



Friends of Slovakia NEWSLETTER

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A FAREWELL TO THE BURIANS

On Friday, May 4, Friends of Slovakia hosted a farewell dinner for Slovak Ambassador Peter Burian and his wife, Nina. The dinner took place at the Washington Golf & Country Club in Arlington, Virginia on a beautiful evening with a pre-dinner reception in the Virginia Room and Terrace overlooking the club's golf course and the Washington National Cathedral in the distance.

The dinner was attended by some 40 people, including members of the FOS Board of Directors and other dear friends of the Burians. To commemorate their more than three years in Washington, FOS presented Amb. and Mrs. Burian with a china bowl depicting different views of the White House. The ambassador was presented with the FOS Medal of Honor for all his dedication in furthering Slovak-US relations and his close cooperation with FOS on a number of projects during his time in Washington, DC. A number of people toasted the Ambassador and Mrs. Burian during the dinner and all wished Ambassador Burian well as he takes on his new responsibilities as State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. Ambassador and Mrs. Burian will be missed by their many friends in the United States. ♦



Bill Tucker, Nina Burian, Julie Slavik, Amb. Burian and Amb. Russell



Scott Thayer, Peter Rafaeli, Ken Bombara, Bill Tucker, Nina Burian, Julie Slavik, Ambassador Burian, and Ambassador Russell



Robert Fico

SMER RETURNS TO POWER FOLLOWING MARCH SNAP ELECTION

After a break of less than two years, Robert Fico returned to the post of prime minister on 5 April, heading up the first single-party government in Slovakia since the fall of communism. His left-leaning Direction-Social Democracy (Smer-SD) party won the largest share of votes by far in the 10 March snap election, while the center-right incumbents were thrown into chaos following revelations of large-scale corruption related to the “Gorilla” case. Voter turnout was surprisingly high and reached almost 60%, surpassing the turnouts achieved in both 2006 and 2010.

In total, six parties crossed the 5% threshold required to enter the parliament. Of the four pre-election ruling parties, the conservative Christian Democratic Party (KDH) and ethnic Hungarian Most-Hid (Bridge) almost equaled their 2010 performance. In contrast, the other two lost considerable support, as the Slovak Democratic and Christian Party-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) was the party most touched by the Gorilla scandal, while the liberal Freedom and Solidarity’s (SaS) gamble of bringing down the government over the issue of Slovakia’s contribution to the enlarged European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) failed to pay off. The sixth parliamentary party is the center-right Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO), which ran on an anti-corruption platform, forcing candidates to pass a lie detector test to prove they had never given or received bribes. Although OLaNO is a new party, chairman Igor Matovic already served in the 2010-12 parliament since his faction entered the legislature on the SaS slate.

Party	Slovak Election Results		
	Votes (%)	Seats (2012)	Seats (2010)
Smer-SD	44.4	83	62
KDH	8.8	16	15
OLaNO	8.6	16	N/A
Most-Hid	6.9	13	14
SDKU-DS	6.1	11	28
SaS	5.9	11	22
SNS	4.6	0	9

Because of the relatively large share of votes going to parties that fell below the 5% threshold, those that did enter the parliament got a bigger number of seats than would normally be the case. This was particularly important to Smer, whose 44% of the vote gave the party an absolute majority of 83 seats in the 150-member parliament. Of those that failed, probably the most noteworthy is the far-right Slovak National Party (SNS), which had served as a junior coalition partner in Smer-SD’s 2006-10 cabinet. Fico’s other 2006-10 partner, the People’s Party-Movement for Democratic Slovakia (LS-HZDS) of Vladimir Meciar, failed for the second straight election to cross the 5% threshold, winning less than 1% of the vote.

According to preference votes (voters are allowed to circle up to four names on the candidate list of the party of their choice),

Party Candidates with Most Preference Votes			
Candidate	Party	Original Rank on Party List	Votes
Robert Fico	Smer-SD	1	762,360
Igor Matovic	OLaNO	150	150,251
Bela Bugar	Most-Hid	1	121,414
Daniel Lipsic	KDH	2	104,635
Jan Figel	KDH	1	104,002
Lucia Zitnanska	SDKU-DS	3	103,517
Richard Sulik	SaS	1	83,813

Robert Fico was the politician with the strongest support by far, and a total of five Smer candidates received more than 100,000 votes. Outside Smer, the candidates with the most preference votes included Matovic, Most-Hid chairman Bela Bugar, outgoing Interior Minister Daniel Lipsic and Transport Minister Jan Figel (both of KDH), and outgoing Justice Minister Lucia Zitnanska (SDKU-DS). Zitnanska received far more SDKU-DS preference votes than party chairman Mikulas Dzurinda or outgoing Finance Minister Ivan Miklos, prompting Dzurinda to give up his party leadership post. While outgoing Prime Minister Iveta Radicova is the SDKU-

DS’s most popular personality, she chose not to run in the 2012 election.

Outlook and Implications

Although Fico did not rule out forming a coalition government, based on the actual election results, it made little sense for any of the remaining parliamentary parties to join Smer. That is especially true given the challenges facing Slovakia in the coming year, as the Eurozone debt crisis continues to bring uncertainty and could contribute to slower growth and higher unemployment in the near term. Indeed, had any center-right parties entered the cabinet, they would have risked taking the blame for unpopular measures that will be pushed forward out of economic necessity.

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PAVOL DEMES DISCUSSES SLOVAK POLITICS WITH FOS AUDIENCE

On February 8 at a lecture sponsored by Friends of Slovakia at the Slovak Embassy, Dr. Pavol Demes briefed an audience of about 50 FOS members and think tank representatives on the current Slovak political scene prior to the March 10 early parliamentary elections. Dr. Demes is a Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund and a member of the FOS Board of Advisors. That evening members of the FOS Boards of Directors and Advisors attended a dinner in Dr. Demes' honor.

Dr. Demes described the factors leading to the loss of a confidence vote in Parliament of the government of Prime Minister Radicova over the issue of Slovakia's contribution to the European Union's bailout fund for Greece. He then gave a summary of the results of polling suggesting that the SMER party of Robert Fico will gain a majority in the March 10 voting. He suggested that SMER would be likely to form a coalition with at least one additional party such as the Christian Democrats (KDH) or the Nationalist party (SNS) with which they were in coalition last time.

In response to questions Dr. Demes described a loss of confidence in the political system by some members of the younger generation in particular based on recent dramatic revelations in leaked intelligence service documents of alleged political corruption. These revelations exacerbate an already worrisome loss of confidence in the judicial system. Dr. Demes talked about ways in which nongovernmental organizations and other elements of Slovakia civil society could be helpful in advancing the debate on combating political corruption.

Asked about Slovakia's likely course in the event of a SMER victory in the March elections, Dr. Demes felt that Slovakia would remain true to its dedication to being a good member of the European Union and transatlantic partner of the United States. However, he emphasized the importance of US-Slovak private and governmental leaders continuing to look for ways to strengthen all elements of the US-Slovak relationship. He emphasized in particular the importance of cultural exchanges and enhancing the opportunity for Slovak students to visit and study in the United States. ♦



Dr. Pavol Demes

2012 FOS SLOVAK SCHOLARS

Friends of Slovakia (FOS) is pleased to report that we are able to sponsor five Slovak students this year who will attend one of the summer institutes offered by The Fund for American Studies at Georgetown University this summer. FOS was able to do this from proceeds raised at the 2011 Slovak-American Awards Dinner and through the generous support of the Slovak American Foundation, Mr. Bill Poorvu, Class of 1961 Adjunct Professor in Entrepreneurship Emeritus at Harvard Business School, and other donors to FOS. Mr. Poorvu's contribution honors U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia Tod Sedgwick.

The Fund for American Studies summer institutes attract students from colleges all over the U.S., including the Ivy League schools and military academies. In addition, international students from many different countries are accepted to attend one of the five institutes offered at Georgetown University: The Engalitcheff Institute on Comparative Political and Economic Systems; the Institute on Political Journalism; the Institute on Business and Government Affairs; the Institute on Philanthropy and Voluntary Service; and the Institute on Economics and International Affairs.

The institutes are intense, combining lectures, coursework, internships, evening lectures and site briefings at key institutions of national government. Each institute offers courses for academic credit. Through the internships, students gain practical experience that prepares them for their careers. Students live in the Georgetown University dorms, which promotes interaction between the US and foreign students.

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Slovak Government Ministers	
Prime Minister	Róbert Fico
Finance	Peter Kažimír
Economy and Construction	Tomáš Malatinský*
Foreign Affairs	Miroslav Lajčák*
Defense	Martin Giváč
Labor and Social Affairs	Ján Richter
Interior	Róbert Kaliňák
Justice	Tomáš Borec*
Health	Zuzana Zvolenská
Transport, Post and Telecommunications	Ján Počiatek
Agriculture and Regional Development	Lubomír Jahňatek
Culture and Tourism	Marek Maďarič
Education, Science, Research and Sports	Dušan Čaplovič
Environment	Peter Žiga

*Denotes non-party member.

In terms of personalities, Fico's 14-member cabinet includes both old and new faces, as well as several non-party members heading the key ministries of foreign affairs, economy, and justice. The new government has until early May to gain parliamentary approval and draft a program.

Some feared that Smer-SD's victory would have negative implications for Slovakia, particularly since the party's 2006-10 term was marked by surging fiscal deficits, highly publicized corruption cases, and rising tensions with the country's Hungarian minority. To be fair, much of the consternation regarding Smer's previous cabinet stemmed from the party's choice of the SNS as a coalition partner, and even most of the corruption scandals of that term revolved around the SNS. Still, Fico did carry responsibility for his reputation as well, and during the 2006-10 term he became known for attacks on the media, threats to foreign investors in the energy sector, and efforts to move closer to Russia.

This time around, Fico has a chance to improve his reputation among skeptics—both domestic and international—who question his democratic credentials. Based on initial signals, Fico now appears ready to demonstrate more responsibility in his words and actions, as he considers his legacy as a politician.

On the economic front, Fico announced shortly after the election that he would continue with the previous cabinet's fiscal austerity measures, with the aim of reducing the budget deficit below 3% of GDP by 2013. That will be very challenging, given that this year's deficit is projected to be as high as 4.6% of GDP. However, any digression from that goal could bring Slovakia's sovereign credit rating under further downward pressure, while also triggering sanctions from the European Commission. Fico's path toward fiscal consolidation will likely differ considerably from that of previous Finance Minister Miklos, and he has promised higher taxes for rich individuals and highly profitable corporations. Regardless, the fact that Fico seems serious about fiscal responsibility and the preservation of the Eurozone sends an important message. The new cabinet has also given positive signals on judicial reform, which was generally seen as the area in which the Radicova cabinet achieved the most success. While some feared that the changes pushed forward by Zitnanska would be undone by the Fico government, just after his appointment, Justice Minister Tomas Borec promised to continue with the reforms begun by his predecessor.

Despite some differences in style and substance, Fico's government appears set to continue on the path of his predecessor, as it focuses on strengthening the Eurozone, fighting corruption, and reducing unemployment. ♦

GREG FASING CONSUL IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN STATES

Greg Fasing is a Denver trial lawyer who was appointed as one of the first three Slovak honorary consuls in the United States by Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan in August 1994. His consular mission covers Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico. He just completed a two-year term as Dean of the Colorado Consular Corps, after finishing two-year terms as Vice Dean and Secretary.

Greg graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor's degree in business administration and economics and received his law degree from the University of Colorado. His Slovak roots are in the Liptov region of north-central Slovakia (Fašiang, Punčo, Brziak), from Hubová (Ružomberok) in the west to Bobrovec (Liptovský Mikuláš) in the east. He is active in the Slovak Society of Colorado and in researching the many contributions of Slovak immigrants in western states. He is a member of the World Trade Center Denver, an organization instrumental in the promotion of business between Slovakia and the United States.



Greg Fasing

His wife Suzanne, is a Denver attorney, his oldest son Jim is a financial analyst in Denver, and his youngest son Kevin is working on his master's degree in integrative physiology at the University of Colorado in Boulder. ♦

DR. GEORGE MESKO HONORED IN NYC

A distinguished Slovak American, and strong FOS supporter, Dr. Z. George Mesko, accepted the Stefanik Award from the Slovak-American Cultural Center (SACC) at its 20th annual 'Slovak Ball' held in NYC, on February 4, 2012. The event was held at the New York Athletic Club, on Central Park South, and was attended by prominent individuals, such as Slovak Ambassador Peter Burian, U. S. Representative John Mica, numerous representatives of Slovak American organizations, and other key members of the Slovak American community. Representing FOS at the event were President Joe Senko and board member Ken Bombara. The Stefanik Award was presented to Dr. Mesko by SACC President Rosemary Harvilla Golia, and SACC Vice-President, Matthew F. Culen.



SACC President Rosemary Harvilla Golia presents the Stefanik Award to Dr. Z. George Mesko

Dr. Mesko, a native of Kosice, has had a long and distinguished medical career and has been active in the Slovak community, particularly in the New York City-area. He completed his medical doctorate at Comenius University in 1952 and became a specialist in pediatric cardiology, holding several positions at hospitals in Slovakia. The 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia led him not to return there, and he eventually made his way to the U.S. as a fellow at the Children's Hospital of Harvard Medical School in Boston. He then moved on to New York City and spent his career from 1978 to 1996 as an Attending Physician and Associate Professor of the State University of New York (SUNY) at Saint Francis Hospital in Roslyn, N.Y.



L to R, Jan and Nina Holy (Slovak League of America), Dr. Mesko, Patricia and Rep. John Mica, Amb. Burian, Joe Senko

Milestones of the Slovak Maelstrom. During retirement, Dr. Mesko and his wife, Judith, lived in France for a number of years, and then relocated to the Washington, D.C. area, where they are active members of the Slovak American community. ♦

Since his retirement, Dr. Mesko has received several awards in Slovakia for instituting the "Heart to Heart" (Srdcom k Srdcu) project, which led to the establishment of the Children's Heart Center in Bratislava. He has also devoted his time to scholarly research on the political history of Slovakia. In 2003, he authored *The Silent Conspiracy: A Communist Model of Political Cleansing at the Slovak University in Bratislava after the Second World War*, which was the focus of an FOS book launch event. His second book, published in 2009 in Slovak is *In the Footsteps of Communism and*

2012 SLOVAK-AMERICAN AWARDS DINNER SET FOR NOVEMBER 16

The fourth annual Slovak-American Awards Dinner is scheduled for Friday evening, November 16 at the Washington Golf & Country Club in Arlington, Virginia. As in previous years, Friends of Slovakia (FOS) will honor individuals and corporations in the areas of Politics/Diplomacy, Economic Cooperation, and Culture/Sports. A Slovak-American-of-the-Year Award will also be presented. Our annual silent auction will again benefit scholarships for Slovak students. The dinner should also provide a festive opportunity to welcome the new Slovak Ambassador to Washington, DC.

We hope that you save the date and plan to join us on November 16 for our annual black-tie gala dinner celebrating the close bonds between Slovakia and the United States. ♦

FRIENDS OF SLOVAKIA RECOGNIZES DONORS FOR 2012

FOS is delighted that there will be a new group of plaques for 2012. We are most grateful to those members and corporations whose generosity makes this an ongoing FOS endeavor. The Wall of Honor is a very special way for individuals, organizations, and corporations to express their support of FOS and, in turn, for FOS to express its gratitude for that support. The plaques will be installed in the late summer and the donors recognized at a fall reception at the Slovak Embassy.

We thank all of the following whose inscriptions will appear on the Wall of Honor in 2012, either on one of two group plaques or on individual plaques.

Group Plaque

Frederick N. Frank, Esq.
Dr. and Mrs. George O. Krizek
Richard Marko
COL (R) and Mrs. John R. Miller
Amb. and Mrs. Rodolphe M. Vallee
Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol of the USA

Individual Plaque Donors

Stephen C. Matula
Eco-Invest, a.s.
BAE Systems
U.S. Steel

In addition there will be a plaque recognizing those who supported the Third Annual Slovak American Awards Dinner on November 17, 2011, co-sponsored by Friends of Slovakia and the Slovak Embassy.

First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association
U. S. Steel
Honeywell International
The Ed Zelenak Family
Mimi Danihel
Dr. Cecilia Rokusek
Slovak League of America
Czech-Slovak American Enterprise Fund
Hewlett Packard
George Sipko, Koger USA

Maria Balazova
Barbara Miller, Denver, Colorado
Henry Kallan, HK Hotels
Dr. Lee Bailey OD JP, Jamaica
Nina and Peter Burian
Sally and Ted Russell
Ingrid Aielli
Washington Capitals
Vel'ka vd'aka FOS, rod. Valko

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The 2012 FOS Slovak Scholars that were selected are as follows:

Name: Mikuláš Curik
School: VSM/City University of Seattle
Major: Business Administration
Hometown: Bratislava
Program: Institute on Business and Government Affairs
Sponsored by: Slovak American Foundation

Name: Monika Izakova
School: University of Economics in Bratislava
Major: Economics
Hometown: Vrable
Program: Institute on Economics and International Affairs
Sponsored by: Friends of Slovakia

Name: Diana Madarászová
School: University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Major: Mass Media Communication
Hometown: Dvory nad Žitavou
Program: Institute on Political Journalism
Sponsored by: Friends of Slovakia

Name: Helena Reichlova
School: University of Economics in Bratislava
Major: International Economic Relations
Hometown: Presov
Program: Engalitcheff Institute on Comparative Political and Economic Systems
Sponsored by: Friends of Slovakia

Name: Martin Teren
School: VSM/City University of Seattle
Major: Business Administration
Hometown: Bratislava
Program: Institute on Business and Government Affairs
Sponsored by: Slovak American Foundation



FOS SLOVAK SCHOLAR BECOMES ECONOMIC SPECIALIST AT THE U.S. EMBASSY IN BRATISLAVA

Miriama Svetkovska graduated from the University of Economics in Bratislava specializing in Public Finance Management. During her studies she accomplished various educational programs connected to public and international finance - at the Vrije Universiteit in Brussels focusing on European Economic Integration and as one of two Slovak scholars to receive a scholarship to attend the Institute of Comparative Political and Economic Systems at Georgetown University funded by The Fund for American Studies and Friends of Slovakia in Washington, DC in 2008.



Miriama Svetkovska

While in Washington, DC, Miriama published a special report comparing transatlantic competitive issues during her professional internship in Global Insight under the supervision of Sharon Fisher. She has also published many articles in Slovak newspapers on the American elections and international affairs, and participated in several projects related to education and public finance management. Currently she is doing a program and focusing her thesis on comparison performance budgeting systems introduced in the US, Slovakia and other European countries.

After returning to Slovakia, Miriama worked at the Antimonopoly Office of Slovak Republic and at Wood & Company, an investment bank with activities in the CEE region. On April 1, 2012 Miriama was appointed Economic Specialist at the US Embassy in Bratislava serving the US Ambassador in issues related to the Slovak economy.

Miriama on her experience at as a FOS Slovak Scholar in Washington, DC:

The Institute of Comparative Political and Economic Systems at Georgetown University has brought me a unique experience in my personal as well as professional life. It combines education with a professional internship in a very efficient way. Taking courses in international politics and economics provided by Georgetown professors has taught me how to think in a broader sense and to understand the bigger picture. My professional internship gave me lots of space for self-realization and I had a chance to publish my special report on competition issues. Without the great support of my supervisor this would simply not have happened. Apart from this I have met many interesting people from the White House, Capitol Hill and the Federal Reserve Bank and also from my classes. I'm still in touch with many of them.

I would like to thank Friends of Slovakia for their generous support in giving me this great opportunity. I am personally persuaded that my experience at Georgetown played an important role in selection process for my current position at the US Embassy in the Slovak Republic. ♦

Save the Date

2012 Czech & Slovak Freedom Lecture
Ambassador Martin Butora, speaker
November 16, 2012
12:00 to 1:00 p.m.
Woodrow Wilson Center
1300 Pennsylvania Ave N.W.
Washington, DC