



Friends of Slovakia NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Issue 1 • Spring 2008

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Amb. Theodore E. Russell
Founding Chairman
Joseph T. Senko
Chairman & Treasurer
William Tucker, Esq.
Vice Chairman & President
Julie Bres Slavik
Secretary
Ingrid Kimianova Aielli
Kenneth Bombara
Dr. Sharon Fisher
David P. Frankel, Esq.
Amb. Rastislav Kacer
John R. Miller
Peter Muzila
Peter A. Rafaeli
Scott Salmon
Thomas W. Skladony
Jan Erik Surotchak
Prof. Sharon L Wolchik

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Amb. Adrian A. Basora
Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski
Amb. Martin Butora
Mary Ellen Callahan, Esq.
Eugene A. Cernan
Hon. Thomas A. Dine
Amb. Julie Finley
Hon. Michal Kovac
Amb. Branislav Lichardus
Hon. Frank E. Loy
Wendy W. Luers
Katarina Mathernova, Esq.
Hon. John L. Mica
Gail Naughton
Amb. Julian M. Niemczyk
Prof. Michael Novak
Amb. Henry Owen
Juraj L.J. Slavik
Amb. Carl Spielvogel
Peter Stastny
Amb. Ronald Weiser

Dinner Honors Foreign Minister Kubis



Minister Jan Kubis during his Washington visit

On February 13 Slovak Ambassador and Mrs. Rastislav Kacer, in cooperation with FOS, hosted a small dinner at their residence honoring visiting Slovak Foreign Minister Jan Kubis. Guests included Amb. Robert Beecroft of L3 Communications; Ricardo Pinos of The Boeing Corporation; Amb. Miroslav Jenca, Chief of Staff to the Foreign Minister; Andrej Droba, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Slovak Embassy; and FOS Board Members: John Miller (Raytheon), Amb. Ted Russell, Scott Salmon (U.S. Steel), Julie Slavik, and Bill Tucker.

Minister Kubis briefed the dinner guests on the meetings he had with key members of Congress and administration officials while in Washington. He also met with officials from three U.S. presidential campaigns. The group had a lively and engaging discussion about the U.S. presidential election, visa reform, and the situation in the Balkans.

FOS is delighted to report that Minister Kubis accepted our invitation to give the 2008 FOS/AFOCR Freedom Lecture at the Woodrow Wilson Center in November 2008. Minister Kubis will join a list of distinguished previous speakers, including Madeleine Albright, former US Secretary of State; Vaclav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic; Ivan Miklos, former Slovak Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy; and Czech Deputy Prime Minister, Alexandr Vondra. ♦

Pittsburgh Fraternal Societies Honor Joe Senko

Over 200 people attended the Fraternal Societies of Greater Pittsburgh annual testimonial banquet on Saturday, April 5, at the Radisson Hotel in Pittsburgh. This year's honoree as "Fraternalist of the Year" was Joseph T. Senko. Joe is the Chairman and Treasurer of the Friends of Slovakia. He is also the Slovak Honorary Consul for Pennsylvania and the Executive Director of the Western Pennsylvania Slovak Cultural Association. Joe was recognized for his volunteer work with numerous non-profit organizations, especially those who have helped the Slovak community in both the United States and in Slovakia.



Andrej Droba, Slovak Embassy deputy chief, congratulates Joe Senko

The Fraternal Societies of Greater Pittsburgh is made up of 21 fraternal benefit societies representing over 1.1 million members. Ten of the societies have their national headquarters in the Pittsburgh area, the most of any city in the United States. ♦

FOS Scholarships Help Forge Strong US-Slovak Ties

Why study in the US? This is a question that has been posed more sharply for the current generation of students in Slovakia than for their predecessors, given the vast array of opportunities for studying at universities in other EU countries now that Slovakia is also part of the EU. For many students, the question includes a financial dimension, as opportunities to study in the EU are often free or low cost, and transportation within Europe is not as expensive as it is to the United States.

As an organization devoted to improving and maintaining good relations among citizens of Slovakia and those of the U.S., Friends of Slovakia is committed to helping make summer study in the U.S. possible for students from Slovakia.

Since 2004, FOS has helped fund the participation of eight students in the summer institutes of the Fund for American Studies. Held at Georgetown University, the three institutes of the Fund bring together students from all 50 states and

from over 80 countries for a rigorous program that combines academic coursework and practical internship experience.

In addition to the two students who will participate in this year's program who are profiled elsewhere in this issue, FOS has given partial scholarships to Ondrej Soucuvka, Martin Mikolas, and Eva Majernikova, all students of the University of Economics in Bratislava, as well as to Anna Stancakova, a law student at the University of Pavol Jozef Safarik, Martin Korcek, who completed his studies at Wageningen University in the Netherlands and Jana Sebosikova, who attended Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica and Charles University in Prague. While in Washington, students have interned at a variety of places including US Steel's Office of Government Relations, the Student Conservation Association, Radio Free Europe, and McGuire Woods, an international law and government affairs firm. Upon completion of their summer courses, FOS sponsored students have won scholarships for

further study in Europe; worked as advisors for the Prime Minister and the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava, and served as officers at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Bratislava.

Students who have participated have been uniformly positive about their experiences both in and outside of the classroom. In addition to the activities organized by the Fund for American Studies, students have frequently been dinner guests of the Slovak Ambassador and have met with FOS board and advisory committee members in Washington.

FOS has been able to fund scholarships for these students thanks to the generous support of FOS members and sponsors, particularly those who have attended the gala dinners held in Bratislava. We will continue to raise funds for this important program. Interested donors may contribute by sending a donation to the FOS address shown on the membership form or may contact Bill Tucker at tuckintl@radix.net. ♦

FOS LEADERSHIP

At the annual Friends of Slovakia (FOS) Board of Directors meeting on February 12, 2008 "Fraternalist of the Year" Joe Senko was elected chairman and treasurer of FOS, succeeding Jan Erik Surotchak who had served as chairman from its inception in 2001. Bill Tucker was elected FOS president in addition to his duties as vice chairman.

In the past seven years FOS has grown into a financially viable organization that yearly sponsors two or more outstanding Slovak students at a Georgetown University/Fund for American Studies summer studies and internship program. FOS also sponsors receptions and other events giving FOS members and related U.S. industry executives interested in investing in Slovakia an opportunity to meet with visiting senior Slovak govern-

ment officials. With support from U.S. Steel, FOS has published an authoritative booklet about investing in Slovakia. It also publishes a newsletter three times a year which is mailed to approximately 1,200 people in the U.S. and Slovakia. FOS and the American Friends of the Czech Republic sponsor an annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture at the Woodrow Wilson Center to honor the values of the Velvet Revolution. FOS has also sponsored numerous seminars on US-Slovak and US-Central European relations, including the visa waiver issue, in cooperation with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

FOS has organized and sponsored three black-tie gala fundraising dinners in Bratislava and created three awards that are presented at these dinners. The

awards are for achievements in Politics/Diplomacy, Business/Economy and Culture/Sports. Keynote speakers at the gala dinners have included former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former NATO Secretary General George Robertson, Chairman and CEO of U.S. Steel John Surma, and Kenneth Walsh, Chief White House Correspondent for U.S. News & World Report. The FOS Wall of Honor with handsome bronze plaques honoring FOS supporters of the gala and other contributors to our varied friendship programs stands in the garden of the Slovak Embassy.

The FOS Board of Directors thanks the outgoing chairman, Jan Surotchak, for his contributions to FOS and wishes him well in his important work with the International Republican Institute. ♦

Profile: First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association

This article is one of an occasional series profiling important Slovak-American fraternal and other organizations. In this issue, we profile the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association.

With over 86,000 members, the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association (FCSLA) is a fraternal benefit society that ranks among the top fraternal societies active in the United States today. Founded in Cleveland, Ohio in 1892, and currently headquartered in Beachwood, Ohio, the FCSLA has grown to provide licensed insurance and financial products in 30 states. Membership and its benefits are available to men, women and children of Slavic descent living in the United States. FCSLA is one of FOS's strongest fraternal organization supporters.

At a time when women were almost considered second-class citizens, nine Slovak immigrant homemakers, under the leadership of Mrs. Anna Hurban of Cleveland, began laying the foundation for a fraternal benefit society—the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Union (FCSLU). These women realized there had to be provisions made for death and injury benefits that would protect families from the hazards and toll of industrial labor. With the encouragement of Father Stephen Furdek, Mrs. Hurban assembled eight other Slovak women on January 1, 1892 at St. Ladislaus Church in Cleveland. Many members were recruited over the next few months, and by year end, the organization had grown from \$77 in assets and 9 members to \$212 in assets and 95 members. By 1899, the Society had 1,859 members, who paid 14 cents a month at any of 83 branches, and the organization became chartered in the State of Ohio. From 1893 to 1915, assets averaged an 86 percent increase biennially.

The FCSLU continued to grow even as it faced a series of challenges. The 1918 flu epidemic claimed the lives of many members and brought the organization

close to bankruptcy. A new administration was chosen, and after introducing a new rate structure that prompted thousands of members to withdraw, the FCSLU recovered, and was again strong by the late 1920s. Then, the organization had to weather the Great Depression, where it assisted destitute families by granting premium waivers. At the Society's 50th anniversary in 1942, it had \$12 million in assets and 65,000 members. In the late 1960s, the name was changed to the current First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association to avoid confusion based on the term "Union." The FCSLA also grew by merging with other smaller benefit societies and focusing on involving young people.

The Society's second century of operation began, coincidentally, with the establishment of an independent Slovakia on January 1, 1993. In 1996, Mary Ann S. Johaneck assumed the Presidency of FCSLA and is its current leader. Ms. Johaneck brought a new professionalism, and improved financial and marketing structures, resulting in a stronger position in the fraternal insurance market. In 2007, the organization had over \$500 million in assets, providing over \$700 million in insurance with over 100,000 insurance and annuity certificates in force. It has earned a rating of A- (Excellent) from A.M. Best, an independent insurance rating company.

As a fraternal society, FCSLA also conducts a number of other activities. With over 450 branches across the U.S., FCSLA members regularly socialize and are involved in Catholic Church and related educational activities, care for others in the Society and the community, and involve young people in contests and activities. The association sponsors over



L-R Cynthia Maleski of the FCSLA, Bishop David Zubik and Andrzej Groch following Zubik's installation as Bishop of Pittsburgh



FCSLA members in Washington, DC March for Life

\$248,000 in scholarships annually. The Society is also a strong supporter of greater awareness of Slovak history and culture. It publishes a monthly magazine, *Fraternally Yours*, *Zenska Jednota*, and supports a number of Slovak-related activities and organizations.

Many Slovak Americans may be familiar with one of the more popular activities sponsored by FCSLA, namely, the *Slovak-American Cookbook*. This book has been a standard reference in many Slovak-American kitchens since the 1950s and is still available on the association's website at www.fcsla.com. FCSLA is one of the most successful and important Slovak-American organizations in this country, and FOS is very proud to be associated with it. ♦

1968. The Story that Deserves to be Remembered

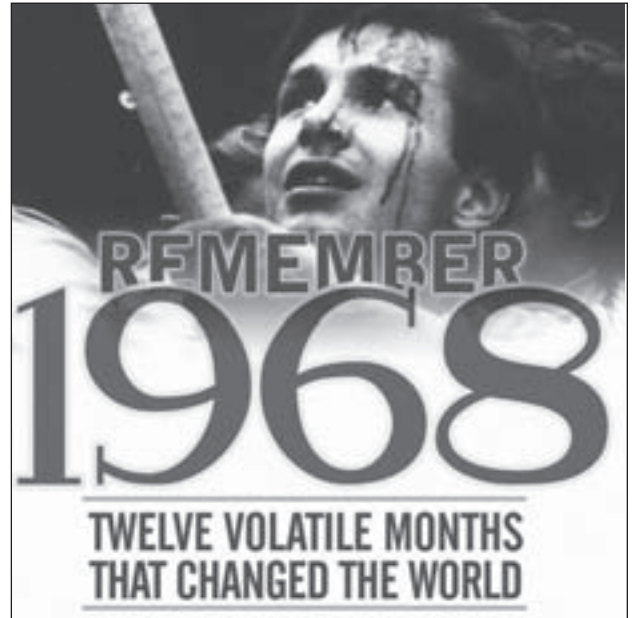
The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, recently opened the original exhibition *1968. Twelve Volatile Months that Transformed the World*. This is the only exhibition on the 40th anniversary in the United States. As you enter, you will have your Czechoslovak ID (admission ticket) stamped and view artifacts from life under communism. A colorful transition through Prague Spring leads you to a small theatre where the underground film, *Summer of Tanks*, will grip you with scenes of the invasion. Turn a corner and you face the front of a tank surrounded by invasion day images and the sound of gunfire; listen to American television coverage of the invasion; watch video of the courageous snub of the Soviet anthem by gold medal gymnast Věra Čáslavská in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics; and watch live footage of the legendary Beach Boys concert in 1969. A collage of images and names from world-wide events in 1968 adds context from this turbulent year worldwide. Description doesn't do this extraordinary exhibit justice. This is the only chance you will have to see it and remember.

Early visitor response the new exhibition indicates that a chord has been struck as people revisit poignant memories or learn for the first time about the dramatic story of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia 40 years ago.

"Thank you for bringing to life a situation I was not able to understand as a nine-year-old child. My parents received a letter from Czech relatives shortly after 8/20/68 and we have never heard from them again."

"Intensely moving. I cried again at seeing the tanks come in, the radio closing."

The exhibition closes January 25, 2009. For more information, see the website www.NCSML.org. ♦



Powerful exhibit at Czech and Slovak Museum



Warsaw Pact tank in 1968 exhibit

Slovak Students at Georgetown Institute

Friends of Slovakia (FOS) is welcoming two scholars from Slovakia for the summer 2008 program at the Fund for American Studies: Miriama Svetkovská and Martin Sočuvka. Both plan to study at the Fund's Engalitcheff Institute on Comparative Political and Economic Systems (ICPES).

Miriama is from the eastern Slovak town of Spišská Nová Ves. Currently a fifth-year student at the University of Economics in Bratislava, she is majoring in finance. Miriama recently studied for five months at the Vrije Universiteit in Brussels, Belgium, with a specialization in

European economic integration. During her summer in Washington, she hopes to gain a better understanding of the U.S. social and economic system and how U.S. institutions work, allowing her to draw comparisons with European Union (EU) countries, including Slovakia. In addition, Miriama would like to gain more practical experience in the field of economics. Her only previous experience in the United States was a summer in Cleveland, Ohio.

Martin grew up in the central Slovak town of Žilina. Having graduated from Trnava University's School of Law in 2005,

Martin is currently enrolled in the JD program at Košice University's Law School, with a focus on business law. In 2006-2007, Martin spent some time in Boston, Massachusetts, taking classes at Harvard Law School and working at the Law Offices of Cutler & Associates, in addition to *pro bono* work with the Volunteer Lawyers Project. He has also studied abroad at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in Greece. Through the summer 2008 program, Martin hopes to gain new skills that will allow him to bring positive change in Slovak society. ♦

A U.S. Diplomat Remembers:

CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S SEASON OF HOPE AND DESPAIR

By Theodore E. Russell



Ted Russell served as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer in Prague from 1968 to 1971 and was the first U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia from 1993 to 1996 after the Velvet Divorce.

My wife Sally and I lived through the 1968 Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact invasion and were fortunate to be back in Czechoslovakia during the 1989 Velvet Revolution. From 1993 to 1996 we were in independent Slovakia, where I served as the first U.S. Ambassador. Following are impressions of the dramatic events we experienced during our first assignment in Czechoslovakia 40 years ago.

Sally, our sons Douglas, age four, and Richard, age two, and I arrived in Prague June 20 during the euphoria of the Prague Spring to begin my three-year assignment as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer. Our apartment, complete with listening devices installed by the Czechoslovak secret police, was in the Embassy complex across a courtyard from the more secure office areas. The day after we moved in we received a phone call. When I answered, the person on the other end of the line whistled the tune being played on our phonograph in the adjoining room.

I started my work as head of the Visa Section. This was a typical “junior officer” rotation in Prague, followed the next year with a move up to head the Consular Section and a final year as Political Officer.

The euphoria Sally and I found among the Czech and Slovak population was based on the overwhelming public support for First Secretary of the Communist Party Alexander Dubček and the reforms he had unleashed in Czechoslovakia beginning in January of that year. In fact this public support for change was so strong that the reform movement was escaping Communist Party control.

Yearning for a new direction

The reform movement sprang from many roots. The backwardness of Czechoslovakia’s command economy was striking. There was a severe housing shortage, consumer goods were scarce and shoddy and the whole infrastructure of the country was in disrepair. Slovaks disliked Party First Secretary and Czechoslovak President Antonín Novotný for his anti-Slovak attitudes and opposition to the long-standing Slovak demands for greater autonomy. The intelligentsia, notably writers like Václav Havel, despised Novotný for his hard-line policies. And university students were angry at the police brutality exhibited in putting down a peaceful student demonstration in the fall of 1967.

In reaction to popular dissatisfaction with the status quo, in January 1968 Dubček assumed the role of First Secretary of the Communist Party and set out to make socialism in Czechoslovakia more efficient and to give it a “human face.” Like Gorbachev 20 years later, Dubček was a true believer in communism and the possibility of reforming it. In April a Communist Party Action Program was introduced which stressed the need for the Party to mobilize popular support. Censorship was abolished and Slovaks were promised greater parity with the Czechs in a new federal system.

The reforms and Dubček’s personal charisma generated public enthusiasm. Czechs began to react with wry humor to endless regime propaganda about the superiority of all things Soviet. Students in a demonstration I observed in Old Town Square danced around the statue of Jan Hus chanting, “Soviet watches are the biggest and fastest in the whole world.”

The Russells — Ted, Sally and their sons Douglas and Richard — stood on a hill overlooking the U.S. Embassy in Prague, with Prague Castle in the background, in January 1969.



Soviet confrontation

Soviet Bloc Party chiefs Leonid Brezhnev, Walter Ulbricht, Władysław Gomułka and János Kádár were not amused. It appeared to them that Dubček had unleashed popular expectations that he could not control. They soon began expressing grave concerns with Dubček's leadership. Their concerns intensified as the Czechoslovak media began addressing sensitive topics including the suspected murder of Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk after the 1948 communist coup and the slaughter of thousands of Polish officers in Katyn forest. They were further concerned by the scheduling of the Extraordinary Communist Party Congress for September 9 to ratify and expand the reforms and changes already made.

In a series of meetings with the Czechoslovak Party leadership, Brezhnev and his allies demanded with increasing vehemence that Dubček put a brake on the reform process, muzzle the press and replace leading reformers. Warsaw Pact military exercises in and around Czechoslovakia gave the Soviets the capability to intervene at any time.

Warsaw Pact forces moved into Czechoslovakia beginning at about 11 p.m. the evening of August 20. Czechoslovak Radio broadcast a message from the Presidium of the Central Committee stating that the intervention was without warning and against international law, but urging citizens not to resist the invasion forces.

The 14th Extraordinary Party Conference took place secretly in a Prague factory soon after the invasion. Delegates elected by secret ballot approved a number of reform measures. However, Dubček and his top supporters were in the meantime hauled off to Moscow. They were forced to sign a Protocol declaring the results of the 14th Congress invalid and agreeing to try to reign in the media and "normalize" the situation. The Prague Spring reform movement was doomed, although it took seven months for Dubček to be removed.

Embassy response

After the invasion, the U.S. Embassy under Ambassador Jacob Beam worked to evacuate the thousands of Americans in Prague, organizing auto convoys to the West German border. A special train to Vienna was procured by our Embassy Economic Counselor Ken Skoug through a contact at the Transport Ministry.

On August 20 I had driven Sally and our ailing son Douglas to a helicopter pick-up point at the West German border to be evacuated to the U.S. military hospital in Nuremberg for what had been diagnosed at the Prague Children's



When Soviet soldiers occupied the U.S. Embassy Pavilion, the head of the Embassy's Political & Economic Section, Mark Garrison, accompanied by two Marine guards, hoisted a U.S. flag and ordered the soldiers to leave.

With citizens waging battle against the powerful Soviet army in the streets of Prague, the U.S. Embassy coordinated the evacuation of hundreds of Americans from the city.



Photo from CTK, the Czechoslovak News Agency.

Hospital as acute appendicitis. He actually had severe gastroenteritis. I drove back with several other Embassy officers on August 22. I was immediately involved in the evacuation effort, including the registration of departing American citizens for our special train.

A few days after the invasion two Soviet soldiers occupied the Embassy Pavilion at the top of our garden. The head of our Political & Economic Section, Mark Garrison, marched up with two Embassy Marine guards, hoisted a U.S. flag and ordered them out.

Not knowing what the Soviets intended, Embassy officers had been burning sensitive documents in our incinerator. The flue overheated and caught the roof on fire. Later an intruder came through the burned hole in the roof into attic space above our classified office area. He was chased away by Marine guards, but the Embassy then mobilized the junior officers including me and had us patrol the attic with flashlights and .45s.

A dream deferred

As key elements of the reform movement were suppressed, the popular mood became increasingly pessimistic. In a protest against the Soviet occupation, Charles University philosophy student Jan Palach set himself on fire in Wenceslas Square on January 16, 1969, dying several days later. In all, 26 protest suicides were attempted during the next three months, with seven resulting deaths.

The crackdown intensified. In late March, Czechoslovakia twice defeated the USSR hockey team in the World Championship finals in Stockholm. The second victory by 4-3 on March 28 provoked massive public celebrations that evening. A likely police provocation resulted in stones being thrown through the Aeroflot office windows in Wenceslas Square. This event was used to force the resignation of Dubček; he was replaced as Party Secretary by a hard-line Slovak, Gustáv Husák, on April 17.

I monitored a demonstration in Wenceslas Square in August 1969 — the anniversary of the invasion — which was harshly put down. There followed a massive purge of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and a return to a repressive regime which lasted for the next 20 years. I left Prague with my wife and family in June 1971, deeply saddened by the bleak situation faced by Czechs and Slovaks. ■

Reprinted with permission from *Slovo*, the biannual journal of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Volume 8, Number 2, Winter 2007-08.

2008 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

- Yes, I would like to renew/start my annual individual membership and enclosed is my \$35 membership contribution for 2008.
- Yes, I would like to renew/start my annual organization/fraternal membership and enclosed is my \$250 membership contribution for 2008.
- Yes, I would like to renew/start my corporate membership and enclosed is my 2008 membership contribution (\$2,500 for companies interested in doing business in Slovakia; \$5,000 for those currently doing business in Slovakia) \$_____
- Yes, I would like to renew/start my membership and enclosed is my \$_____ membership contribution for 2008 and an additional contribution of \$_____ for the following FOS sponsored program (please check one):
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> FOS Scholarship Fund | <input type="checkbox"/> Visa Liberalization Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Involvement in Slovakia | <input type="checkbox"/> General contribution to FOS |

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Tel/Fax: _____

Email: _____

Please send form to: **Friends of Slovakia, P.O. Box 40733, Washington, DC 20016-0733**

FOS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization



Friends of Slovakia NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 40733
Washington, DC 20016-0733
703-671-0926
<http://www.friendsofslovakia.org>