
President of Latvia visited Charles University

On August 31, 2010, the president of Latvia, Valdis Zatlers, officially visited the university and met its representatives and faculty members from programmes related to Latvia. He was welcomed by the Rector of Charles University, Mr. Václav Hampl, in the Patriot Hall of the Karolinum building.

"I am honoured to welcome such a distinguished guest. I find the flourishing of relations between our countries to be immensely inspiring. We both share the fate of our peoples and languages. That is also one of the reasons I am very happy that the European history of Latvia and its Baltic neighbours is taking place at our university", said the Rector, president Zatlers and Latvian minister of education, Ms. Tatjana Konečná. They went on to discuss the importance of education in the global arena and the possibilities for expanding the scope of collaboration with the University of Latvia. Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Prof. J. Stehlík, thanked the members of the diplomatic corps for supporting joint projects and for the recent history of both countries. President Zatlers responded that "historical events are for the past, but for the future" and claimed that it is the history of the last few decades which is the most sensitive. Towards the end of his visit, the president talked about his experiences in the programmes related to his country.



The president of Latvia wrote the following words in the visitors book: "The present moment in all the time is motion between the past and the future. It never leaves the past and never catches the future."

To coincide with the visit, the "The Baltic Way That Shook the World" exhibition was opened on August 27 at the Faculty of Arts. It shows collages of photographs of the unique event of August 23, 1989, when more than a million people connected the capitals of the three Baltic republics, Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius by holding hands and forming a human chain, aimed at drawing the global attention to the popular desire of independence of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania of the Soviet Union.

Charles University maintains close ties with Latvia. Latvian language and literature is being taught at the Department of Slavic and Eastern European Studies of the Faculty of Arts. Since the bilateral agreement was signed in 1999, our university has been collaborating with Latvia's largest university in Riga (the University of Latvia). Student exchange between the two institutions flourishes: Czech students of Latvian language and literature and those from the Institute of International Studies go to Riga, Latvian students of Czech studies in turn come to Prague. Faculty and research staff also take part.

Translation: Jaroslav Švelch