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CELEBRATES 25 YEARS



# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF PRAGUE IWAP GENERAL MEETINGS

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Photos by Colette Katschner-De Ruiter (NED) and Sandra Hill (GBR)*

The **November General Meeting** took place in the beautiful baroque chapel of the Italian Institute of Culture in Prague. Our guest speaker was Dr. **Umberto Cavallaro, President of ASITAF (Italian Astrophilately Society), and editor of AD Astra**. Dr. Cavallaro has written several publications on space exploration and activities; his latest book is entitled "Donne nello spazio" or "Women In Space".

His presentation, accompanied by a slide show, featured women space travellers over the last 50 years. The first cosmonaut was Valentina Tereshkova, during the Cold War. According to Dr. Cavallaro, Communist propaganda played a major role in putting women in space, making a strong statement to the world that women were fully emancipated and included in all Soviet Union activities. It was with Sally Ride, in 1983, that NASA opened space to women. Though the catching up was slow, the USA made a great effort to recruit women into the space program. Of a total of 60 women space explorers, NASA sent 44. Other countries that have sent women to space are: Canada, China, France, Italy, Great



*Photo by Quintino Zicarelli (ITA)*

Britain, Japan, South Korea, and Russia. Many countries now cooperate in their space missions, and women's participation has become the norm.

The meeting ended with a short and lively presentation of film clips from Dr. Giovanni Sciola, Director of the Italian Institute, parodying Italian stereotypes and showcasing Italy's contributions to the world.

The **December General Meeting** featured JUDr. Martin Rozumek, a human rights lawyer and the Executive Director of OPU (Organizace pro pomoc uprchlíkům/Organization for Aid to Refugees). He spoke to us about the current challenges in refugee protection in Europe and specifically in the Czech Republic. It was a very interesting and enlightening talk. We learned that "Recently, an estimated ten million people have left their country of origin because of wars and conflicts in the Middle East". These refugees seek asylum because of

fear of persecution and possible death. "Millions are residing in refugee camps in Turkey and Jordan, and hundreds of thousands of others have made their way to Europe" in an attempt to start a new life. Today, Europe faces the most profound humanitarian crisis since WWII. Despite protection and rights afforded asylum-seekers by the Geneva Convention and the Dublin Accord and International Law, refugees often face inhospitable conditions.

Response to the crisis has been contentious within the EU and in the Czech Republic. JUDr. Rozumek's talk elicited diverse and spirited responses, and generated an open and productive discussion.

At the **January General Meeting**, IWAP started 2016 with a social at Hergetova Cihelna. New and old members enjoyed a welcoming and cozy ambience and delicious treats. We had fun reconnecting and recounting our holiday stories, and making plans for the new year. •

