

Czech-born shoemaker Thomas Bata, former BIAC Chairman, dies in Toronto at age 93

Thomas Bata, Chairman of BIAC Committee on Non-Member Economies, at the 3 June 2008 meeting of the BIAC General Assembly in Paris

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PARIS, 3 September 2008 – Thomas Bata, owner of global shoe corporation that bears his name and life-long business advocate for the development of countries, has died in Toronto only weeks before his 94th birthday.

Business and government leaders from around the world expressed sadness and regret at the news of Bata's passing on 1 September, recalling his vitality, energy and dedication as the key factors for his success.

A founding father of the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC) in 1962, Bata served as BIAC Chairman from 1968-1970, and remained actively engaged in the organisation, chairing BIAC's Committee on Non-Members at the time of his death.

"As a global business leader, Thomas Bata was deeply committed to advancing the progress of developing countries," said Charles P. Heeter, BIAC Chairman and Principal, Deloitte & Touche USA. "He saw business as the vehicle to bring economic growth and create abundance to contribute to human well being internationally. He will be sorely missed."

"Mr Bata made a major contribution to the work of the OECD through his leading involvement in BIAC," said OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría. "Indeed, we had the pleasure of welcoming him to the OECD as recently June this year to benefit from his wisdom regarding the Organisation's relations with Russia and Africa. He will be greatly missed as a friend of the OECD by both our Member countries and the OECD Secretariat."

Czech Ambassador to the OECD Karel Dyba added, "Tomas Bata remains mostly symbolic personality of 20th century [sic] – symbol of business success and global opportunities. This is his message not only for his original homeland but a universal one. In the same time his life reflected all the breaking points of Czech history in last century and inspired many of his fellow-countrymen. I had the privilege to meet this great man and will be one of many missing him."

Bata, who made Canada his adopted country, was born in Praha, Czechoslovakia, Sept. 17, 1914 as a tenth generation cobbler; running the giant Bata Shoe Organization from the 19040s into the 1980s. The company returned to the Czech Republic in 1989, after the Communist regime ended, nearly 100 years after the company was founded in 1894.

“Tom Bata symbolized the best in Canadian entrepreneurship. With his headquarters in Canada, he built a world class company decades before globalisation became a hot buzz word. He then shared his extensive knowledge through important forums including BIAC. He will be missed,” said Perrin Beatty, President and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

“All of his life Tomas Bata [sic] stood up for employers’ interests,” said Jaroslav Mil, President of the Confederation of Industry and Transport of the Czech Republic. “He was the personification of entrepreneurial success, and it was Tomas who opened the door to BIAC for our organisation.”

“One of the greatest personalities of our time has left,” Czech President Vaclav Klaus said in a statement.

Bata’s commitment to BIAC (and to the OECD), can be best characterised in his 2002 message on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of both organisations. “It was once said that there are no plateaus or resting places in history. This statement holds true both for myself as a businessman and for BIAC as an organisation. We both share a deeply held belief in the need to move forward and face the challenges of tomorrow.”

Today, the BIAC business community mourns his passing.

Bata is survived by his wife, Sonja, a son and three daughters.

Founded in 1962 as an independent organisation, the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC) is the officially recognised representative of the OECD business community. BIAC’s members are the major business organisations in the OECD member countries and a number of OECD observer countries, www.biac.org.

For more information, journalists are invited to contact [Mark Primmer](#), BIAC Communications Manager. (Tel: +33 1 42 30 09 60).