



Friends of Slovakia NEWSLETTER

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Amb. & Mrs. Kacer Host Dinner to Raise FOS Scholarship Funds



Bottom row from left, Frank Backer, Brooks McClure, Otilia Kacer, Amb. Kacer, Olga McClure, Jana Sebosikova, Mr. and Mrs. Josephson. Going up steps from bottom right: Martin Korcek, Julie Slavik, Stephanie Salmon, Nancy Tucker, Juraj Slavik, Tom Gibian, Ted Russell, Scott Salmon, Bill Tucker.



l. – r. Ted Russell, Martin Korcek, Scott Salmon, Jana Sebosikova, Julie Slavik, Amb. Rastislav Kacer

Slovak Ambassador Rastislav Kacer and his wife Otilia hosted the annual Friends of Slovakia (FOS) Scholarship Fundraising Dinner at their residence on June 18. The event was a beautiful, intimate candle-lit affair attended by the two 2007 FOS Slovak Scholars, Jana Sebosikova and Martin Korcek, as well as members of the FOS Board of Directors and FOS supporters.

The Fund for American Studies summer institutes at Georgetown University started on June 9 so the 2007 Slovak Scholars had been in Washington for just over a week and were able to share their experiences and first impressions of the program with the dinner guests. The four institutes at Georgetown University are on Comparative Political and Economic Systems, Political Journalism, Business and Government Affairs and Philanthropy and Volunteer Service. Mr. Korcek attended the Institute on Philanthropy and Volunteer Service, and Ms. Sebosikova attended the Institute on Business and Government Affairs.

The institutes also include an internship component, and both the Slovak scholars extolled the benefits of having actual work experience in the United States. On page 4 is an article written by the two students on their Washington, DC summer experiences ♦

Slovakia Gains Chance to Qualify for Visa Waiver Program; U.S. Exit Verification Still Needed

Congress recently passed and President Bush has signed the “Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007”. The new law offers the chance for countries like Slovakia, not currently covered by the Visa Waiver Program, to qualify for visa free travel of their citizens to the United States. Our readers will recall that the Friends of Slovakia Spring 2007 Newsletter discussed prospects for this legislation in its lead article describing a successful Forum for Congressional Staff on the issue sponsored by FOS, CSIS and American Friends of the Czech Republic.

The following fact sheet issued by the Department of State (DOS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) describes the highlights of the new law. Slovakia, which was not included in the original Visa Waiver Program because its visa refusal rate considerably exceeded the 3% cutoff limit, is now just a few percentage points shy of qualifying under the law’s new 10% cutoff. In addition, it has the opportunity to qualify under the “maximum overstay” provision to be determined by DHS and DOS once DHS establishes an airport exit verification system to keep track of departures.

FACT SHEET | The 9/11 Law and the Visa Waiver Program

Additional Security Features for all VWP countries

The “Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007”—the 9/11 Law—introduces security enhancements for the Visa Waiver Program that will apply immediately to new VWP countries and will be phased in for current VWP members. These enhancements will provide a more secure international travel environment and help facilitate the movement of legitimate travelers.

- An Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system will collect basic passenger biographic information which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will use to assess potential threats and determine passengers’ eligibility to travel under the VWP.
- Before traveling, passengers will submit ETA applications via Internet, or other means, and will be told quickly whether they may travel on the VWP. Passengers who are not given an ETA will be referred to a U.S. consulate to apply for a visa.
- DHS will set the duration of the ETA approval, up to a maximum validity of three years, and its cost, expected to be nominal.
- An ETA is not a visa.
- The new law spells out requirements that VWP countries must report promptly, via Interpol or other specified means, information about the theft or loss of passports; share passenger information to assist in determining whether U.S.-bound passengers pose a security threat; and accept their citizens for repatriation no more than three weeks after a court issues a final order of removal.
- The law establishes additional security-related factors in considering new VWP candidates: a candidate’s airport security, air marshals program, passport/travel document standards, and broader counter-terrorism cooperation. Over the next two years, DHS will also assess whether current VWP members satisfy these new standards.

Waiver of the three percent refusal rate threshold

The 9/11 law also allows the VWP’s three percent nonimmigrant visa refusal rate criterion to be waived for countries that meet the enhanced VWP security requirements and that have EITHER a visa refusal rate of 10 percent or less OR an overstay rate below a maximum rate, yet to be established.

- The new waiver authority cannot be exercised until DHS has put in place the ETA system and a new exit system to verify the departure of 97% of foreign nationals exiting through airports.
- The new maximum overstay rate will not be established before the air exit system is in place. ♦

Profile: The Slovak Catholic Sokol

This article is one of an occasional series that FOS will be publishing profiling important Slovak-American fraternal and other organizations. In this issue, we profile the Slovak Catholic Sokol organization.

One of the largest of the Slovak-American fraternal organizations, the Slovak Catholic Sokol, fosters the well being of its members by providing personal insurance products, fitness programs, and benevolence as part of the Slovak-American community.

The Slovak Catholic Sokol was founded 102 years ago by a group of 46 young Slovak immigrant men. The Sokol movement had begun in Prague in the mid-19th century to promote physical fitness among its members, and the movement provided activity for youth while promoting solidarity among Slavic peoples seeking autonomy from Hapsburg rule. As the movement came to America, a non-sectarian Sokol organization was formed in Chicago, but many Slovak Catholic immigrants longed for a Sokol organization that would cultivate their strong religious tradition along with the gymnastic and athletic traditions of the Sokol movement.

On July 4, 1905, groups of Slovak immigrants, predominately from the Spis region, met in Passaic N.J. and formed the Slovak Catholic Sokol organization, later adopting the motto "*For God and Nation.*"

As a fraternal benefit society the Slovak Catholic Sokol provides insurance prod-

ucts to its membership, mainly in the form of life insurance and annuities. Such insurance was particularly important to the young Slovak immigrant workers in the early 20th century because little was provided by private employers in the form of employee benefits and extensive social insurance programs had yet to develop in the U.S. Currently, with over 32,000 members, the Slovak Catholic Sokol has over \$100 million of insurance in force and over \$55 million in assets.

The Slovak Catholic Sokol promotes its physical fitness mission by offering gymnastic and track and field programs that culminate in biennial competitions called a "*Slet*". These events have been held since 1912 in various cities throughout the U.S. and Canada. In addition to Slets, the organization hosts annual bowling, golf, basketball, volleyball and softball tournaments at both the national and district level.

Consistent with its strong commitment to youth, the organization promotes higher education among its members by offering scholarship grants to college-bound youth as well as those attending Catholic high schools and grammar schools. To date, over \$1 million has been awarded.

As a Catholic organization, the Slovak Catholic Sokol supports various works of charity and benevolence. It encourages active participation in parish life, supports religious communities of Slovak heritage, and since the demise of communism, has supported Catholic Bishops in Slovakia. As a Slovak organization with

pride in its Slovak roots, it also supports appreciation of Slovak history and traditions, as well as the work of the Slovak League of America and other Slovak cultural groups. It is also a strong supporter of the Friends of Slovakia.

A Supreme Assembly elected by the membership at an annual convention governs the organization. The members participate through a total of 123 local lodges called *Assemblies* and *Wreaths* that are located throughout the East and Midwest of the U.S. and in Ontario, Canada. These local lodges are part of 19 groups or districts. The current Supreme President is Sue Ann M. Seich; Larry M. Glugosh will succeed her in 2008. The official publication of the Slovak Catholic Sokol, the *Slovak Catholic Falcon*, has been published weekly since 1911. Its long-time and current editor, Daniel F. Tanzone, also serves as President of the Slovak League of America.

Founded upon the ideals and determination of a young group of Slovak immigrants over one hundred years ago, the Slovak Catholic Sokol has continued to adhere to those ideals and to foster the growth and development of the Slovak American community. It can proudly support its claim as "*America's Greatest Slovak Gymnastic and Athletic Fraternity.*"

For more information see www.slovakcatholicsokol.org ♦

2007 FOS Gala Dinner in Bratislava

will take place on

Monday December 10, 2007

Radisson SAS Carlton Hotel,

Bratislava, Slovakia

**If you are interested in attending or for more information,
please contact**

Bill Tucker at Email: tuckintl@radix.net

FOS Slovak Scholars Report on Georgetown Summer Institutes Experience

Being back in Slovakia, in my usual routine, it is hard to believe that only a few weeks ago, I sat at a breakfast table with a member of the House of Representatives, waited in line for a security check at the Senate, and discussed the economy of climate change in class. Yet I did all those things and many more. This summer, I was given the opportunity by The Fund for American Studies and Friends of Slovakia to experience Washington as a student, intern, and, of course, a tourist, all at the same time. I attended three courses at Georgetown University, which focused on different aspects of lobbying and government-business relations in general. In addition to that, each of the eight weeks was filled with guest lectures, site briefings, and workshops to provide us with a better understanding of how Washington works.

Washington, however, is like an anthill. You must be one of the ants to really understand its seemingly chaotic whirl. An internship at the U. S. Steel Government Relations office was such a first-hand experience. It enabled me to peek behind the curtain of media coverage by simply going to the congressional hearings and to see the roots of many issues by attending meetings or talking with Scott Salmon, my supervisor. It makes me happy that I also brought my little bit to the Hill, literally as well as figuratively, by helping to draft a letter

in favor of the visa waiver extension. I feel like I learned a lot at U. S. Steel, and I enjoyed it.

Friends of Slovakia played an important role in showing me Washington from a perspective other than that of a student or an intern. I was honored by an invitation to the dinner at Ambassador Kacer's residence. An interesting experience for me was to hear guest speakers at Mr. Tucker's country club, and to talk with guests at the gathering at Mr. and Mrs. Slavik's. I owe special thanks to Sharon Fisher that I got to see parts of D. C. other than the usual tourist area.

It is very cold and rainy in Slovakia now. It is hard to believe that only a few weeks ago I was cooking in the humidity and heat of Washington. Yet I clearly recall waiting in the midday sun beneath the Washington Monument for a tour. It was wonderful. Memories of this summer will stay with me forever and so will all the new experiences gained throughout the program.

Jana Šebošiková ♦

I want to thank Friends of Slovakia very much for its generosity in providing my scholarship; this allowed me to study at Georgetown University through the Fund's Institute of Philanthropy and

Voluntary Service. The Georgetown University campus is beautiful. The sports facilities on campus are very nice, and the opportunity to live with American classmates afforded me a unique opportunity.

I especially enjoyed the experiences that I was privileged to have with FOS members personally. It was a great honor to meet Slovak Ambassador Kacer over dinner. I met so many very interesting people that now serve as an inspiration for my life. I will graduate in August from Wageningen University in the Netherlands, so the classes at Georgetown have afforded me the experience of a lifetime that will not soon be forgotten. Professor Mitchell's class on Tocqueville's Democracy in America was the most stimulating for me. The Fund for American Studies and FOS have provided multiple opportunities for us to grow, both personally and intellectually. I was happy to have the chance to hear guest speakers at lunches and go on trips.

My internship at the Student Conservation Association was the most rewarding. I learned a lot about non-profit organizations, and this knowledge will greatly assist me in my future work. Thank you again for facilitating me in this life-altering experience. Without the support of FOS this would not have been possible.

Martin Korcek ♦

Garden gathering for FOS 2007 Scholars

On July 6th, Julie and Juraj Slavik hosted an early evening gathering for the two FOS Slovak Scholars, Martin Korcek and Jana Sebosikova. From the Slovak Embassy, Ambassador and Mrs. Kacer, Andrej Droba (Deputy Chief of Mission), and Stella Kukuckova (First Secretary – Culture & Science) came to greet the Scholars. Joining the group were FOS Board members, Ambassador and Mrs. Ted Russell, Mr. and Mrs.

William Tucker, Mr. and Mrs. John Miller and David Frankel. Also attending were FOS Newsletter Editor Ann Johnson, Steven Fabry and Kathy Milton, Helena Fabry, and Stephanie and Charles Partridge – all of whom have strong ties to Slovakia and FOS. The evening afforded Jana and Martin the opportunity to visit with the guests and to describe their experiences at Georgetown. ♦



I-r. Andrej Droba, Jana Sebosikova, John Miller

This is a list of the Honorary Consuls that the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs has appointed in various U.S. cities to represent Slovakia, assist Slovaks traveling in the United States and provide information to Americans who may be interested in visiting Slovakia. Two of Slovakia's Honorary Consuls, Joe Senko (Pittsburgh) and Peter Muzila (Boston) serve on Friends of Slovakia's Board of Directors as does Slovakia's highly respected Ambassador, Rastislav Kacer.

SLOVAK HONORARY CONSULS

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Consulden@aol.com

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Mr. John J. Luknic (Minnesota)

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FOS Travel Program

FOS is planning a travel program from the U.S. to Slovakia which will start in late 2007 or early 2008. FOS is in the process of entering into a contract with a travel agency that handles these types of programs. Some of the FOS delegations will be for professionals such as medical doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, etc., and others

will be designed for people that want to travel to Slovakia, meet with some government officials, U.S. Embassy personnel and visit some of the major cities in Slovakia. The U.S. Embassy in Slovakia is very interested in this program and has agreed to work closely with FOS in putting the program together. The delegates will pay their own expenses on the

trip. Expenses will be set by FOS in cooperation with the travel agency we use in organizing the trip.

If you are interested in one of the trips, visit our website, www.friendsofslovakia.org. ♦

Defense Minister Kasicky Pays Official Visit to Washington

Slovak Defense Minister Frantisek Kasicky and members of his staff visited Norfolk, Virginia and Washington, DC September 4-6. September 4 Minister Kasicky visited the headquarters of the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) Gen. Lance Smith in Norfolk. A flag raising ceremony was held honoring Slovakia's national day. On September 5 he held a productive meeting with Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England at the Pentagon. On September 6 Minister Kasicky, accompanied by Ambassador Kacer, was hosted at a small breakfast forum for government, think tank and business representatives interested in Slovak defense policy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Friends of Slovakia Vice Chairman Bill Tucker and Founding Chairman Ambassador Ted Russell (ret.) participated in the discussion.



l.-r., Minister Kasicky, General Smith

Minister Kasicky pointed out that Slovakia has a very realistic defense budget and can make good on any pledge to NATO. Slovakia plans to downsize use of its forces abroad in peace-keeping activities to two or three sustainable foreign operations. Afghanistan is the number one priority, followed by Cyprus and the Balkans. Slovakia still has troops in the Golan Heights and the Balkans including Kosovo as well as staff officers in Iraq. In 2009 Slovakia will join the Czech Republic to provide about 300 troops for a common EU battle group.

Slovakia can offer NATO specialized training and facilities. Medical training, engineering and de-mining are areas of particular competence. In response to questions, Minister Kasicky explained that Slovakia has plans to stabilize the current size of its armed forces and to make enlistment more attractive. Asked whether Slovakia has surrendered any sovereignty by joining the EU and NATO, the Minister said that Slovakia has simply joined two organizations that share common values. ♦

FoS Honors Slovak League

On Sunday, June 10, the Slovak League of America celebrated the 100th anniversary of their founding with a gala banquet at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Secaucus, New Jersey.

Present were representatives from all the Slovak fraternal societies. Attendees included Dusan Caplovic, Deputy Prime Minister; Eduard Kukan, former foreign minister; Vilma Privarova, Director of the office for Slovaks living abroad; Jozef Markus, President of Matica Slovenska; Rastislav Kacer, Slovak Ambassador to the United States; Peter Burian, Slovak Ambassador to the United Nations; Ivan Surkos, Consul General; and Peter Zelenac, head of the embassy political section.

The Slovak League of America is a civic and cultural federation of Americans of Slovak ancestry. The original mission of this umbrella organization was to help the large population of Slovaks that emigrated to the U.S. during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, the Slovak League also supports Slovaks and Slovak-Americans domestically.

The Friends of Slovakia recognized the Slovak League for being a key supporter of improvement in Slovak social, political and economic life by presenting the officers with the FoS Medal of Honor. ♦



Daniel Tanzone, president, Slovak League of America, accepts FOS Medal of Honor from Joseph Senko, FOS treasurer

FRIENDS OF SLOVAKIA APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP – 2007

Minimum contribution for an annual membership to Friends of Slovakia is:

- \$35 for individuals
- \$250 for Fraternal and other non-profit organizations
- \$2,500 for companies interested but not currently doing business in Slovakia
- \$5,000 for companies currently operating in Slovakia

Note: Companies not doing substantial business in Slovakia may wish to make a contribution to individual FOS initiatives and participate as a non-member in selected FOS events.

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

- Yes, I would like to become a **new member** of Friends of Slovakia
- Yes, I would like to **renew** my membership of Friends of Slovakia

My Membership contribution: \$ _____

In addition to the membership fee, I would like to contribute \$ _____ to the following FOS project (please check appropriate box):

- FOS Scholarship Fund
- Promotion of US-Slovak economic ties
- General Contribution to FOS
- Promotion of education & cultural ties

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

TEL: _____

FAX: _____

EMAIL: _____

FOS WALL OF HONOR PLAQUE

- If you would like to receive some information on how you can get your name, family name or the name of a loved one on the Friends of Slovakia Wall of Honor (located on the grounds of the Slovak Embassy in Washington, DC) please check this box.

We are a 501(c)(3) organization.

Please send this form with your check, payable to *Friends of Slovakia*, to:

Friends of Slovakia
P.O. Box 40733
Washington, DC 20016-0733

For more information, please go to: www.friendsofslovakia.org



Friends of Slovakia NEWSLETTER

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Ingrid Aielli

Ingrid Kimianova Aielli, a member of Friends of Slovakia Board of Directors, was born in Bratislava and left Slovakia in 1989 for Venice, Italy. Ingrid studied engineering in Bratislava and art in Venice. In February 1990, while in Venice, Ingrid met and married Fabrizio Aielli.

Ingrid is currently at the helm of one of Washington DC's premier restaurants, Teatro Goldoni, which she co-owns with her husband, Chef Fabrizio Aielli. Teatro attracts Washington's movers and shakers as well as aficionados of fine Italian food. The design theme of the restaurant is theatrical, and in fact, the restaurant's namesake, Goldoni, was a Venetian playwright whose popular works are performed to this day.

A large part of the success of the Goldoni brand is due to the vision, determination and energy that Ingrid brings to the enterprise. Business studies in her native Slovakia and the intensive experience over twelve years of creating and establishing several restaurants have made Ingrid a professional and practical businesswoman.

The fine reputation of Teatro Goldoni sits squarely at the top of the roster of Ingrid's achievements. Through implementation of her husband's creative ideas, Ingrid has become a skilled marketing and public relations executive and a skilful team-leader both in her years as a co-owner of restaurants and in her many philanthropic and cultural endeavors. Incidentally, Teatro Goldoni is the successor to two other Washington DC restaurants established by the Aiellis, beginning in 1995. All have received numerous awards that have placed the restaurant in the top echelon of the country's establishments.

Ingrid has taken on a number of voluntary positions to help raise funds for local and national charities and her philanthropic involvements continue to grow as she reaches out to a greater community at large. She also is active in promoting Slovak cultural exchanges.

Ingrid has been a loyal supporter of Friends of Slovakia. Teatro Goldoni has a private function room, and Ingrid has generously hosted a number of lunches and dinners for visiting Slovak officials. She has also hosted lunches for corporate executives who are currently doing business or are interested in doing business, so that



Board member Ingrid Aielli

members of the FOS Executive Committee can inform the corporate executives about FOS and its activities.

In 2001, Ingrid was named Woman of the Year by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and the following year *Washingtonian Magazine* named her one of 25 Most Beautiful People in Washington.

Ingrid has attended both the 2002 and 2005 FOS Gala Dinners in Bratislava and gave moving welcoming remarks at the 2005 event.