

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

## SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, DC

### NEWSLETTER

May 2010

### **Slovak Government Bestows Honors on Messrs. Karch and Matula**

The SASW proudly acknowledges and congratulates long-time members John Karch and Steve Matula for the honors they recently received from the Slovak government.

During the month of March, Jaroslav Baška, the Slovak Minister of Defense, led a delegation on an official visit to Canada and United States. This delegation included General Lubomir Bulik, the top military officer in Slovakia, and Mr. Julius Demetrian, Director General of the Defense Policy Department of the Slovak Ministry of Defense. Many topics were discussed during the official meetings but, two of the more significant ones were the Slovak commitment to the NATO mission in Afghanistan and increasing the cooperation between the National Guard of Indiana and the Armed Forces of Slovak Republic.

Slovakia continued to strengthen its military presence in Afghanistan during 2009 and currently has 319 troops supporting operations. The Slovak government intends to increase its commitment of troops to 400 during 2010 and 2011, and is loosening restrictions on how they may be deployed. The cooperation between the Indiana National Guard and the Slovak Armed Forces has spanned some 15 years. The Guard has helped extensively with the modernization of the Slovak Armed Forces, the improvement of their interoperability, and the professional development of soldiers. The Guard also helped Slovakia prior to joining NATO, and continues to enjoy an excellent working relationship with the Slovak Armed Forces.

On the evening of Monday March 15, 2010, a reception at the Slovak Embassy in honor of the Minister's visit was hosted by Ambassador Peter Burian and Colonel Jaroslav Gofjar, the Embassy's defense attaché. During the reception, Minister Baška awarded to four persons the Memorial Medal of the Minister of Defense – 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree. Two of the awards were posthumous: Brigadier General Koloman Skalina, for military gallantry performed well beyond the call of duty during his faithful and honorable service in the Czechoslovak Army during the WW II, and Sgt. Michael Strank (of Iwo Jima fame), for military gallantry performed well beyond the call of duty during his faithful and honorable service while defending freedom and democracy on the Pacific battlefields during World War II. The other medals, somewhat to their pleasant surprise, were awarded to two of our longtime SASW members: Dr. John Karch and Mr. Steve Matula, both for their faithful and honorable service on the Pacific battlefields during the WW II, and for their exceptional and lifelong contributions to mutual relations between the Slovak Republic and the U.S.

Minister Baška and his delegation ended their trip by meeting with several congressmen, including representatives Pete Visclosky (D-IN), John Mica (R-FL), and Joe Wilson (R-SC); Senator Dick Lugar (R-IN); and officials at the departments of State and Defense, including Defense Secretary Gates with whom they discussed NATO, Afghanistan cooperation, and the fight against global terrorism.

## *President's column*

As the year nears the halfway point, I am delighted to report that SASW was able to send \$2,000 to City University for four \$500 scholarships awarded to deserving students for the fall 2010 term. Millie Schoepe-Evans donated funds for two of the scholarships to be given in memory of her late sister, Mary Knurek. Thank you for all of your contributions. Any new contributions will go to next year's scholarships.

Our first speaker presentation this year was a talk about Slovak wedding music by Jadranka Važanová on April 17. Our next talk will be a presentation by Ben Sorensen, who will discuss Slovak popular music, on Saturday, May 22. It will be at the Arlington County Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy St.—halfway between the Ballston and Virginia Squares Metro stops. The program starts at 2:00pm and will go no later than 4:30pm. Please join us for Slavic food afterwards at the Domku Cafe, 821 Upshur St., N.W., in Washington, DC. If you need a ride from the library to the restaurant, some of us will be available for car pooling; email <[dcslovaks@yahoo.com](mailto:dcslovaks@yahoo.com)> (preferred) or leave a message at (571) 265-4436 (a local number). Ben Sorensen will play his button accordion after dinner. We look forward to seeing you there.

In February and March, Millie Schoepe-Evans offered holubky and halusky cooking lessons. The attendees had a great time and learned a good deal. We hope to have more sessions later this year. Stay tuned for details.

Two other upcoming events to plan for are our annual summer picnic on Sunday, June 27, at Millie Schoepe-Evans' home in Fairfax, and a joint presentation with the National Capitol Chapter of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society on Sunday, September 19, location TBD. The topic will be genealogy and the speaker will be Tom Sadauskis. Specific information will be forthcoming. Also in this mailing, you are receiving a survey from your Board on increasing our membership and expanding our range of programs. When you receive it, either by mail or electronically, please take a few minutes to fill it out. It will help your board when planning future events.

As always, all are invited to our monthly board meetings. Our next meeting will be on June 2, at 6:30pm, in the Food Court of the Ballston Common Mall, in Arlington (very close to the Ballston Metro station).

Kathryn Tatko

## **Key Events for Slovakia in the Month of June: Elections; World Cup**

As Slovakia continues to emerge from the economic difficulties of recent years, the month of June also has Slovaks focusing on both domestic politics and the country's role on the world (sports) stage.

**Elections:** On June 12, Slovaks will elect a new parliament, although major change in the government is not expected, according to polls of the electorate taken in March. A total of 18 parties registered to compete in the election, 12 of which are not currently in the parliament (a party needs to obtain 5 percent or more of the national vote to be seated). Typically, no party obtains a majority of the vote (or seats), so the process of forming a government through party coalitions begins. The current government, formed after the 2006 elections and led by Prime Minister Robert Fico, is comprised of three parties: SMER (Mr. Fico's party), the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), and the Slovak National Party (SNS). This government remains popular, and it is likely that Mr. Fico will remain as PM, although the election could result in a different set of coalition partners. A poll taken in March and released in April showed SMER with about 44 percent support nationally. The other two partners in the governing coalition, HZDS and SNS, split a 13 percent share of the expected vote. Interestingly, the two main opposition parties, the Slovak Democratic &

[Continued on p.4]

## SASW Calendar of Upcoming Events

*Don't Miss the Next SASW Speaker's Series Event!!*

### TO JE ALE MUZIKA! WHAT'S SO SLOVAK ABOUT SLOVAK POP MUSIC?

A talk by Ben Sorensen

Saturday, May 22, 2010  
2:00pm

2nd Floor Meeting Room, Arlington County Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy St, Arlington, VA  
(midway between Virginia Square and Ballston Metro stations) Cost: free

What's so Slovak about Slovak popular music? Ben will explore its folk-music roots to identify the elements that have been carried over into Slovak pop music, giving it a distinct flavor. He'll show us examples of what's out there now and talk about how it's evolved.

Ben Sorensen graduated with a BA in History and Music, only to move to Slovakia to fall in love with ethnomusicology and Slovak folk music. He learned to play the *fujara* and *pišťalka* in the fields of Podpolanie while also fronting a bluegrass band (Longhorns) and a progressive rock band (SIX) in Poprad.

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#### *Other Events of Interest*

**Thursday, May 27** 12 noon-1:00 pm -- *Fujara Lecture and Concert* for the American Music Instrument Society and the general public: <  
<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/events/botkin-lectures.html> > Library of Congress,  
Jefferson Building, Coolidge Auditorium, 10 E. First St., SE, Washington, DC.

#### *Mark your calendars!! Details Forthcoming*

**Sunday, June 27** The SASW Annual Picnic at Millie Schoepe-Evans property in Fairfax, VA  
**Sunday, Sept. 19** Joint presentation with Carpatho-Rusyn Society: Tom Sadauskis on genealogy  
**Saturday, Oct. 23** SASW Annual Meeting (with a speaker)  
**Sunday, Dec. 6** SASW Sv. Mikuláš Party

## *SASW News and Notes*

We were sorry to hear of recent losses by members of SASW. On April 11, longtime SASW member John M. Harar passed away at the age of 92. Also in April, we learned that Jim Galbavy unexpectedly lost his wife, Jane. SASW extends its sincerest condolences to the Harar and Galbavy families.

**NCSML Oral History Project** -- The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library is launching a new project to record the personal stories, family sagas, and community histories of émigrés from Czechoslovakia who settled in Chicago, Washington D.C., and Cleveland. Their stories are personal, but they help explain monumental political and cultural shifts that occurred during the 20th century. In what is believed to be the first project of its kind, NCSML aims to gather the personal accounts of Czech- and Slovak-Americans, and preserve their stories for future generations. If you know of an émigré who might have an interesting story to tell, or for more information about the project, contact: Rosie Johnston, Project Coordinator, at (319) 362-8500 ext. 214 or < [rjohnston@ncsml.org](mailto:rjohnston@ncsml.org) >.

**“Bathory” movie update** -- In the last newsletter we announced the expected showing of the Slovak movie “Bathory” as part of the Friends of Slovakia (FOS) film series. Complete details are not yet available, but it is expected that the showing will be in late July or early August, and will be at the Avalon Theater on Connecticut Ave. (not at the embassy, as previously expected). We will provide details once they are finalized. This Slovak film is based on the story of Elizabeth Bathory, a 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian countess with an infamous history.

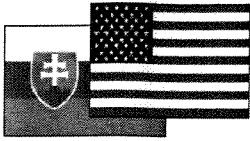
**Slovak Caucus formed** -- On May 4, 2010, the United States Congress formally registered a Congressional Caucus on Slovakia. The decision followed an initiative tabled by representatives Peter Visclosky (D-IN) and Joe Wilson (R-SC) who jointly chair the new caucus. The group aims to support and enhance relations between the United States and Slovakia, in order to advance mutually advantageous cooperation between the two countries. The caucus emerged as a result of long-term interest in enhancing U.S.-Slovak relations at the Congressional level, and as an additional tool for effective dialogue and cooperation. The caucus will bring together members of the U.S. Congress with a deep interest in, and close ties to, Slovakia. [Source: SK embassy website]

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[“Elections, World Cup” continued from p.2]

Christian Union (SDKU) and the Christian Democratic Movement (KHD) also would garner about 13 percent of the vote each. Three other parties, the Freedom & Solidarity party (SaS), the Hungarian Coalition party (SMK), and the Most-Hid party are competing with single digit shares that may not allow them to meet the 5 percent share necessary for representation in parliament. A vigorous campaign is ongoing and other reports suggest the race appears to be tightening, with an April poll showing SMER with 35 percent support.

**World Cup:** June will also see the emergence of Slovakia on the world stage in the game of football (or “soccer” as we call it here in the U.S.), as the national team competes in its first World Cup Tournament in South Africa. While Czechoslovakia was a world power in soccer for many years, this is the first time that Slovakia has qualified for the World Cup since gaining its independence in 1993. The Slovak team defied predictions by winning a strong Group 3 in European qualifying competition last fall, with a 1-0 victory over Poland in the snow. The team is coached by Vladimir Weiss, who is the son of a former Czechoslovak national team player, and whose own son plays for Manchester City in the English Premier League. The Slovak team also features stars Stanislav Sestak, Marek Hamsik, and Martin Skrtel. In the World Cup, Slovakia was placed in Group F and will compete with Italy, Paraguay, and New Zealand. This is a strong group and it will be a challenge for Slovakia to emerge from this group and compete in later rounds of the tournament. Slovakia’s Group F games will be: Tuesday, June 15, vs. New Zealand; Sunday, June 20, vs. Paraguay; and Thursday, June 24, vs. Italy. We wish good luck to the Slovak national team and, of course, to the U.S. as well!



## SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Slovak American Society of Washington D.C. (SASW) was established in 1988 for Americans with an interest in Slovakia, its culture, and its people. SASW functions are primarily social, cultural, and educational.

In pursuing these goals, SASW sponsors and/or has supported:

- lectures
- cultural events
- exhibitions
- annual picnic
- annual Sv. Mikuláš party (St. Nicholas)
- scholarships for Slovak students in Slovakia
- Slovak language classes
- sending books to Slovak public libraries

Because members' interests can change, the SASW Board of Directors is interested in learning which current activities we should continue to sponsor or what new activities we should support. We are also interested in finding activities that would attract younger members.

To help do this, we have drawn up a brief survey below. Please take a few minutes to complete this paper survey and mail it back to the following address: **4004 Isbell St., Silver Spring, MD 20906-4218**, or go to our Web site at: < <http://dcslovaks.org/> > and complete the survey online.

1. What activities would you like to see?
  - a. lectures, e.g. political, historical
  - b. movies, current Slovak language, classic movies
  - c. social outings
  - d. activities with the Baltimore Slovak Association
  - e. co-sponsored events with Capital Chapter of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society
2. In which activities would you participate (please list):
  - a.
  - b.
3. Which cultural events interest you?
  - a. dance performances
  - b. cooking classes
  - c. book talks on Slovak-related themes, locations, authors
  - d. music: contemporary, classic, or other
  - e. genealogy workshops
4. How can we attract younger members?
  - a. plan activities with the local Slovak Meetup.com group
  - b. announce our activities on college campuses
  - c. sponsor happy-hour socials after work
  - d. sponsor cultural events at museums
  - e. other (please list):
5. I prefer that SASW activities and meetings take place in:
  - a. Washington, D.C.
  - b. Virginia
  - c. Maryland
6. Which activities would you be willing to help organize?
  - a. cooking classes
  - b. travel discussions
  - c. annual picnic
  - d. Sv. Mikuláš holiday party
  - e. outings to Wolf Trap
  - f. other (please list):
7. Additional comments (on reverse side)



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

New membership or renewal runs thru the end of **2010**

Individual membership (\$15/year)      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Family membership (\$20/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--Carol Fedorchak  
3309 Dunnington Road  
Beltsville, MD 20705-3206**

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

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

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

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

Work: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please do NOT include my phone number in the Annual Membership Directory

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes! Please contact me to help out with Society events (05/10)

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

**2010 Board of Directors:**

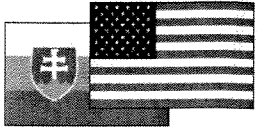
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Jerry Rich -- Vice-President  
Georgene Chastain -- Secretary  
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Helen Fedor -- at large  
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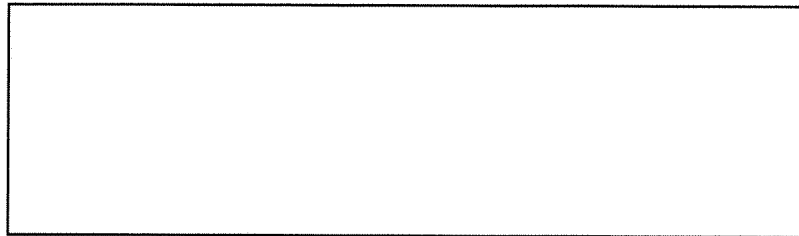
**Email:** [dcslovaks@yahoo.com](mailto:dcslovaks@yahoo.com)

**There is still time to renew  
your SASW membership for  
2010!**

We will publish the SASW  
membership directory this summer  
so please renew if you haven't  
done so and/or update your  
information by sending it to Carol  
Fedorchak at the address above or  
at [dcslovaks@yahoo.com](mailto:dcslovaks@yahoo.com)



SLOVAK-AMERICAN SOCIETY  
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***Don't Miss the Next SASW Speaker's Series Event!!***

***Saturday, May 22***

***SASW Member Survey Enclosed. Please respond!!***