



## **SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, DC**

### **NEWSLETTER**

**April 2013**

[www.dcslovaks.org](http://www.dcslovaks.org)

## **Slovaks Celebrate 20 Years of Independence**

The arrival of New Year's Day 2013 kicked off a year-long celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the Slovak Republic.\*\* In Bratislava, fireworks around the Castle and concerts marked the occasion, and celebrations also took place in other Slovak cities and towns. Kosice also started the new year as the "European Capital of Culture." Here in the U.S., celebration ensued as well with the 'Slovak Ball' in New York, sponsored by the Slovak American Cultural Center, which was attended by the new Slovak Ambassador Peter Kmec. In Washington, the Slovak Embassy held a special concert celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and various events are expected throughout the year, including a gala dinner sponsored jointly by the Slovak Embassy and the Friends of Slovakia (FOS). The anniversary celebration will also be a theme of this year's SASW program of events, including its annual picnic and Sv. Mikulas Party.

On January 31, a special concert was held at the Slovak Embassy featuring noted pianist Eva Virsik, playing a classical program that included several traditional Slovak folk pieces. She also accompanied renowned tenor, Radoslav Lesay, on several selections. The program was well received by a large crowd. Prior to the concert, Amb. Peter Kmec delivered opening remarks and Ms. Bay Fang, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, offered congratulations to the Slovak Republic on the anniversary occasion. Amb. Kmec then made several presentations. For extraordinary efforts in promoting the image of Slovakia abroad, the Medal of the President of the Slovak Republic was awarded to Mr. Joseph Senko, Honorary Consul from Pittsburgh. For developing friendly relations and promoting Slovakia, a letter of appreciation from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs for European Affairs was presented to Ms. Gail McNaughton, President and CEO of the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and to Major General R. Martin Umbarger, Adjutant General of the Indiana National Guard. Also, for extraordinary professional achievement, a letter of High Recognition was awarded to Prof. Jan T. Vilcek, M.D., Ph.D., of the New York University Langone Medical Center in New York.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary was also noted in the U.S. Congress. Prominent Slovak-American, Rep. John Mica of Florida, entered remarks into the Congressional Record of January 2 commemorating the occasion. The remarks are reproduced in this newsletter.

Among the events planned for later this year, the Friends of Slovakia and the Slovak Embassy will hold their annual gala dinner on Friday evening, June 14, at the Washington Golf and Country Club in Arlington, VA. The event will honor individuals and organizations from the fields of business, politics/diplomacy, and education/culture that have made significant contributions to promoting friendly relations between the U.S. and Slovakia. The coveted Slovak American of the Year Award also will be presented. The dinner will benefit scholarships to Slovak students to attend the summer program of the Fund for American Studies at George Mason University. The gala will also benefit the Peter Burian Roma Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships to deserving Roma students to attend VSM/City University in Slovakia--a program that SASW has supported. If you would like to receive an invitation to purchase tickets to the gala, call FOS at (703) 671-0926 and provide your name, address, and phone contact information.

**\*\* For some historical background on the 'velvet divorce' of the Czech and Slovak Republics, see this link: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/48656/2/slovakia\\_celebrates\\_the\\_20th\\_anniversary\\_of\\_the\\_velvet\\_split.html](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/48656/2/slovakia_celebrates_the_20th_anniversary_of_the_velvet_split.html)**

## ***President's column***

The SASW Board of Directors is working to finalize plans for the 2013 Speakers Series. Dates and locations will be posted on our website <[www.dcslovaks.org](http://www.dcslovaks.org)> as soon as available. Our annual picnic is scheduled for Saturday, September 14. The Sv. Mikulas Party will be held on Sunday, December 8, at the Slovak Embassy.

We currently have about 180 SASW members. Our goal for 2013 is to increase our membership to at least 200. We very much need more of our members to step forward and volunteer to help at one or more SASW events.

On a charitable note, we continue to raise money to support deserving Slovak students attending VSM/City University in Bratislava and Trencin. This is a very worthwhile program and is greatly appreciated by the scholarship recipients. Scholarship contributions can also be designated to Slovak Roma students. Our scholarship program is a good opportunity for anyone wishing to donate funds in honor of, or in memory of, a family member or friend.

All current SASW members are invited to attend any of our board of directors meetings as guests. Our next SASW Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 24, at 6:30 p.m., in the Ballston Commons Food Court in Arlington, Virginia. Please feel free to contact the SASW officers and board members with your suggestions or concerns. We also welcome your offers to volunteer to help.

Jerry Rich

## ***SASW 2012 Sv. Mikuláš Party--one of the best ever!!***

SASW held its annual Svätý Mikuláš party on December 2, 2012. By all accounts, it was an overwhelming success! We had 74 paying attendees, members and non-members, about ten complimentary attendees, and 30 children who received gifts from Svätý Mikuláš, including a beautiful book of Slovak folktales provided courtesy of SASW. We were especially delighted to have the Embassy Chef, Michal Šariský, cook three of our main dishes—*kapustnica*, *halušky* and *guláš*. These dishes, along with *pirohy*, sliced ham, macaroni and cheese, potato salad, green salads, and many tasty desserts, made for a memorable Slovak meal.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was a gift certificate from SASW to Michal, presented to him by Svätý Mikuláš himself! The certificate was for a Dutch oven, which his wife confided that he had always wanted.

The musical group Pajtaši once again travelled down from the New York area and played for our listening and dancing pleasure. The children were most energetic on the dance floor, which made the afternoon complete.

I would like to extend an enthusiastic thank you to everyone who helped make the party a success--those who set up tables and chairs, arranged the individual place settings, set up serving areas, served food, and cleaned up. You all helped to make the afternoon go smoothly--one of the best SASW Mikulas parties ever! We greatly appreciated your efforts and participation.

This year's Sv. Mikuláš party will be on December 8, 2013--please mark your calendars and plan to join the fun!

Kathryn Tatko,  
2012 Chair of Svätý Mikuláš party

The Slovak American Society of Washington, DC

presents

# **Slovak-American Writers: Little Known or Not At All**

by

**Diana Židová**



**Saturday, May 18**

**2:00PM**

**2nd-Floor Meeting Room  
Arlington Central Library  
1015 N. Quincy St., Arlington, VA**

Diana Židová will introduce little-known American writers who embrace their Slovak ancestry in novels, short stories, memoirs, or poems. These authors usually write in quest of an identity, recollecting pieces of their lives or retelling the stories of parents and grandparents who emigrated from Austria-Hungary to find a new home in America. Thomas Bell, Vasil Stefan Koban, and Milan Kovacovic are just a few such writers.

Diana Židová is a PhD. student in the Department of English and American Studies, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia. She is currently working on her dissertation about literary works produced by the descendants of Slovak emigrants to America.

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## ***The SASW Speakers' Series presents***

### ***Slovak Folk Architecture***

A two-part talk

by **Professor Joseph M. Samson**,  
Professor of Architecture and Facility Management  
at the College of Engineering Technology,  
Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI

Saturday, June 15

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Meeting Room, Arlington Central Library  
1015 N. Quincy St., Arlington, VA\*\*

#### ***Traditional Homes and Villages***

1:30pm

#### ***Village Worship Spaces***

3:00pm

##### Traditional Homes and Villages

Traditional lifestyles in Slovakia were adapted to the country's many varied landforms. While farms and vineyards were prominent in the south, in the mountainous north shepherding, mining, and logging were more common occupations; farming was an ever-present necessity. In the cities, merchants and craftsmen lived lives similar to their counterparts in Western Europe. The villages and towns, as well as the houses themselves, were designed to protect people, minimize the use of energy, and be flexible and efficient. They also varied from region to region, adapting to the unique climatic and cultural situation of each region. At the same time, craftsmanship and unique design elements could be found in these examples.

##### Village Worship Spaces

Under Roman Catholic Habsburg domination of what is today Slovakia, the Lutheran, Byzantine-Rite Catholic (Uniate), and Orthodox faiths were discouraged; today, however, they continue to flourish. Urban churches in Slovakia are similar to churches in Western Europe (Romanesque, Gothic, and Baroque), and are often simply not as old. However, churches in rural areas tend to use economical local materials and craftsmanship techniques that are creative, while still being of the people. It is in the northeast of the country, where the religions mentioned above co-exist, that the most unique folk architecture developed. Often designed to meet economic or political restrictions and constraints, these churches feature fanciful and symbolic forms that were created using common materials such as logs, shingles, painted murals, etc., to create spiritual and inspirational spaces.

\*\* The Arlington Central Library is near the Virginia Square Metro station on the Orange Line

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**Statement of the Hon. John L. Mica,  
of Florida,  
in the House of Representatives, Thursday, January 3, 2013.  
[from the *Congressional Record*]**

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate our ally and friend, the Republic of Slovakia, on her 20th anniversary of independence.

In two brief decades, Slovakia has dramatically transitioned to an independent, democratic, and economically viable free nation.

As some of my colleagues may know, my great grandparents emigrated from Slovakia to the United States at the turn of the last century. Like so many others, my family was drawn to America by the promises of freedom and opportunity. My ancestors would be proud to see both the progress of America over that century and the positive development of the Slovak Republic in its 20 years of independence.

For a millennium, the Slovak people were ruled or governed by others. After centuries of power shifts and realignments, in 1989, the Velvet Revolution brought down the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Democracy came to that nation as formerly jailed dissident and political activist Vaclav Havel was elected to the presidency. However, the Slovak people's yearning for self-governance was not realized until 1993.

Following the peaceful separation of the Czech and Slovak Republics, January 1, 1993, marks the birth of the Second Slovak Republic. As fate would have it, days later I was sworn in as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. As one of the Members of Congress with Slovak ancestry, I have been proud to work with many who have been so successful in strengthening U.S.-Slovak relations and to aid in the political and economic development of the Slovak Republic.

Like any new democracy, the Slovak Republic has experienced some growing pains. After President Michal Kováč's service as the first president, my good friend and former Košice Mayor Rudolf Schuster was elected president after a constitutional amendment changed the presidency to a directly-elected position. His successor is now President Ivan Gašparovič. I commend these and all the other Slovak leaders who have helped fashion a new era for their people.

Even with many difficult challenges as a new nation, the Slovak Republic made outstanding progress over the last 20 years, and I am proud to have played a very small part in its history. In 2000, Slovakia became a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and in 2004, joined both NATO and the European Union. The Republic of Slovakia and its people continue to provide international leadership both in Europe and throughout the world.

For the United States and the American people, we are fortunate to have such a strong ally and friend in the family of nations. So today we salute and congratulate the Slovak Republic on the special occasion of their 20th anniversary of independence. We wish them every continued future success as they mark this historic milestone.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Slovak Republic and look forward to peace and prosperity for both of our countries for decades to come.

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VELVYSLANECTVO  
SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY  
EMBASSY  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

### **Studia Academica Slovaca Scholarship 2013**

This year, the prestigious "Studia Academica Slovaca" (SAS) is organized already 49<sup>th</sup> year by the Centre for Slovak as a Foreign Language at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Comenius University in Bratislava. The Summer School SAS is the oldest summer language school in Slovakia. Every year, around 160 participants from more than 30 countries study at this academic institution and enjoy benefits of its Slovak studies courses. Lecturers at the SAS are professional teachers, experts in teaching Slovak as a foreign language.

This year's course will take place **from August 4th till August 24th, 2013**. The course is aimed at foreign students of the Slovak language and culture and Slavists in general. This intensive program is offered especially to university or college professors, teachers, postgraduates and advanced undergraduates of Slovak and Slavonic studies, to writers, translators and all others interested in the Slovak language and culture. The course offers opportunity to study the Slovak language at any level of proficiency, including beginners. The aim of the course is to enable students to improve and extend their Slovak language competence, as well as increase their level of expertise in the Slovak literature and culture.

**In 2013, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic offers four scholarships for the participants from the United States of America.**

#### **Scholarship application process:**

**1) All applicants for scholarship** will submit their letters of interest **to the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, DC between April 8<sup>th</sup> and April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013**. The letters are to be sent by email to **Ms. Katarína Kováčová, First Secretary of the Embassy**, at [katarina.kovacova@mzv.sk](mailto:katarina.kovacova@mzv.sk). Please indicate in the subject line of your email **"Studia Academica Slovaca" \_your Name and Surname**.

**The applications for the scholarship should include the following data:**

Full name, Date of Birth, Address of Permanent Residence, Address of Temporary Residence, Nationality, Citizenship, Current Employment, Telephone contact, E-mail contact, Indication whether the candidate received SAS scholarship in the past, Current level of skills in the Slovak language (proficiency, intermediate, beginner), a short motivation letter for attending the course and receiving the scholarship including indication to which of the priority groups (explained below) the applicant belongs.

The reception of applicant's documents will be confirmed by the Embassy by email. In case you do not receive this confirmation within 3 working days following submission, please email to Ms. Katarína Kováčová, First Secretary of the Embassy, or call the Embassy at 202 237 1054, ext. 223.

Applicants for the SAS scholarship will be evaluated according to the following priorities/ priority groups:

1. University or college professors, experienced teacher, postgraduate and advanced undergraduate of Slovak and Slavonic studies in the U.S.,
2. Writers, translators, journalists, artists using Slovak language in the U.S.,
3. U.S. Businessmen and employees of the U.S. based companies active in the Slovak Republic,
4. Members of the Slovak American organizations and families,
5. All other with interested in Slovak language and culture.

Within the groups, the priority to receive the scholarship will be given to those:

1. whose work is perceived as most beneficial for promotion of the Slovak language and culture in the U.S. or for the promotion of strong Slovak - U.S relations,
2. who are in a weaker social situation preventing them from paying the participation in the course,
3. who did not receive SAS scholarship in the past.

An application for the scholarship in the past has no positive nor negative on the decision making process.

**2) Four successful applicants for scholarship will receive from the Embassy special scholarship codes** which they will use for submitting their formal applications **on-line at [www.office.studyin.sk/sas](http://www.office.studyin.sk/sas). This application has to be submitted by May 15th, 2013 at the latest.** After this date the codes will be blocked. The online application form will request a short motivation letter, applicant's photo (max. 2MB) and a scanned letter expressing a consent with personal data processing signed by the applicant. A successful submission of the online application will be automatically confirmed and applicants will have opportunity to download and save it in the PDF format. The successful applicants will be contacted directly by SAS coordinators from the Slovak Republic.

**Please do not apply on-line prior to receiving the code from the Embassy!**

**Applicants who apply on-line without using the special scholarship code will be automatically considered as self-payers!**

**The final decision on awarding SAS scholarships will be confirmed by the SAS acceptance letters at the end of May 2013.**

For more information on the course, please, see

<http://www.fphil.uniba.sk/index.php?id=999>

and / or

<http://www.fphil.uniba.sk/index.php?id=899>

**Applicants who have not succeeded in the scholarship selection process still have an opportunity to apply for the SAS course as self-payers.**

Washington, DC

March, 2013



## **SASW News and Notes**

**2013 SASW Board Elections** -- At the SASW annual general membership meeting last October, three members of the Board of Directors were elected. Incumbent Board members Jerry Rich and Georgene Chastain were re-elected. Anne McKeown decided not to run for re-election, and long-time SASW member Brian Belensky was elected to the open position. Subsequent to the meeting, the 2013 Board met and chose the following officers: Jerry Rich, President; Evan Stefanik, Vice-President; Georgene Chastain, Secretary; Tom Marton, Treasurer. SASW looks forward to continued success with the new Board and officers and extends a warm welcome to Brian upon joining the Board.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Anne McKeown for her many years of service on the board and for her dedication to Slovakia, to SASW, and to the Washington-area Slovak community in general. Her contributions and accomplishments in the cause of promoting Slovakia are too numerous to mention, but she has earned the sincere gratitude of all those who have worked with her over many years. Fortunately, we can look forward to her continued participation in SASW and other activities.

**NCSML Conference in April** -- The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library (NCSML) will hold its Czech and Slovak History and Culture Conference, "Leaving or Staying: Personal Stories of 20th-Century Czechs and Slovaks," on April 26 and 27. "What motivates people to leave or stay in their homeland? Learn the stories of people who made these decisions. How do their stories add meaning and understanding to historical events? What about your own family's story? Three oral historians discuss their groundbreaking studies conducted in the United States and the Czech Republic, and consider how their findings add meaning to current immigration debates." NCSML will also open a new permanent exhibition "Faces of Freedom: The Czech and Slovak Journey". For more information visit < [www.NCSML.org](http://www.NCSML.org) >.

**EU Embassies Open House** -- The annual Open House of EU embassies will take place on Saturday, May 11, 2013, 10am-4:00pm. The Slovak embassy will again participate. You can learn more about the country, as well as enjoy a folk music performance in traditional costumes, a folk art display, and food samplings. For more information, go to < <http://www.euopenhouse.com/> > or call the Delegation of the EU to the US at (202) 862-9500.

**Tours to Slovakia** -- It's time again to plan for summer travel. Among the tours being offered to Slovakia and nearby countries are the 2013 Treasure Tours. Helene Cincebeaux is offering three tours this year, 1) The Treasures of Slovakia (July 13-21), 2) Five Countries, Five Cultures (July 22-30) and 3) the Adventure Tour (Aug. 2-15). More information is available at < [www.our-Slovakia.com](http://www.our-Slovakia.com) >, or you can call Helene at (585) 472-5377 (toll-free) or email < [helenezx@aol.com](mailto:helenezx@aol.com) >.

Joe Senko, Pittsburgh Honorary Consul, is also organizing his 10<sup>th</sup> Consular Tour to Slovakia to take place August 24-Sept. 3. The trip will include visits to Bratislava, Košice, and Prešov, and include many other sites and activities. For a detailed itinerary and more information, please call Joe at (412) 531-2990 during office hours, or (412) 956-6000 in the evenings.

**U.S. Steel to stay in Slovakia** -- During the past year, amid the difficult economic situation in Europe, there had been speculation that U.S. Steel would sell its Košice facility, a major employer in eastern Slovakia. After months of negotiations, the Slovak government announced that it has reached a deal to keep U.S. Steel in Slovakia for at least five more years. The deal includes concessions on energy and environmental regulations, while U.S. Steel has agreed to maintain the workforce at the current level of around 11,000 employees.

The **Slovak-American Society of Washington** is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. [Contributions and membership dues are tax-deductible.](#)

### **2013 Board of Directors:**

#### **Officers:**

Dr. Jerry Rich – President  
Evan Stefanik – Vice-President  
Georgene Chastain – Secretary  
Tom Marton – Treasurer

#### **At-Large Members:**

Brian Belensky  
Ken Bombara  
Helen Fedor  
Tonya Harmon  
John Husovsky

**Website:** [www.dcslovaks.org](http://www.dcslovaks.org)  
**Email:** [dcslovaks@yahoo.com](mailto:dcslovaks@yahoo.com)



SLOVAK-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF  
WASHINGTON, DC  
5217 ELLICOTT COURT  
CENTREVILLE, VA 20120-1727



***Next SASW Events  
May 18      &      June 15***

**SLOVAK-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, DC  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL/DONATION FORM**  
New or renewing annual membership runs thru December 31, 2013.

Individual membership (\$25/year)      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Family membership (\$35/year)      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Optional tax-deductible donation:

VSM/City U. scholarship fund      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

SASW General Fund      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED**      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
Slovak American Society of Washington,  
D.C.

**MAIL THIS FORM TO:**

**SASW—Tonya Harmon  
606 Kentland Drive  
Great Falls, VA 22066**

**NAME(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**ZIP+4** \_\_\_\_\_

**TELEPHONE:** Home: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Work or Cell: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Please do NOT include my phone number in the Annual Membership Directory  
\_\_\_\_ Yes! Please contact me to help out with Society events (04/13)