

SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, DC

NEWSLETTER

November 2018

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2018 Anniversary Year Celebrations Wrap-Up; Amb. Korčok Arrives in Washington

As the year 2018 draws to a close, a range of activities commemorating this special anniversary year have wrapped up. Most notably, 2018 represents the 100th anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia, when Slovaks and Czechs agreed to join together in a new nation that freed them from the Hapsburg Empire as World War I drew to a close. Just as important are the events of 50 and 25 years ago. In 1968, the so-called 'Prague Spring' and efforts to humanize the communist regime brought to the world's attention the aspirations of Slovaks and Czechs for a better life. Then in 1993, the long-held aspirations of Slovaks for autonomy, as expressed in the historic Cleveland and Pittsburgh agreements, was realized as Slovakia became an independent nation after the break-up of Czechoslovakia.

In June we reported on commemorative events held in the first half of 2018, including the wonderful celebration of the Pittsburgh Agreement. Since then, SASW has continued its special Speakers' Series talks under the theme of "Anniversaries of the Eights." The four lectures held June through November were organized by SASW Board member and Program Chair Helen Fedor. SASW was joined by Friends of Slovakia as a co-sponsor of the series.

In June, the lecture focused on events relevant to the year 1938. Prof. Leslie J. Waters of Randolph-Macon College spoke on the topic "Borders on the Move: a Look at Southern Slovakia's Tumultuous 20th Century" at the Slovak Embassy. She described the dramatic changes in the Slovak-Hungarian border in 1918 and again in 1938, 1939, and after World War II. Prof. Waters provided the political context for these changes and described the dramatic impact on local populations suddenly finding themselves ruled by a radically different political regime.

After a summer hiatus, the series resumed on September 29, with a lecture by Prof. Gregory Ference of Salisbury University, focused on the events leading up to 1918. He spoke on the topic "The American Formation of Czecho-Slovakia: the Cleveland Agreement and the Pittsburgh Pact." Prof. Ference provided detailed background on the early involvement of Slovak organizations in the U.S., such as the Slovak League and the National Slovak Society, which pushed for autonomy from the Kingdom of Hungary, but as World War I proceeded, realized that joining with their Czech cohorts would be a more realistic option. The Slovak groups were in part influenced by their experience of federalism in the U.S. As the movements grew over the course of the war, the advocacy of Prof. T.G. Masaryk and others for a Czecho-Slovak state became pivotal. The Cleveland Agreement and Pittsburgh Pact (as Ference likes to describe the latter) emphasized the Slovaks' desire for autonomy in a federalized common state. As World War I drew to a close, the proposed Czecho-Slovak state gained a key goal in recognition by the U.S. under Pres. Woodrow Wilson and Sec. of State Robert Lansing, and the independent state was declared in Prague on October 28, 1918. In subsequent years, many Slovaks felt that Masaryk deemphasized their desire for autonomy in a

federal state and moved toward a more centralized Czechoslovak government. This precipitated an ongoing split among Slovaks between “autonomists and “centralists” (or Czechoslovakists) that carried through the country’s entire history, only achieving resolution with the “Velvet Divorce” of 1993.

On October 20, Prof. Martin Votruba of the University of Pittsburgh, where he directs the Slovak Studies program, gave a talk focused on the year 1848, titled “Empire or Kingdom: Slovak Considerations in 1848-49.” Prof. Votruba sketched a complex picture of movements and individuals that found inspiration in the European Enlightenment starting in the late 1700s. Then, Hungary was part of the Hapsburg Empire, and Enlightenment ideas focused on the importance of language as a key determinant of ethnic (and ‘national’) identity. Hapsburg Emperor Joseph II wanted to move the empire away from the use of Latin in official affairs and replace it with German. This did not sit well with the Hungarians, who appealed to Vienna, and also sought greater freedoms within the monarchy. In the 1800s Slovaks also sought recognition, through their desire to retain Latin, but also the use of Slovak (as opposed to Hungarian) in their affairs, culminating in a petition to Vienna on June 6, 1842. It went nowhere. Then in 1848, Louis Kossuth, a Hungarian figure of Slovak paternity, brought forth a series of demands for Hungarian autonomy and democracy, but he refused to recognize the existence of any “Slovak nation or nationality”. As Slovak awareness grew, leading figures tended to prioritize the use of the national language over democracy while trying to convince the Emperor to carry out reforms. A complex series of events ensued, complete with armed conflicts, and culminated in a March 1849 memorandum outlining Slovak demands. But months later, the Russian tsar intervened to support the Hapsburg Empire and defeat the Hungarian Revolution, along with Slovak aspirations.

The special series concluded on November 3, with a lecture by Dr. J. Luke Ryder, who holds a Ph.D. from McGill University in Central European Studies, and is currently a researcher at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. He spoke on the topic “Prelude to February 1948: Crisis in Slovakia and the Roots of a Communist Coup d’Etat.” Dr. Ryder noted that discussion of the February 1948 communist coup in Czechoslovakia tended to focus on the events in Prague involving Czech communists. But Ryder noted that a kind of coup had already occurred in Slovakia. By early 1948, the Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPC) had not yet neutralized its opponents in the Czech lands, but the Slovak democratic opposition had been subdued by the autumn of 1947, and the government there was in the CPC’s hands. He reviewed the events in Slovakia from 1945 to 1947, emphasizing two critical developments. The first was the pre-history of the “Slovak coup,” focusing on how Slovak communists positioned themselves as the standard-bearers of postwar anti-fascism and democracy. The second was the political missteps that left non-communist forces in Slovakia vulnerable to sabotage and slander.

If you’d like to watch a video of these talks check out You Tube under the tag
< https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeptYWtHx_klgiWDgyt25iw > or search under "DCSlovaks videos".

Ambassador Ivan Korčok Arrives in Washington

There is a new Slovak Ambassador in Washington: Amb. Ivan Korčok arrived in early September and presented his credentials to President Donald Trump on September 18. A number of distinguished visitors were invited to the Embassy that evening to meet with the new Ambassador.

Prior to being named Ambassador, Korčok served as State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs from August 2015. Between May and December 2016, he served as Government Plenipotentiary for the Slovak Presidency in the Council of the EU. Prior to these assignments, he was assigned the post of Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the EU (2009-15) and Slovak Ambassador to Germany (2005-09). Ambassador Korčok began his career in 1992, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he held many senior positions, including Director of the Department for Policy Planning and Analysis (1997-98), Director General of the Directorate General for International Organizations and Security Policy (2001-02), and State Secretary (2002-04). In 2003, he was Head of

Delegation of the Slovak Republic on Accession Talks to NATO and Member of the European Convention in Brussels.

Interestingly, Amb. Korčok will move into a new residence in Washington, D.C. The Slovak government recently acquired a property that will serve as the ambassadorial residence. It is located in the prestigious Kalorama section of Washington, which is home to many distinguished figures. The prior ambassadorial residence was acquired in 1994, and is located in the Washington suburb of McLean, Virginia. The property, while lovely, was a distance outside the District of Columbia, where all the other EU ambassadors reside.

We note with great appreciation the service of departing Ambassador Peter Kmec. He will move on to a position as advisor to the Slovak Prime Minister. A farewell reception was held at the Slovak Embassy in July for Amb. Kmec and his wife Monika. Warm wishes were extended to the ambassadorial couple in remarks by U.S. government officials and representatives of the Slovak-American community.

SASW Holds Annual General Meeting

SASW held its annual general meeting on Saturday, October 20, at the Slovak Embassy. President Brian Belensky presented an overview of the Society's activities in 2018 (the SASW annual report is printed below). In addition, elections were held for the positions of the three Board members whose terms were expiring: Brian Belensky, Georgene Chastain, and Rich Palaschak. Each of them agreed to stand for another term on the Board. No other candidates had come forward, so at the meeting Nominations Chair Kathryn Tatko proposed the slate and they were elected by acclamation. Subsequently, the entire Board met and selected officers, and the incumbent slate of officers was re-elected: Brian Belensky, President; Marcel Lorincz, Vice President; Georgene Chastain, Treasurer; and Rich Palaschak, Secretary. We congratulate them on their re-election and their willingness to serve SASW. SASW is fortunate to have a strong, dedicated leadership team.

SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, DC Report to the Membership: October 2018

This year our society has continued our efforts to help foster awareness of Slovak cultural and current affairs. The following are the highlights:

Membership

As of October 14, 2018, we had 100 total memberships (54 Individual and 46 Family), an increase from 85 memberships (42 Individual and 43 Family) in September 2017.

Financial

Our financial status is stable. Our total assets at September 30, 2018, were \$13,280.81. These assets are deposited in our business checking account at Bank of America (\$7,280.81) and a CD account at Lafayette Federal Credit Union (\$6,000.66).

City University

In May we donated \$7,500 to City University of Seattle, which supported 10 partial scholarships to needy students in Slovakia. This sum was the largest amount ever donated by SASW in a single year. On October 14, we held our fifth annual Café Night fundraiser at Bistro Bohem in Washington, DC, for City University Scholarships. Orchester Praževica provided the music for the event.

Programs

The following are the events we have held or have scheduled for the 16th year of our Speakers' Series:

in collaboration with the Friends of Slovakia, for 2018, we lined up speakers for a series of talks about prominent years in Slovak history that end with “8” – 1848, 1918 (the founding of Czechoslovakia), 1938, 1948 (the communist takeover), 1968 (the Prague Spring), and 1988 (the Velvet Revolution).

April 21 — Dr. Carol Leff, University of Illinois, spoke about the events surrounding the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia.

May 4 — Ted Russell, former U.S. ambassador to Slovakia, spoke about his personal experiences in Czechoslovakia and Slovakia around the time of Slovak independence, and Prof. James Krapfl, McGill University, spoke about the events leading up to Slovak independence in 1993, and their influence until the present day.

June 15 — Prof. Leslie Waters, Randolph Macon College, spoke about the events of 1938.

September 29 — Prof. Gregory Ference, Salisbury University, spoke about the events of 1918 and the Pittsburgh Agreement.

October 20 — Prof. Martin Votruba, University of Pittsburgh, spoke about the events of 1848 and their meaning for Slovak nationhood.

November 3 — Dr. J. Luke Ryder, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, about the communist takeover in 1948.

Membership Initiatives

Over the past year, SASW has continued with several initiatives to attract new members. The Board plans to explore new strategies for attracting new members and streamlining organizational procedures concerning membership renewal.

We are working to increase the quantity and variety of content that is available to SASW members and visitors on our website < www.dcslovaks.org >.

We are actively maintaining public pages on social media sites such as Twitter < <https://twitter.com/DCSlovaks> > and Facebook < <https://www.facebook.com/dcslovaks/> > to raise our public profile and generate interest in Slovak topics. Please follow these pages and share them with your friends and colleagues to boost the society’s internet presence.

Social and Cultural Activities

On September 22, we held our annual picnic at the home of SASW member Ludo Hintos.

On December 2, our annual Svätý Mikuláš party will be held at the Slovak Embassy. Orchester Praževica will provide the musical entertainment.

SASW has continued to support a social group on the Meetup website < <http://www.meetup.com/dcslovaks/> >, to attract younger members and more-recent Slovak émigrés.

2018 Board of Directors

Officers:

Brian Belensky, President
Marcel Lorincz, Vice President
Georgene C. Chastain, Treasurer
Rich Palaschak, Secretary

At-Large Board Members:

Helen Fedor
John Husovsky
Valerie McNeil
Virginia Sorkin
Marta Szotakova

The Slovak American Society of Washington, D.C.,
in cooperation with the Embassy of the Slovak Republic

Svätý Mikuláš Party

Join us to celebrate the tradition of St. Nicholas with a delicious Slovak buffet dinner,
a visit by Sv. Mikuláš, and live music by Orchester Praževica.

Sunday, December 2, 2018
2-4:30 pm (doors open at 1:00pm)

\$25 - SASW Member (Individual)

\$45 - SASW Member (Family)

\$35 - Non-Member (Individual)

\$65 - Non-Member (Family)

The Embassy of the Slovak Republic
3523 International Court, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Prepaid Reservations Only

Seating is limited to the first 100 persons.

RSVP by 6:00 pm, Wednesday, November 28



Please visit the dcslovaks.org for more information.

SASW News and Notes

Membership Renewals – Please remember that it is not too early to send in your SASW membership renewal for 2019! If you are attending the Svätý Mikuláš party, you can renew at the same time, by sending in the renewal application on the back of this newsletter along with your the prepaid Sv. Mikuláš reservation form. If you are not attending the Sv. Mikuláš party, you can just send in the membership renewal form. Your support is needed and appreciated. Thanks !

Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture – This prestigious annual lecture is planned for **Friday, November 16**, at noon, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, in the Reagan Building, in downtown Washington. The event is jointly sponsored by Friends of Slovakia (FOS) and American Friends of the Czech Republic (AFoCR), and this year will feature former Slovak Prime Minister **Mikuláš Dzurinda**. It promises to be a special event in this multiple anniversary year. Dzurinda was a key architect of the post-Mečiar reforms that spurred Slovakia's economic success and fully integrated it into Western institutions. You can register via the Wilson Center website at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/2018-czech-and-slovak-freedom-lecture-miracles-the-heart-europe> >.

In Memoriam – SASW notes the passing of long-time member and World War II veteran, **John Lewis Dvorscak**, of Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, on June 2, at the age of 92. He was born in Hazelton, PA to parents who emigrated from Slovakia. We extend our condolences to his family.

Also, earlier this year, **Stephen J. Ditko** passed away. Mr. Ditko was an American comics artist and writer best known as the artist and co-creator, with Stan Lee, of the Marvel Comics superheroes Spider-Man and Doctor Strange. He was born in Johnstown, PA, the son of first-generation Americans of Slovak descent < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Ditko >.

Slovak Movies – The Slovak Embassy has been showing a series of excellent Slovak movies over the past several months. Most recently, the documentary film "The Oath" was screened on November 8. The film examines the life of Sgt. Michael Strank, a Slovak-American who participated in the famous World War II flag raising on Iwo Jima by US Marines. The film debut was followed by a discussion with the director, Dušan Hudec.

HOLIDAY SHOPPING OPTIONS !

AmazonSmile – SASW is a participant in the AmazonSmile charitable donation program. Under this program, Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organizations selected by our customers. When you do your shopping on Amazon this holiday season, please use this link < <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1906440> > to support SASW. Donations will only be credited to SASW on purchases made through this link. Please share it with your family and friends.

Slovak Wines for the Holidays? – A reminder that Slovak wine is a good choice for Thanksgiving dinner and/or a great gift for under \$20, and is still available in the Washington, DC area. A selection of wines sold under the LIMBA brand are available at **Potomac Wine and Spirits, 3100 M St., NW, Washington, DC (in Georgetown)**. You can also order by calling 1-(800) 333-2829; the wine can be shipped to most states. To order online go to < www.potomacwines.com >, then click on 'Country' (left side) and scroll down to 'Slovakia'.

SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, D. C. MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL / APPLICATION / DONATION FORM

New membership or 2019 renewal runs through 12/31/2019.

Individual membership (\$25/year) \$ _____
Family membership (\$35/year) \$ _____

Tax-deductible donation (optional):

City University Scholarship Fund \$ _____
SASW General Fund \$ _____

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

Mail your check (made out to the Slovak American Society of Washington, DC) and this form to:

**SASW Membership
P.O. Box 2502
Springfield, VA 22152-2502**

NAME(s) _____

ADDRESS _____

_____ **ZIP+4** _____

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

E-MAIL _____

Please Circle Your Selections:

Contact me to help out with SASW events: Yes No

Send my copy of the Newsletter via (select one): USPS Mail Email

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

2018-19 Board of Directors:

Officers:

Brian Belensky – President
Marcel Lorincz – Vice-President
Georgene Chastain – Treasurer
Rich Palaschak – Secretary

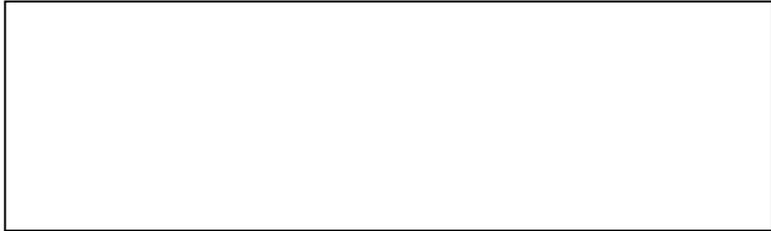
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Valerie McNeil
Virginia Sorkin
Marta Galysh Szotakova

Website: www.dcslovaks.org



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WASHINGTON, DC
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Springfield, VA 22152-2502



PLEASE NOTE: Your mailing label indicates the date through which your SASW membership is 'paid up'. For example, (12/2018) means you are current—paid through 2018. However, (12/2017) or earlier indicates your membership has expired. We appreciate your continued support!



Use this link < <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1906440> >
to support SASW.