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**SLOVAK-AMERICAN SOCIETY
OF WASHINGTON, D.C.**

NEWSLETTER

March 2008

**The SASW Speakers' Series presents a talk and book
discussion by**

Ms. Margarete Hurn

Author of

The Foreigner's Guide to Living in Slovakia

Saturday, April 12, 2008, 2:00pm

at the Slovak Embassy

3523 International Court, NW ,Washington, D.C.

(admission free)**

Amazon.com briefly describes Ms. Hurn's recently published book as follows: *"Everything a traveler needs to know about the Slovak people, their unique culture, and how to acclimate smoothly within it. Features descriptions of topics such as how to find accommodation and get settled in, applying for a visa, Slovak food, public transportation, and social and business customs. Includes hundreds of addresses and Web sites."*

At this SASW event, Ms. Hurn will discuss the contents of her book, will talk about her experiences in writing it, and will answer questions about living in Slovakia. The book should be of interest to both those who know a lot about Slovakia and those who want to learn more about it. We expect to have copies available for purchase and signing by the author. This promises to be a unique event that you will surely enjoy!

**For questions about SASW or this event, call 703-851-6035. Please do not call the Slovak Embassy. For directions to the Slovak Embassy see page 4 of this newsletter.

President's Column

We are finally emerging from a long, busy winter and I want to update you on the Society's activities, both past, and planned. As for past activities, on behalf of the SASW Board I want to thank those who attended our events of late last year, the annual general membership meeting, and the Svätý Mikulás party on December 2. Once again, the Mikulás party proved to be our most popular event, combining Slovak food and music with old and new friends. We are encouraged by the increase in the number of families with children attending the event, and extend our thanks to all those who helped make the event possible! As for the annual meeting, the Board was able to complete some long-standing work by approving a slightly revised set of by-laws, and electing a new Board. The new Board is largely like the old one except that Kathryn Tatko has returned to the Board, while Viera Jamrich, decided to step down. We thank Viera for her hard work on behalf of SASW and look forward to working with Kathryn again, who, as most of you know, has long been a dedicated SASW member and past Board member. The returning Board members include myself, Ken Bombara, as President, Anne McKeown as Vice-President, Linda Trout, Secretary, Tom Marton Treasurer and Helen Fedor as Chairperson of the Member Services and Communications Committee. A copy of the 2007 Annual Report to the Membership that was presented at the annual meeting, along with a copy of the updated by-laws is included in this mailing.

Now, as for 2008, and our planned activities, we will continue the SASW Speakers' Series with the cooperation of the Slovak Embassy. The Series is entering its 6th year and has brought an incredible array of speakers and presentations to the D.C. Area. This year we are planning to continue the tradition. As the front page notes, our first speaker on April 12 will be Margarete Hurn, speaking about living in Slovakia. Then on September 20, we have scheduled Prof. Martin Votruba, head of the Slovak Studies program at the University of Pittsburgh. Some may remember that Martin was the first speaker when we began the series in 2003. A number of members have requested that we bring him back again and now we plan to do so. We are working on scheduling one or two more events in the spring/summer period and will update you as details become available. We're also in contact with the Carpatho-Rusyn Society regarding a possible joint event this year. Of course, the Mikulas Party is on the schedule for December 7, and the Board is discussing other events. Don't forget that we are always open to considering some new ideas, so please don't keep them to yourself!

Let me also remind you to **renew your SASW membership for 2008** if you have not already done so. Use the form on page 4 and forward it to Helen Fedor at the address shown. We will be compiling our annual membership directory soon. As for our **VSM/City University scholarship fund**, we have, thanks to the generosity of a number of members, made it about halfway to our usual annual goal of two scholarships, and spring is fast approaching. So, please consider making a donation to SASW using the same membership form on page 4. As you complete your tax returns, remember that the donation will be **tax-deductible** when you do next year's taxes.

On a sad note, the SASW Board mourns the recent loss of Camilla Skrovanek, wife of long-time Board member, Ambroz Skrovanek. Camilla typically accompanied Ambroz to many events and activities down through the years and was a strong supporter of the organization in her own right. We always enjoyed, and will greatly miss, her charming and positive personality. On behalf of SASW, Anne McKeown personally arranged for several masses to be said in memory of Camilla in Bratislava, where the Skrovaneks were married.

In closing, I'd just like to thank you all for your support of SASW and its activities, and hope you will continue to support the Society in 2008 and beyond. Happy Easter to all!

Ken Bombara

SASW News and notes

Upcoming Genealogical Conferences- We noted this in a previous newsletter, but since the date is now approaching we remind you that The Czechoslovak Genealogy Society International, of St. Paul MN, will hold their 2008 Genealogical and Cultural Symposium on Friday and Saturday, **April 11-12, 2008**, in Seattle, WA., at the DoubleTree Guest Suites Airport Southcenter. For registration and info visit, www.cgsi.org

Also, this summer, The Federation of Eastern European Family History Societies will hold its 2008 Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, at the Pittsburgh Marriott Hotel on **August 1- 3, 2008**. The conference will feature presentations from leading experts in the fields of Central and East European genealogy, DNA testing, online databases, one-on-one research consultations and more! There will also be an optional tour of Pittsburgh sites, The Rivers of Steel “Babushkas and Hard Hats Tour.” Registration information is available at www.Feehfs.org.

Visa Waiver for Czechs, Slovaks next-- “The fulfillment of a dream for a generation of Czechs” is how Czech Interior Minister, Mirek Topolánek described the signing on February 26, in Washington, of a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Government paving the way for Czechs to visit the U.S, without obtaining a visa. However, under the agreement, Czech citizens will have to provide detailed information to U.S. officials prior to traveling. Meanwhile, EU officials have criticized Prague’s “go-it-alone” approach to visa negotiations. Eligibility requirements for the U.S. visa waiver program were revised in 2007 increasing the chances that several central European countries, including Slovakia, might qualify.

Before Czechs can travel to the U.S. they will have to file data with U.S. authorities via the internet as part of the Electronic Travel Authorization system. They will also come under the US-VISIT immigration and border system database (including fingerprints) which tracks foreigners in the U.S. at any time. Meanwhile, EU officials were angered by the Czechs bilateral approach to negotiating visa waiver eligibility and are concerned that the agreement goes beyond EU policy for providing sensitive personal data. The Czechs, however, were frustrated by the lack of progress by the EU, and hailed their action as a breakthrough.

Following these developments, Slovakia and the United States signed a similar Memorandum of Understanding in Washington on Monday, March 17. Slovak Interior Minister Robert Kalinak signed on behalf of the Slovak Government, citing it as an important step to achieving the dreams of Slovak citizens for visa-free travel to the U.S..

Amb. Obsitnik Settles In— The new U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia, Vincent Obsitnik has settled into his role in Bratislava. Arriving on December 6, he subsequently presented his credentials and met with Slovak officials, including Prime Minister Robert Fico. The activities he has conducted include presenting Army Commendation Medals for outstanding service to six Slovak soldiers who participated in the Iraqi Freedom operation. Also, in February, he lectured at the University of Economics in Bratislava on the presidential election in the USA. In his remarks about the US election, Obsitnik took the students through the mechanics of primaries and caucuses and briefly outlined the profiles of the individual candidates. Obsitnik also took questions from the students that ranged from the election to the cancellation of the visa regime for Slovaks traveling to the U.S., as well as Slovak-US relations, Iraq, and Kosovo. Obsitnik emphasized that Slovakia is on the same road to a visa-free regime as the Czech Republic.

Condolences- We were recently informed of the passing of SASW member **Ruth M. Solga**. Mrs. Solga was a 49 year resident of Bethesda, MD., and is survived by her husband Albert P. Solga, Sr of Bethlehem, PA. Also surviving are sons, Albert P. Jr, and Thomas Solga and a daughter, Dorothy Popovich. Services were held February 25 in Allentown, PA. We extend sincere condolences to Albert and the family. We also learned of the passing of **Frank G. Toth**, a retired official of the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO). Mr. Toth was a long-time resident of Rockville and a member of the National Slovak Society.

Easter Customs Book - A recently published book, “Celebrate...Easter Slovak Style” is available, \$13.50 postage paid, from its author, Lawrence G. Kozlowski, Mercyhurst N.E., 16 W. Division St., North East, PA 16428. For information contact the author at lkozlowski@mercyhurst.edu.

SLOVAK-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL/APPLICATION/DONATION FORM

New membership or renewal runs thru the end of 2008

____ Individual membership (\$15/year) ____ Family membership (\$20/year)

Optional Tax-deductible donation: City U. fund ____; SASW general fund ____

Total amount enclosed \$ ____

Mail your check made out to the Slovak American Society of Washington, and this form to: Helen Fedor, 11914 Winstead Lane, Reston, VA 20194-1518

NAME(s) _____

ADDRESS _____

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TELEPHONE Home: () _____ - _____ Work: () _____ - _____

E-MAIL _____

_____ Yes! Please contact me to help out with Society events

_____ Please do NOT include my phone number in the Membership Directory (03/08)

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

2008 Board of Directors:

Ken Bombara, President;
Anne McKeown, Vice-President;
Tom Marton, Treasurer;
Linda Jo Trout, Secretary.
Helen Fedor,
Kathryn Tatko

Correspondence should be addressed to:

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Directions to the Embassy of Slovakia

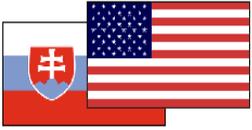
3523 International Court NW, Washington DC

From the Beltway north of DC: Take Wisconsin Ave. south to Van Ness St. NW. Turn left onto Van Ness and proceed east, crossing the intersections of Van Ness with 38th St., 37th St. and Reno Road. Just east of Reno Road, turn left (north) onto International Court. If you reach Connecticut Ave., you have gone too far on Van Ness. The Slovak Embassy is on the east side of the cul-de-sac at the north end of International Court, directly across from the Austrian Embassy.

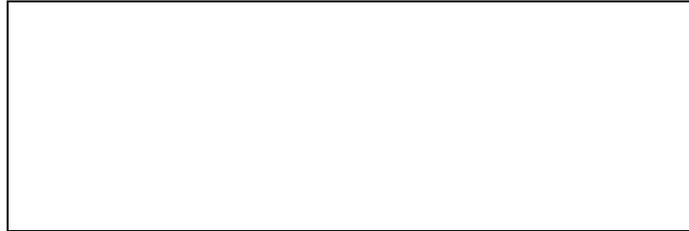
From downtown DC: Take Connecticut Ave. north to Van Ness St, NW. Turn left onto Van Ness, proceed west about 500 yards, and turn right onto International Court (see above, if you reach Reno Road you have gone too far).

Parking: Garage parking is available at the Van Ness Center on Connecticut Ave. Limited on-street parking is available on Van Ness and on 36th St.. Some street parking may be available on International Court.

Metro: The Van Ness-UDC Metro stop on the Red Line is just north of the intersection of Van Ness and Connecticut.



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