



Národní knihovna  
České republiky  
National Library  
of the Czech Republic

19th Sept.2007

# PRESS RELEASE

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## The Devil's Bible Has Returned to Prague

The manuscript **Codex Gigas**, wrapped in a weave of legends, also known as the **Devil's Bible**, has returned to Prague after more than 350 years. The Swedish National Library in Stockholm has loaned it to the National Library of the Czech Republic, which will present the rare exhibit **in the Klementinum Gallery from 20th September 2007 to 6th January 2008**. The unique book, for which a special vault has been built, will be part of the exhibition **Codex Gigas – The Devil's Bible (The Secrets of the World's Largest Book)** here. The Codex Gigas is a book of practically incalculable monetary value, and as such it usually is loaned abroad only in entirely exceptional cases. Its being loaned to the Czech Republic is a joint success of Czech and Swedish diplomacy. The personal support of the delegates of the political representation of both countries has considerably contributed to every stage of the demanding project. The exhibition itself is a result of the work of dozens of employees of the institutions which have participated in its preparation, specifically the Swedish National Library in Stockholm and the National Library of the Czech Republic.

The exhibition Codex Gigas – The Devil's Bible (The Secrets of the World's Largest Book) would not have been possible without the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. Special thanks are owed to the Ministry of Defence of the CR and the Armed Forces of the CR for providing the air transport of the Codex Gigas from Sweden to the Czech Republic; a military charter flight will also transport the book back at the beginning of the next year, when the exhibition finishes. Our special thanks also belong to the Police of the CR, which has provided the protection of the unique work on its way from the airport to the National Library.

### What is Hidden in this Book Wrapped in a Weave of Legends?

The **Codex Gigas** was written in Latin at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries in the Benedictine monastery at Podlažice and already at the time of its creation attracted extraordinary attention, not only due to its size (920 x 505 mm), which could not be matched by any other mediaeval book, and a respectable weight of 75 kilograms, but numerous speculations were also raised by the depiction of the Devil, to which a legend about a monk who was sentenced to death refers. He was supposed to redeem himself by copying out the largest book in the world within a single night. When at midnight, however, he saw that he would not be able to finish the work by himself, he called upon the Devil, with whose help he completed the task. This is the reason why the book is also called the Devil's Bible despite the fact that its 312 vellum leaves contain also other texts, including Cosmas' Chronicle of Bohemians or magic spells against diseases and thieves. On the page opposite of

the depiction of the Devil, Heavenly Jerusalem is drawn – the neighbouring depictions are thus a symbolic expression of the basic duality of a mediaeval person.

The Codex Gigas changed hands several times, reaching even the famous Kunstkammer of Emperor Rudolph II at Prague Castle, where it was seized at the end of the Thirty Years' War by the Swedish army, besieging Prague, and taken, along with other rare objects from Rudolph's collections and a live lion, to the army's homeland, where it became a part of the collections of Queen Christina I of Sweden.

Besides the Devil's Bible itself, the visitors to the exhibition will have the opportunity to discover more about the circumstances of its creation, its context and the dramatic pilgrimage which took it to Northern Europe. (The value of such a unique item as the Codex Gigas is practically incalculable in terms of money. And if similar titles ever very rarely appear at auctions round the world, their prices as a rule reach many hundreds of millions of Czech Korunas.) In Prague, the Devil's Bible is exhibited in a secure display case brought from Sweden, for which a special air-conditioned vault was constructed at a cost of two and a half million Czech Korunas. Those interested in examining this exceptional work closer will be able to "leaf" through it at least in the digital form, on a computer screen, and will find copies of the twenty most interesting pages (on a 1:1 scale) as a part of the exposition. (On the occasion of the grand opening of the exhibition, the director of the National Library in Stockholm Gunnar Sahlin will present the National Library of the CR with a digital copy of the Devil's Bible in high resolution, which will facilitate its thorough scientific examination. The digital copy will subsequently be made accessible also on the website of the NL CR.) **Almost 160 exhibits, mostly books, complemented by period art prints, paintings, documents and additional loans of a total value of 4.5 million Czech Korunas, are on display in the Klementinum Gallery.** (20 display cases and 49 exhibition panels have been used for their installation.) A **documentary film** is also being screened at the exhibition which was made on the occasion of the journey of the Devil's Bible to Prague by the director Naďa Kverková.

### **Expedition to the Secrets of the Devil's Bible**

On the occasion of the exhibition **Codex Gigas – The Devil's Bible (The Secrets of the World's Largest Book)**, the National Library of the CR has issued a publication of the same name. In its one hundred and twenty pages, the authors – **Kamil Boldan, Michal Dragoun, Dušan Foltýn, Jindřich Marek and Zdeněk Uhlíř** – deal with the phenomenon of the Devil's Bible in various contexts. For instance, they describe the process of book making in the Middle Ages and captivatingly relate the circumstances of the creation of the Devil's Bible as well as its dramatic pilgrimage from Bohemia all the way to Scandinavia. A special chapter is also devoted to the content itself of the exceptional manuscript. The book **Codex Gigas – The Devil's Bible (The Secrets of the World's Largest Book)** contains not only reproductions of selected pages from the Devil's Bible but also dozens of other period depictions, or newly-made photographs, which are related to the theme of "the book of books". The book has been published on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition in the Klementinum Gallery in two separate versions – in Czech and in its English translation. It can be purchased by those interested in the gallery itself or ordered at the publishing house of the National Library of the CR ([http://www.nkp.cz/pages/page.php3?nazev=Vydané\\_publicace&submenu3=58](http://www.nkp.cz/pages/page.php3?nazev=Vydané_publicace&submenu3=58)). Also a DVD with the documentary film on the Devil's Bible and various souvenirs with the central motif of the exhibition are for sale.

## **Pictorial Documentation for the Media**

It is possible to take television news shots, videorecordings and photographs in the Klementinum Gallery **only on 19th September (!)** during the press tour of the exposition and the subsequent grand opening. Pictorial materials related to the exhibition, which will be complemented by the current photographs from the grand opening, have been prepared for journalists to download in print quality at the website of the NL (<http://www.nkp.cz/en/pages/page.php3?page=press.htm>). (When using the photographs and other pictorial documentation, please always show the copyright by which they are labelled.) Should you have any further questions about the exhibition, please contact the Centre for Communication of the NL, namely [katerina.novakova@nkp.cz](mailto:katerina.novakova@nkp.cz), tel. 737 063 612, where we can also arrange an interview for you with some of the specialists dealing with the Devil's Bible.

## **Advance Booking**

Advance booking for times in September **began in the National Library of the CR on 17th September**, and **as of 24th September** it will be possible to book tickets for October. A special **online** reservation system has been prepared at the **website of the National Library** ([www.nkp.cz](http://www.nkp.cz)). **The basic admission fee is 100 CZK**, whereas **the reduced tickets** for students, seniors, children (10–15 years of age) are **50 CZK**. The same (i.e. 50 CZK) is also the price of one ticket for visitors who come into the gallery in groups of 10 or more. Children under 10 years of age and handicapped persons (holders of ZTP / for the severely physically handicapped/ and ZTP-P /for the severely physically handicapped requiring attendance/ identity cards) are exempt from paying any fee. (It will also be possible to reserve the tickets online if necessary using the terminal at the counter of the Klementinum Gallery.)

**Two days of the week – i.e. on Tuesdays and on Saturdays** – the doors of the Klementinum Gallery will open to the visitors without previous online reservations. **The tickets for the exhibition Codex Gigas – The Devil's Bible (The Secrets of the World's Largest Book) are sold for specific hours** for the sake of preserving the Devil's Bible on display, for which the prescribed temperature and air-humidity parameters must be strictly maintained. The number of persons who can enter the special vault in the course of one hour is thus carefully regulated, and **the visitors must come for the tour of the special vault at the precisely set times!** (The Klementinum Gallery is open to the public every day from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. except for Mondays.)

**Booked tickets** must be **collected** by the visitors **no later than 2 hours before the time of their entrance to the exhibition** and in the case of the entry times 10, 11 or 12 o'clock no later than **one day in advance**. Visitors who take the advantage of neither the online reservation nor the so-called open days (Tuesday and Saturday) can visit the exhibition any time but without the guarantee that the tickets for the desired time will be available.

### **The dates when the advance sale of the tickets for the individual months begins:**

- \*from 17th September – advance sale for September 2007
- \*from 24th September – advance sale for October 2007
- \*from 22nd October – advance sale for November 2007
- \*from 19th November – advance sale for December 2007 and January 2008.

Further details on how to reserve, current changes in the opening hours of the Klementinum Gallery and the special system of the exhibition can be found at [www.nkp.cz](http://www.nkp.cz) or personally at the reception of the Klementinum Gallery.

Centre for Communication of the NL  
[public.ur@nkp.cz](mailto:public.ur@nkp.cz)

## **Codex Gigas – The Devil’s Bible** ***The Secrets of the World’s Largest Book***

*Prepared by:* **Kamil Boldan, Michal Dragoun, Dušan Foltýn, Miroslava Hejnová, Zuzana Hochmalová, Jindřich Marek, Veronika Procházková, Milena Ředinová, Eva Štanská, Zdeněk Uhlíř**

*Authors of the texts for the exhibition:*

**Kamil Boldan, Michal Dragoun, Dušan Foltýn, Jindřich Marek, Zdeněk Uhlíř**

*Translation:* **Kateřina Millerová, Sean Mark Miller**

*Curators of the exhibition:*

**Kamil Boldan** (*ground floor – The Pilgrimage of the Manuscript*),

**Zdeněk Uhlíř** (*first floor – Codex Gigas*)

*Architectural design:* **Pavel Kolíbal, Petr Tej**

*Graphic layout:* **Pavel Helísek, Luděk Joska**

*Artistic elaboration:* **Exhibition Department of the NL CR**

*Production:* **Zuzana Hochmalová**

*Installation:* **Exhibition Department of the NL CR, Pavel Břech and Petr Albrecht, REVYKO, s. r. o. Praha**

*Exhibits prepared by:* **Restoration Department of the NL CR**

*Photography:* **Dušan Foltýn, Jan Frolík, Eva Hodíková, Ivan Král**

*Promotion:* **PR and Marketing Department of the NL CR**

**The organiser of the exhibition would like to thank the institutions which have loaned the exhibits or provided materials from their collections:**

**Archives of the City of Brno**

**Austrian National Library**

**Benedictine Abbey of St. Wenceslas, Broumov**

**Benedictine Archabbey of St. Adalbert and St. Margaret, Břevnov**

**City Museum, Chrast**

**Institute of Archaeology of the ASCR, Prague, v.v.i.**

**Johannes Schwarzenberg, Chateau Orlík**

**Masaryk University Archives, Brno**

**Moravian Library, Brno**

**Moravian Provincial Archives, Brno**

**Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague**

**Museum of Fine Arts, Stockholm**

**Museum of the Broumov District, Broumov**

**National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm**

**National Archives of the CR**

**National Gallery in Prague  
National Museum, Prague  
Office of the President of the CR – Archives of Prague Castle  
Philip Morris CR Inc., Sedlec  
Prague City Archives  
Regional Museum in Chrudim  
Regional Museum in Vysoké Mýto  
Research Library, Olomouc  
Roman-Catholic Parish in Hradec Králové  
Royal Collegial Chapter of Sts. Peter and Paul at Vyšehrad  
Royal Library, Stockholm – National Library of Sweden  
State District Archives, Jihlava  
University Library, Uppsala**

**The exhibition Codex Gigas – The Devil’s Bible (The Secrets of the World’s Largest Book) has been organised under the auspices of the Prime Minister of the CR Mirek Topolánek, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the CR Karel Schwarzenberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden Carl Bildt, Minister of Culture of the CR Václav Jehlička, Ambassador of Sweden to the Czech Republic H.E. Ms Catherine von Heidenstam, Mayor of Prague Pavel Bém and Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Sweden H.E. Ms Marie Chatardová.**



**The National Library of the Czech Republic would like to thank the Swedish National Library in Stockholm for loaning the Codex Gigas and providing its digital copy for study and research purposes.**



**The exhibition  
Codex Gigas – The Devil’s Bible  
The Secrets of the World’s Largest Book  
in Prague would not have been possible without the financial support**

of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.



*Cooperation on the project:*  
**Nordic Chamber of Commerce in the CR**



**Special thanks are owed to the Ministry of Defence of the CR and the Armed Forces of the CR for providing the air transport of the Codex Gigas from Sweden to the Czech Republic.**



*The project was also supported by:*

**Ministry of Finance of the CR  
Police of the CR, Directorate of the Capital City of Prague**

**General Partner of the National Library of the Czech Republic**







Project Partners



Partners of the NL CR



Media Partners of the NL CR



**Codex Gigas – The Devil's Bible (The Secrets of the World's Largest Book)**

**The Klementinum Gallery (Křižovnická 190, Prague 1)**

**20th September 2007 – 6th January 2008**

**Open on Tuesdays – Sundays 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.**

**Admission fee 100 CZK, reduced admission fee 50 CZK (students, pensioners, children 10–15 years of age) and groups of 10 or more 50 CZK, admission free for handicapped persons (holders of ZTP / for the severely physically handicapped/ and ZTP-P /for the severely physically handicapped requiring attendance/ identity cards) and children under 10.**

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