

POLAND'S NATIONAL DAY, AND THE ANNIVERSARY OF 90 YEARS OF THE POLISH DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN FÜRSTENBERG PALACE



On the occasion of Poland's National Day, and the anniversary of 90 years of relations between the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, H.E. Mr. Mateusz Gniazdowski, hosted a special reception at the beautiful garden in Fürstenberg Palace (The Embassy of Poland in Prague), with a great view of Prague Castle.

From right: First Lady Eva Pavlová, President of the Czech Republic Petr Pavel, Ambassador of Poland H.E. Mr. Mateusz Gniazdowski, and his spouse Ms. Laura Kinga Trebel-Gniazdowska

Speech of the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Czech Republic, H.E. Mr. Mateusz Gniazdowski

Dear Mr. President of the Czech Republic, Dear Mrs. Pavlová, Dear President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, Dear Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends, Dear Guests.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the gardens of Fürstenberg Palace, the seat of the Polish diplomatic mission in Prague for 90 years. Thank you, Mr. President, for accepting this invitation. We find ourselves at a time that is favourable for reflecting on our cooperation – just now we heard Ode to Joy, and recently we celebrated 20 years of EU membership together. While we have been co-creating Europe together



The President of the Czech Republic Petr Pavel, First Lady Eva Pavlová, President of the Senate Miloš Vystrčil, and many other politicians, ambassadors, and distinguished guests attended the event.

for more than a thousand years – in Poland, Christianity arrived from Bohemia – our membership of the European Union is a historic opportunity to influence the fate of the continent. Today we commemorate the Constitution of 1791, one of the first in Europe, adopted by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: a modern constitution with the principle of the separation of powers, natural liberty and the sovereignty of the people, based on the common political values of a civil society and a will to reform the state. The protection of democracy and these values marks another important anniversary for us: we have been NATO allies for 25 years and have valiantly co-created a third of the Alliance's history. As tangible proof of this, we are already looking forward to the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Prague.

The last two years have demonstrated how close Poland and Czechia are to each other: how similarly they perceive the issues of freedom, independence and democracy, and how they

oppose revisionism and imperialism. This is reflected in practical cooperation on behalf of Ukraine suffering a barbaric invasion, and includes the supply of arms and ammunition. It is good to have allies like the Czech Republic in these efforts. We are also bound by our interest in close transatlantic cooperation.

Recently, MFA Radosław Sikorski mentioned in the Sejm that Poland's most important partners in the EU are Germany and France, while the Nordic countries and the Baltic states, as well as Romania and Czechia, were highlighted as „our closest allies and friends“. The Minister added at the time that „these are countries with whom we understand each other without words“, but that doesn't mean we do not talk to each other!

Let us remind ourselves that President Petr Pavel, after his election and after his traditional first visit to Bratislava, went to Poland. This year, PM Tusk and Mr. Sikorski have also visited Prague as well as the Speakers

of both chambers of the Polish Parliament on the occasion of the V4 Summit. Furthermore, intergovernmental consultations will take place this autumn. Polish-Czech cooperation is intense and completely amicable. Given the crisis of V4, in which we intend to remain, we observe the will for closer bilateral political consultations. This was illustrated by the meeting of PMs before the V4 meeting and a similar bilateral meeting of FMs.

Polish-Czech contacts are more intense than ever before – including cross-border ties, trade (€33 billion/year), tourism – with growing understanding, mutual learning, and affection. Czechs are traditionally listed in surveys among the nations that Poles like best, while recent surveys show that Poland is among the top three countries liked most by Czechs. We are becoming a reference point for each other, we understand each other more and more which allows us to deal with our differences.

The citizens of our countries wish for good Czech-Polish relations.



● President of the Czech Republic Petr Pavel and Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, H.E. Mr. Mateusz Gniazdowski

Our good cooperation is reflected in the wider region and is appreciated by our allies.

I would like to thank the Representative Band of the Land Army from Wroclaw for honouring our celebration. Seeing the Polish uniforms, I would also like to draw attention to an important element of the cooperation of the Polish and the Czech armed forces. Our officers and soldiers, as always in the most difficult times, understand each other very well. I would like to thank the sponsor, PKO BP, and the whole Embassy team for cooperation. Thank you all for being here with us today.

Speech of the President of the Czech Republic, H.E. Mr. Petr Pavel

Your Excellency, friends of Poland and the Czech Republic, Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to speak here today. I accepted the Ambassador's invitation with true pleasure.

I perceive the relationship between Czechs and Poles as a source of inspiration. We have been living side by side for many centuries and our nations are deeply intertwined. We are linked by a history of great changes and twists, as well as by the everyday history of cross-border destinies, accompanied by friendships and quarrels.

Nevertheless, we are friends first and foremost! However, our friendship is not a mutual uncritical admiration. It is a dynamic of goodwill.

A book by a Polish bohemist Aleksander Kaczorowski is titled: „Czechia. You can't make this up“. I could have not said that better! We look at each other with kindness and lasting awe – and yet we understand each other.

Today we gather here to commemorate Constitution Day. Your Constitution of 3 May, born 233 years ago, is a symbol of modern Europeanism. It foreshadowed the long struggle for Polish

sovereignty and real control over its own destiny; a control that is impossible without freedom, equality and justice.

I am pleased that these are the values that our countries stand on even today; and I firmly believe that they will continue to do so in the future.

Allow me to add a personal memory from 1981, when I was on vacation on the Hel Peninsula. The Solidarity movement was at its peak, social dynamics were galloping and the price of petrol suddenly rose by perhaps 1000%. When I asked a petrol vendor to sell it to me for some reasonable money, he uttered a memorable phrase: „We have freedom, which also means free prices“.

The wild capitalism is behind us, but a piece of logic from the petrol vendor words is permanent. Freedom is not free. If we do not want to live in a totalitarian state and controlled poverty, we must stay responsible, tolerant, just, and uphold the principles of

a free economy and social sensitivity at the same time. We must honour democracy.

We are trying to do it separately and we are trying to do it together. We are active players in the EU. We are responsible allies in the NATO. We are leaders in supporting Ukraine.

Our historical experience has provided us with a better

understanding of what is at stake if we do not consistently concern ourselves with what is happening beyond our borders, and not just to our east. Let's persevere!

Dear friends, dear guests, I wish you and us all the best. I wish Poland a successful presidency in the EU Council in the first half of the upcoming year. I wish everyone as many gatherings as possible where we can celebrate

true democracy. I wish us many more decades of freedom and great partnership.

In other words: "Czechia and Poland. You can't make this up!" ■

TEXT: M. Zisso PHOTO: Archive

Both speeches were delivered in Czech and translated into English.



● President Petr Pavel



● First Lady Eva Pavlová

