



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Václav Havel's shoes inducted into Bata Shoe Museum**

*- An exhibit of photographs of Havel and his times is also on view till June 24 -*

TORONTO, ON, June 12, 2007 – A pair of shoes belonging to Václav Havel was inducted into the Bata Shoe Museum on June 5. The reception featured remarks from Mr. Richard Krpac, Consul General of the Czech Republic, Mrs. Sonja Bata, Founding Chairman of the Bata Shoe Museum, and Mr. Thomas J. Bata, Honourary Chairman, Bata Shoe Foundation.

Writer, dissident and statesperson, Havel played a key role in Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution in 1989. He served as President of Czechoslovakia from 1989 to 1992, then of the Czech Republic from 1993 to 2003, and left it a thriving and affluent country. The Bata family, founders of the Bata Shoe Museum Foundation, have a strong connection to the Czech Republic as the T. & A. Bata Shoe Company was registered in Zlin, Czechoslovakia in 1894. The company grew rapidly throughout the world and was based in Czechoslovakia until 1939, when Thomas J. Bata moved to Canada.

Mr. Krpac said, "For all of us demonstrating in the cold cobblestone squares of Czech towns and cities during the Velvet Revolution, and for many others, Václav Havel will always remain close to our hearts. And during those events, in freezing weather, it was Bata shoes which kept us warm. I'm delighted to see Václav Havel's Bata shoes find a home here as the connections run very deep."

Mrs. Bata said, "We're honoured to add the shoes of Václav Havel to the Museum's collection. Mr. Havel has been instrumental in shaping modern Europe. He is an example of someone whose ambitions were never for himself, but always for his country and its people. These shoes are modest and hardworking, and in those respects I feel that they're an accurate reflection of the individual who wore them."

Approximately 45 guests attended the event, including many from the Toronto Czech community. Opening reception sponsors were **Pilsner Urquell**.

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### ***Václav Havel in Photographs on display to June 24***

The induction was also the opening of the exhibition *Václav Havel in Photographs*. Taken by Oldřich Škácha, Havel's personal photographer for more than 30 years, the images document Havel's activities from 1968 to the present. They provide an unparalleled glimpse into history in the making as they take viewers inside the Velvet Revolution of 1989, as well as capturing other significant events in one of the more unusual transitions from a single-party state to two democracies. The black-and-white photographs also offer insight into the human side of Václav Havel. The exhibition was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and Europlatform, c.a. It will be on view until June 24 on the main and B1 levels of the Museum.

### **About the Bata Shoe Museum**

The Bata Shoe Museum is a centre of knowledge about the role of footwear in the social and cultural life of humanity. The Museum's growing international collection of over 12,000 objects touches on 4,500 years of history. A varied programme of events and exhibitions lets visitors discover the stories behind footwear from many lands and cultures. Current exhibitions include: *Chronicles of Riches: Treasures from the Bata Shoe Museum*; *The Charm of Rococo: Femininity and Footwear in the 18th Century*; *Watched by Heaven, Tied to Earth: Summoning Animal Protection for Chinese Children*; and *All About Shoes: Footwear Through the Ages* (semi-permanent). Online exhibitions include *All About Shoes* and *On Canadian Ground: Stories of Footwear in Early Canada*. The Bata Shoe Museum is located in downtown Toronto at the southwest corner of Bloor and St. George Streets. Further information is available at [www.batashoemuseum.ca](http://www.batashoemuseum.ca).



Václav Havel's shoes on display at the Bata Shoe Museum.



Thomas Bata Jr. Honorary Chairman, Bata Shoe Foundation, shares some memories, while Richard Krpac, Consul General of the Czech Republic, and Sonja Bata, Founding Chairman of the Bata Shoe Museum, look on.

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