

SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, DC

NEWSLETTER

October 2010

www.dcslovaks.org

Slovak American Society Annual General Membership Meeting Saturday, October 23

On Saturday, October 23, 2010, at 12:30pm, the Slovak American Society of Washington, D.C., will hold its annual general membership meeting at the Slovak Embassy, 3523 International Court, N.W., Washington, D.C. **The business meeting will start at 12:30 pm** and should take about an hour. It will include an annual report by the Board of Directors on SASW's status and activities during 2010, an opportunity for members to raise issues or ask questions of the current board, and the election of three board members. The slate of candidates for the Board of Directors is: Helen Fedor; Tonya Harmon; John Husovsky; Wil Laska; Mark Sabol; and Stephen Sopko. Because there are six candidates for three positions, voting at the meeting will be conducted by written ballot. You must be present to vote, so members are encouraged to attend. Brief bios of the candidates appear on pages 3-4. If you have questions about the meeting, call Steve Matula, Nominations Committee Chair, at (703) 671-3013, or email < scmatula@aol.com > or < dcslovaks@yahoo.com >.

The business part of the meeting will be followed by an **SASW Speakers' Series talk at 2:00 pm**, presented by **Mr. Marcel Jesensky, doctoral candidate in the History Department at the University of Ottawa**, who will speak on,

"Between *Realpolitik* and Realism: The Slovak-Polish Border, 1918-47"

In 1918-19, when Czecho-Slovakia and Poland failed to settle their border issues by themselves, they agreed to accept the decision of the Paris Peace Conference. Unfortunately, border delimitations between the two countries very quickly degenerated into *Realpolitik* arm-twisting. The idealistic idea of a self-determination plebiscite ultimately gave way to a solution that combined *Realpolitik*, negotiations, and behind-the-scenes maneuvering.

Marcel Jesenský is a doctoral candidate and a Sessional Lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Ottawa. He received an M.Sc. and an M.A. from universities in Slovakia and Canada, has worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, and served as a diplomat at the Slovak Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. He specializes in the history of international relations and diplomacy, and Central Europe and European integration.

The talk is open to the public, so if you cannot attend the business meeting or know non-members who would be interested, please let them know. Admission is free. A light luncheon will be provided.

New Slovak Government Puts its Program into Action

This summer saw some important political events in Slovakia, with a new government formed, led by the country's first female prime minister, Iveta Radicova.

June parliamentary elections resulted in the main party in the ruling coalition, PM Robert Fico's Smer, receiving the highest percentage of votes, at 34.8%. However, its coalition partners, the Slovak National Party and Vladimir Meciar's LS/HZDS dropped considerably, with the latter party not meeting the 5% threshold for parliamentary representation. As the opposition parties pledged not to join with Fico in a new ruling coalition, the opportunity fell to Ms. Radicova of the SKDU/DS to form a new government. Her party joined with three others, the Christian Democrats (KDH), a moderate Hungarian party (Most-Hid), and the Freedom and Solidarity Party, led by economist Richard Sulik, in a new center-right coalition with a narrow majority of seats. The composition of the new government is similar to the coalition that ruled Slovakia from 1998-2006 under former PM Mikulas Dzurinda. Like that coalition, the challenge for the new government will be to bridge the differences among the partners and to maintain its cohesion under challenging economic and political circumstances.

The new government brings a few familiar faces back into government, most notably former PM Dzurinda, who will now serve as foreign minister. Ivan Miklos returns as finance minister, and Jan Figel will head a new ministry of transport, tourism, and regional development. Ms. Radicova, a professor of sociology, had served as a Minister of Labor, Social Affairs, and Family in Dzurinda's government, and had raised her profile considerably with an unsuccessful run for president in 2009 against President Ivan Gasparovic.

PM Radicova presented the program of the new coalition to parliament in early August and it was approved. In its statement of priorities, the new government is promising a smaller budget deficit, a healthier business environment, a more active civil society, more corruption-sensitive political and public life, better access to justice, enough jobs to reduce social risks, an innovative society, and access to quality health care. PM Radicova will be in Washington in November for several events, including delivering the Annual Czech & Slovak Freedom Lecture at the Woodrow Wilson Center on November 10th. The event is open to the public.

SASW News and Notes

New U.S. Ambassador Arrives in Slovakia – After nearly 19 months without an ambassador to Slovakia, Theodore “Tod” Sedgwick, a business executive originally from Cleveland and who resided in Georgetown, was sworn in as U.S. ambassador on July 28. Amb. Sedgwick's bio appeared in the February issue of this newsletter. President Ivan Gasparovic received the new U.S. ambassador on August 18. “I am extremely excited and privileged to be here in Slovakia to represent President Obama,” Sedgwick stated.

Condolences – The Washington-area Slovak American community experienced the loss of two important members recently. **Dr. John Karch** passed away on September 7th. Our May newsletter reported the award he received from the Slovak government for his WWII service. We hope to publish more biographical material on Dr. Karch as it becomes available. Later in the month, we learned of the passing of **Mrs. Olga McClure**. Olga was a gracious presence at many events and was a strong supporter of Slovak culture. SASW extends its deepest sympathies to Loretta Karch and her family, and to Brooks McClure and his family.

Scholarship Grants available – The Slovak League of America has announced that it will offer John & Julia Demko Memorial Scholarship Grants of \$750 to deserving students of Slovak ancestry. The grants are available to undergraduate and graduate level students. The application process requires a study paper; applications are due November 1, 2010. For an application, write to: Slovak League of America, 205 Madison St., Passaic, N.J. 07055. You can also call (973) 472-8993, M-F, 11am-4pm, for more information.

Information About the Six Candidates for the 2011 SASW Board of Directors.

Helen Fedor (*incumbent board member*) -- Helen Fedor is a reference librarian at the Library of Congress, where she works with Slovak and Czech materials. She grew up on the southeast side of Chicago, where she spoke an eastern Slovak dialect, ate lots of Slovak home cooking, and went to many Slovak celebrations. She studied the standard Slovak language at university and twice at the Studia Academia Slovaca program in Bratislava. She is also a member of the Slovak Studies Association.

Helen has been a member of SASW since its earliest days. She held the office of president 1999-2001, and was subsequently membership chair for several years before handing off those duties so that she could better focus on her role as program chair, which she continues to this day. During her time as program chair, Helen implemented the Speakers Series, bringing university professors, popular authors, and others to speak on the Slovak side of topics such as cooking, history, music, and politics. Other programs have included cooking lessons, Slovak documentaries, and a reception for Slovak and Rusyn scholars. She is working to broaden the range of topics for future programs.

Tonya Harmon -- "I'm Tonya Harmon, the daughter of a Slovak father. My dad, Jerry Shuster, was born in Ontario, Canada, in 1939, shortly after his family immigrated from a small Slovak village in Vojvodina, Yugoslavia, in 1938. I grew up with close contact to my large, boisterous, noisy Slovak extended family, enjoying many memorable vacations, meals, and visits with aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and great grandparents. Throughout the decades after WWII, my family kept in close contact with relatives in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Austria, and the former Yugoslavia, but it wasn't until the past year or two that I became interested in learning more about my Slovak heritage and in establishing closer ties with my family and culture in Europe. I finally made a trip over there in the spring to visit family, and look forward to returning next year.

"I am very proud to be of Slovak descent, and would like to continue to learn more about the food, language, culture, and traditions. I am blogging about my family stories and centuries-long obsession with food (I think that is a typical Slovak trait) at < <http://paulinescookbook.com> >. I am also keenly interested in spreading the beauty and knowledge of Slovakia, Vojvodina and Slovak culture in general within North America, because I think it is fascinating and so little is known about it here. Finally, I am interested in getting to meet other Slovaks here, as I have had little to no contact with Slovaks outside of my family. I have strong ties to the entrepreneurial community here in the DC area, as well as within the technology space. I am a software company founder who is now helping new entrepreneurs launch their own businesses through a mentoring program called the Founder Institute. I am writing a book based on *Pauline's Cookbook*. I have been married for 22 years to Nicholas Harmon, and we have three children: Will (18), who is in Dubai studying computer science at university, John (14) at Langley High School, and Katherine (10), in elementary school. We live in Great Falls, VA, and spend summers back in Canada. I look forward to meeting and getting to know you all."

John Husovsky -- John Husovsky is currently a self-employed tax preparer, the treasurer of the Library of Congress Federal Credit Union, and a volunteer at Hillwood Museum. Currently retired, his career included work as an auditor at the Naval Propellant Plant and the Federal Aviation Agency, and as an accounting officer with the Library of Congress. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from King's College in Wilkes Barre, PA. He also served in the Army from 1961-65. He made the following statement,

(continued)

“My interest in serving on the Board of Directors of the SASW is to support and advance the cultural, educational, and social goals and strategies of the organization, with an emphasis on growth in membership.”

William D. Laska – (*incumbent board member*) Wil has been on the Board of Directors for two years assisting leadership in organizing events and helping steer the SASW in a positive direction. He is a senior Program Manager at the Department of Homeland Security, Science & Technology directorate. Some of his work involves delivering prototype-level demonstrations of potential game-changing technologies in two to five years while others are transition programs that support end-user needs within a number of Critical Infrastructure Sectors. Prior to this career Wil had extensive military experience as a Naval Aviator and Program Manager. Wil holds a Bachelor Degree from Kent State University, and Master of Science Degree in Engineering from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He has completed work towards a PhD in Public Policy.

Mark Sabol – (*incumbent board member*) "Mark Sabol has lived in Northern Virginia and worked for the Army Research Institute for 25 years. He was a founding member of the Society and has served it in turn as Vice-President, President, Information Officer, and Board Member-at-Large."

Stephen Sopko – “I am first-generation American and my father was born in Kosice (Tahanovce), Slovakia. I was raised like a Slovak, as my father was an orphan and was taken from his country by Nazi Germany into concentration camps for helping people escape the Nazi party. I grew up with the language, food, music, and culture in Detroit, Michigan. I was able to reconnect my father to our family in Europe after 64 years and I joined the Slovak Meetup group to connect with my heritage. I am a technology executive and have been spent my life working around the USA and Europe. I am married and have two kids.

“I want to help other Slovaks with culture, events, as well as spreading this to others that can enjoy the food, music, and culture that we have to offer. We need to increase events and get creative so that others will attend which will allow us to grow the organization. I would like to help grow the organization and spread our awesome culture.”

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.

SASW Calendar of Events

Mark your calendar for upcoming events!

- Thurs., October 21** 7:00 pm – Opening of the art exhibition “Pink Freud Anyone?” featuring the work of Petra Stefankova, at the Slovak Embassy. RSVP at (202) 237-1054, ext 266 or 200, or via email at < emb.washington@mzv.sk >.
- Sat., October 23** 12:30pm – SASW Annual General Membership Meeting at the Slovak Embassy
2:00 pm – SASW Speakers’ Series talk by Marcel Jesensky
- Sun., October 24** Noon to 6pm – The 24th Annual Czech and Slovak Festival, sponsored by the Czech and Slovak Heritage Association (CSHA) of Maryland. At the Baltimore 45 Association, Inc. Hall, (formerly Tall Cedars Hall), 2501 Putty Hill Avenue, Parkville, MD (corner of Old Harford Road and Putty Hill Avenue). Admission: \$5.00. For more information go to < <http://www.panix.com/~czslha/> >.
- Sun., October 31** 2:00pm – Especially for Children: The Embassy of the Slovak Republic presents a pantomime by Miroslav Kasprzyk as "The Bad King". A funny and joyful fairy tale for young children that actively engages the audience in the play. At the Slovak Embassy. Doors open at 1:30pm. RSVP to (202) 237-1054, ext. 266 or 200.
- Wed., November 10** Noon – The 11th Annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture will be delivered by Her Excellency, Iveta Radicova, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic. Title to be determined. Woodrow Wilson Center, Flom Auditorium, 6th floor, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC. Phone (202) 691-4222. Admission free.
- Sun., December 5** The SASW Svätý Mikuláš Party at the Slovak Embassy. Details forthcoming in November.

Another Event of Interest

- Sun., November 7** 1 to 5 pm, in Pittsburgh, PA – The 20th annual Slovak Heritage Festival, presented by the University of Pittsburgh Slovak Studies Program. Event will be held at the Cathedral of Learning Commons Room, in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh. For more information, call Chris Metil at (412) 624-5906 or go to < <http://www.slavic.pitt.edu/documents/festivalflier10.pdf> >.

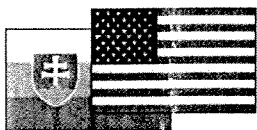
The Slovak-American Society of Washington is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Contributions and membership dues are tax-deductible.

2010 Board of Directors:

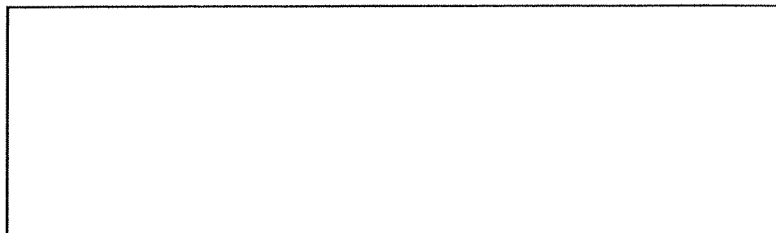
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SLOVAK-AMERICAN SOCIETY
OF WASHINGTON
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It's not too early to renew your SASW membership for 2011!

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

New membership or renewal runs thru the end of 2011

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

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Optional tax-deductible donation:

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TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

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

MAIL THIS FORM TO:

**SASW--Carol Fedorchak
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____ Please do NOT include my phone number in the Annual Membership Directory

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

(10/10)