, Albania and the unique Castle of Sammezzano, a palazzo in Tuscany. Thanks to the long-term efforts of Petr



Jezeří Castle

Svoboda, the new vice-chairman of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society, who is at the same time a member of the Europa Nostra Council, the Castle Jezeří in Horní Jiřetín, North Bohemia, was also included on the list. Apart from highlighting endangered heritage sites, Europa Nostra is in particular committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural. The association, in cooperation with the European Commission, annually awards the European Heritage Award/Europa Nostra Award, the most prestigious heritage award in Europe. In the past, also several Czech projects have received this award. Two examples of award recipients are: the project for the renovation of the Baroque complex in Kuks and the project for the conservation of the southern facade of Český Krumlov Castle.



Petr Svoboda, vice-chairman of the Czech-Liechtenstein Society

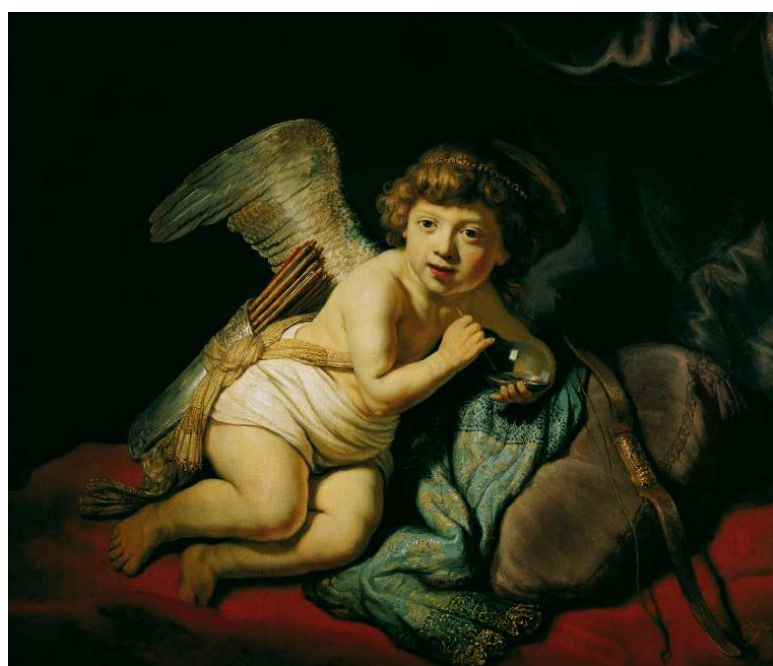


■ New biography of Prince Hans-Adam II

A unique book, “Hans-Adam II - Prince of Liechtenstein”, was published in English at the beginning of this year. The current Prince of Liechtenstein shared his life story on the occasion of his 75th birthday, which he celebrated on 14 February this year. Should you expect a conservative and predictable story of a monarch, you will be surprised. The Prince of Liechtenstein is the head of a small state that during his reign has become one of the most successful economies in the world. And that is mainly down to the fact that Hans Adam II is both an inspirational person and a skilful businessman. While the biography is not available in the Czech Republic, the Association has three copies that can be borrowed by its members. If you are interested, please contact us at cesko@lichtenstejnska.cz



■ National Gallery to display a Rembrandt from the princely collections



Rembrandt: Cupid Blowing a Soap Bubble (1634)

The House of Liechtenstein owns one of the world's biggest and most precious private art collections, which includes paintings by Rubens, Rembrandt and other Old Masters. One of the paintings from the collection, “Cupid Blowing a Soap Bubble” by Rembrandt, will be on display in the National Gallery in Prague from 24 September. The Liechtenstein family has lent the masterpiece for the exhibition “Rembrandt: Portrait of a Man”. It will be open in the Kinsky Palace until 31 January 2021.



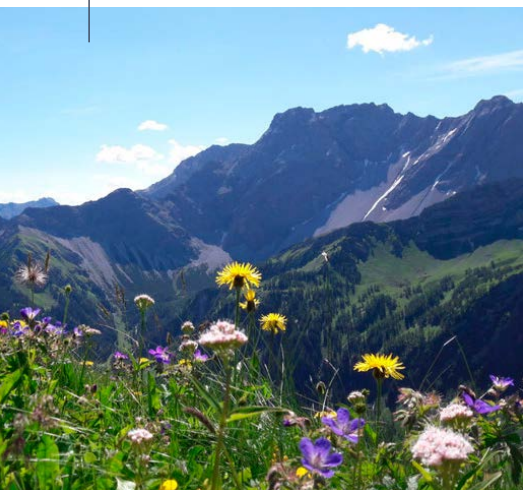
... you could see on our Instagram @czechliechtensteinsociety

Founded two years ago, our Association is meant to discover and enhance the common rich Czech-Liechtenstein heritage. Since this year, this Association's objective has been supported by its Instagram profile where interesting pictures and videos are regularly posted. Join us and follow @czechliechtensteinsociety!

Despite the fact that Liechtenstein is one of the smallest countries in the world, its national day, 15 August, is celebrated every year in grand style. The princely family participate in person in the celebrations and the gardens of the Vaduz castle open to the public for the one occasion per year. This year the public celebrations were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The louder we should call out: "Happy Birthday, Liechtenstein!"



Sunday pleasures - a view from the walk along the Princess Gina path. Did you know that in Liechtenstein, where undisturbed nature has been preserved thanks to the country's visionary approach (up to 65 percent of trees in Liechtenstein are over 100 years-old), 342 insect species are found within what is a small territory. Liechtenstein can also take pride in being Europe's number one for the amount of butterfly species registered in one place -



Richard Svoboda, the manager of Valtice castle and member of the Board, has sent an invitation for a tour of the final rooms on the second floor that have not yet been opened to the public. The new exposition will take the visitors to the apartment of Franz Josef II, the last Prince of Liechtenstein who lived at the castle in Valtice. We are looking forward to the visit this year!

Prince Emanuel Liechtenstein welcomes new residents to the zoo in Rosegg, Carinthia. The extraordinarily beautiful Carinthian zoo park and the nearby castle built in the style of an Italian villa are owned by the brothers Emanuel and Stefan from the non-reigning branch of the Liechtenstein family. The nature park with its views of the Alps is most certainly worth a visit. There are around 400 animals living there, mostly freely moving around the park, just a few metres from the visitors. There is also another attraction for children - a mini-zoo where the small visitors can feed goats, little donkeys and roe deer.





■ The dispute between Liechtenstein and the Czech Republic continues

At its meeting on 18 August 2020, the Liechtenstein government agreed to file an international complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg to „ensure the sovereignty of the country“. The long-lasting lawsuit contested by Liechtenstein and the Czech Republic, formerly Czechoslovakia, thus has a new dynamism. We asked Michal Růžička, the spokesman of the Prince of Liechtenstein Foundation, to summarize latest developments:

Since the Czech side on a long-term basis refuses to settle in a diplomatic way open issues related to the post-war confiscation of properties owned by less than thirty Liechtenstein citizens, the lawsuit now splits into two parts at different levels: there is the Říčany case, which was initiated by a motion filed by the Czech state as regards the 600 hectares of forest which the Prince of Liechtenstein Foundation acquired through an inheritance process following the passing of Prince Franz Josef II, and there are motions filed by the Foundation and several other families with 26 district courts at the end of 2018, which claim back Liechtenstein property held by the Czech state.

While the second part is still being heard at the district court level - and most of the litigations are currently, for different reasons, not proceeding - “the Říčany case” received a Constitutional Court verdict in February 2020, rejecting all objections raised by the Liechtenstein family, including much documented evidence, and deciding in favour of the Czech state in „confirming“ that the Liechtenstein family were German. The Prince of Liechtenstein Foundation and Prince Hans Adam II have always stated that they did not want to sue the Czech Republic. However, they also made it clear that if it proved necessary and if they were left with no option by the Czech side, they would even turn to international courts. In this sense, the international complaint in Strasbourg is no surprise.



Valtice castle

The surprising thing, at least from the Czech perspective, is that the complaint has been filed by a country against a country. From the Liechtenstein point of view, it is not so surprising.

Every government, and the one in Vaduz is no exception, gives due attention to important lawsuits with regard to their citizens, especially when the protection of their fundamental rights is at stake. And, according to the Liechtenstein government, rights are being trampled on by the Czech Republic. “The background is the current Constitutional Court verdict,” reads the official statement made by the government of the principality, “which again denies fundamental rights of Liechtenstein nationals, reasoning that they must be considered German based on the application of presi-



Velké Losiny castle

dential decrees from 1945. Their repeated application in 2020 clearly disrespects the sovereignty of Liechtenstein and the personal identity of its citizens...

“...The reasoning that led to the verdict stemmed from obviously false proof that Franz Josef II registered German ethnicity in the sense of the presidential decrees. The Czech courts said they were not authorised to admit evidence proving the opposite, despite the fact that the proof was available in a documented form. In its final verdict dated 20 February 2020, the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic did not correct this unacceptable approach that treats Liechtenstein citizens as German.

In the case of other neutral countries, for example Switzerland, the Czech Republic was willing in previous decades to negotiate a bilateral settlement concerning open issues of a similar character. However, no negotiation on open property issues has ever been started with Liechtenstein. The approach of the Czech Republic that rejects negotiation damages the legal successors of all 29 Liechtenstein nationals from whom properties were illegally confiscated on the territory of the present Czech Republic, and compensation was denied.” Vít Makarius, who prepared the international complaint for the government in Vaduz, explained to Lidoviny which rights are being breached:

„Firstly, this is definitely not only about properties, but about a serious breach of rights guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human

Rights. Particularly the breaching of the ban on discrimination, the breaching of the right to the protection of property, the breaching of the right to a fair trial and the breaching of the right to a private and family life in connection with Article 13, which provides for the right to an efficient remedy against any breaching of rights of the Convention.”

According to Makarius, among others, the crucial question for the court in Strasbourg will be why Czech justice has rejected examining all the documented evidence provided by Liechtenstein: „The national courts said they were not authorised to examine administrative acts

issued in Czechoslovakia immediately after World War II. In other words, they admitted one paper but refused to examine whether it was an administrative act at all, whether it was issued by an administrative body which existed and had the power to issue a document like this. Franz Josef II was the head of a foreign state at that time who enjoyed privileges and immunities according to international law. It is inconceivable that any district national committee with its small apparatus would decide on such sensitive issues like the property of the head of a foreign state and the fact of whether he was covered by immunity or not. Today, and even according to the law applicable at the time, these legal issues are discussed at the ministerial level, in particular by the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, this did not happen in this case; this committee did not consult the state administration authorities and issued this void legal act.”

It is entirely the court in Strasbourg that will decide how it will hear the case and according to which time horizon. Looking at statistics for international cases at the European Court of Human Rights, the average proceeding duration is between 3.5 and 7.5 years. So far, the Czech state has reacted to the Liechtenstein complaint (by the way, this is the first ever case in which a sovereign state is pursuing a complaint about the Czech Republic) by cancelling a long-prepared trip of the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs to Vaduz. No reconciliation is in sight for the time being.