



# Friends of Slovakia NEWSLETTER

Volume 15, Issue 1 • Fall 2012

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Amb. Theodore E. Russell**  
Founding Chairman  
**Joseph T. Senko**  
Chairman and Treasurer  
**William Tucker, Esq.**  
Vice Chairman and President  
**Julie Brès Slávik**  
Secretary  
**Kenneth J. Bombara**  
**Amb. Peter Burian**  
**Dr. Sharon Fisher**  
**Frederick Frank, Esq.**  
**Roger Kodat**  
**Peter Muzila**  
**Peter A. Rafaeli**  
**Scott Salmon**  
**Thomas W. Skladony**  
**Scott Thayer**  
**Prof. Sharon L. Wolchik**

## BOARD OF ADVISORS

**Ingrid Kimianova Aielli**  
**Amb. Adrian A. Basora**  
**Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski**  
**Amb. Martin Butora**  
**Mary Ellen Callahan, Esq.**  
**Dr. Pavol Demes**  
**Thomas A. Dine**  
**Amb. Julie Finley**  
**John H. Goodish**  
**Amb. Rastislav Kacer**  
**Hon. Michal Kovac**  
**Amb. Branislav Lichardus**  
**Hon. Frank E. Loy**  
**Wendy W. Luers**  
**Hon. John L. Mica**  
**Gail Naughton**  
**Prof. Michael Novak**  
**Amb. Vincent Obsitnik**  
**Juraj L.J. Slavik**  
**Amb. Carl Spielvogel**  
**Peter Stastny**  
**Jan Erik Surotchak**  
**Amb. Ronald Weiser**

## 2012 FOS SLOVAK SCHOLARS

Friends of Slovakia (FOS) sponsored five Slovak students in 2012 who attended one of the summer institutes offered by The Fund for American Studies at Georgetown University, Washington DC. 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, William and Lia Poorvu, and other donors to FOS. Mr. Poorvu's contribution honors U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia Tod Sedgwick.



FOS Scholars and Rep. Mica's summer interns: (l.-r.) Mikulas Curik, Michal Krcmery (Mica), Lucia Paskova (Mica), Helena Reichlova, Monika Izakova, Diana Madaraszova, Martin Teren

The Fund for American Studies (TFAS) sponsors five summer Institutes for undergraduate students both from colleges in the U.S. and from international institutions as well. These institutes specialize in comparative political and economic systems, on political journalism, on business and government affairs, on philanthropy and voluntary service and on economics and international affairs.

They prepare young people for leadership in the life of their communities and their nation by providing them with opportunities in our nation's capital for enlightenment and enrichment.



Standing (l to r): Richard Marko, Sharon Fisher, Martin Teren and Mikulas Curik. Seated (l to r): Monika Izakova, Joe Senko, Helena Reichlova, Bill Tucker, Diana Madaraszova and Albina Senko

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.

*(continued on page 2)*



(continued from page 1)

**In 2012, the FOS-sponsored students attended the following institutes:**

**Name: Mikuláš Curik**

**School:** VSM/City University-Bratislava

**Major:** Business Administration

**Hometown:** Bratislava

**Program:** Institute on Business and Government Affairs

**Sponsored by:** Slovak American Enterprise Fund

**Name: Helena Reichlova**

**School:** University of Economics in Bratislava

**Major:** International Economic Relations

**Hometown:** Presov

**Programs:** Engalitcheff Institute on Comparative Political and Economic Systems

**Sponsored by:** Friends of Slovakia

**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: Martin Teren**

**School:** VSM/City University-Bratislava

**Major:** Business Administration

**Hometown:** Bratislava

**Program:** Institute on Business and Government Affairs

**Sponsored by:** Slovak American Enterprise Fund

**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

**The following are some comments by former FOS Slovak scholars about how they program has influenced their lives:**

**Anna Stancakova (2006)** - Institute on Business and Government Affairs (IBGA). Now working as an attorney with Vojcik & Partners, s.r.o. Kosice.

*"To me, attending the Fund for American Studies program is one of the most determining experience acquired during my studies or career so far. Currently I work as attorney and last three years I have been also a full-time PhD. student at Law faculty of University of P. J. Safarik in Kosice. Among my school responsibilities as a PhD. student has also belonged teaching. I was teaching Civil law and Street law Clinic. While preparing my classes I was constantly coming back to days of taking classes at Georgetown, because those became for me an example of quality classes attractive for students."*

*"Being back to school as PhD student I have been again facing a fact, that studies at universities in Slovakia are focused mostly on acquiring theoretical knowledge, while students get their first opportunity to acquire some practical skills with focus on values of professional ethics only as graduates in their first job. My experience at TEAS program convinced me of utility of gaining the practical skills during the studies concurrently with the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and at the same time showed me how such connection can be realized. Therefore I decided to get involved in creating a new course at our Law faculty - Legal Clinic in the near future (from January 2013 to August 2013) and its leading (since September 2013). At designing this course I would like to pursue a meaning of the TEAS program slogan "Live. Learn. Intern." in such way, that participants of the course shall attend (i) internships (in law firms, offices, nonprofit organizations etc.) one day in a week throughout the whole academic year under the auspices of the faculty and (ii) once-a-week classes which shall be focused on reflection their practice, addressing related problems or other practical activities"*

*"I hope to turn this experience into success in my future plans described above."*

**Martin Korcek (2007)** - Institute on Philanthropy and Voluntary Service. Now employed at the Chancellery of the National Council of the Slovak Republic

*"I helped some former scholarship recipients with contacts on MPs. I cooperate with Jana Sebosikova from Candole partners Prague, Miriam Svetkouska from US Embassy Bratislava and couple of others."*

**Jana Hays (formerly Sebosikova) (2007)** - Institute for Business and Government Affairs

*"Attending the TEAS institute was the single most important semester in my studies and it would not have been possible without the help of the Friends of Slovakia. The experience directly shaped my choice of career. On a more personal basis, it strengthened my confidence in my own abilities and in the necessity of ethical conduct (this may sound a bit out of context but, living in the post communist part of the world, I have found this to be particularly important)."*

(continued on page 6)

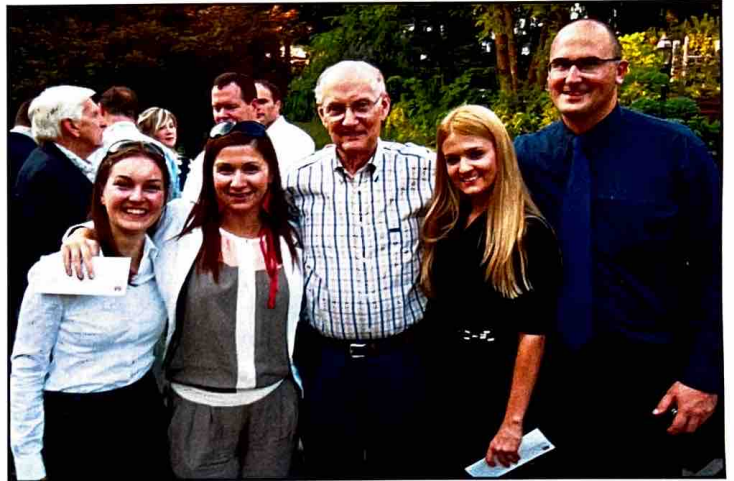


# SUMMER RECEPTION FOR SLOVAK SCHOLARS

Friends of Slovakia Board member Scott Thayer and his wife Nena hosted a gracious reception on June 27 in their beautiful gardens to welcome the 2012 Friends of Slovakia Slovak Scholars to Washington, DC. The Scholars -- Monika Izakova, Diana Madaraszova, Helena Reichlova, Mikulas Curik and Martin Teren -- were joined by Lucia Paskova and Michal Krcmery, Slovak interns in the office of Congressman John Mica, who arrived in DC scant hours before and came straight from the airport.



(l.-r.) Helena Reichlova, Roger Ream, President, The Fund For American Studies, Mikulas Curik, Mary McPherson, Vice Chair of the Slovak-American Foundation



(l.-r.) Helena Reichlova, Monika Izakova, FOS Founding Chairman Amb. Ted Russell, Diana Madaraszova, Martin Teren

In addition to FOS Board members, attendees included Slovak charge d' affaires Peter Zelenak, Fund for American Studies President Roger Ream, and Slovak-American Foundation Vice Chair Mary McPherson. This was the largest group of Scholars FOS has ever been able to support, due to the generosity of several donors: Mr. and Mrs. William J. Poorvu of Cambridge Massachusetts contributed a scholarship to honor U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia Tod Sedgwick, Mikulas and Martin were sponsored by the Slovak-American Foundation, and the remaining two scholarships were made possible by the generous support of the members of Friends of Slovakia. ♦

## ED ZELENAK - CONSUL FOR THE GREAT LAKES



Ed Zelenak

Ed Zelenak was appointed honorary consul by Foreign Minister Edward Kukan in June of 2001. His mission covers the states of Michigan and Wisconsin. He also serves as City Attorney for the cities of Lincoln Park and Southgate, Michigan and as counsel to the St. James, Jamaica (West Indies) Police Civic Council.

Ed is a graduate of Wayne State University, Monteith College (Bachelor in Philosophy – 1975) and its law school (Juris Doctor, 1977). His diverse career includes work as a comedy writer, announcer, talk show host and broadcaster for local and network radio and cable television. He has taught law, police procedure, arbitration and labor relations at Wayne State University in Detroit and continues to perform as a musician. His 100% Slovak family roots are planted in Brehy, Vitaz and Kosice.

His wife, Angie, is a Major Gifts Officer for Lawrence Technological University. Twins Amelia and Eddie are sophomores at Wayne State University and University of Michigan respectively and son Elliott is a senior at University of Detroit Jesuit High School. ♦



# ROBERT FICO'S COMEBACK

It is only natural that friends of Slovakia are interested in the consequences of the latest governmental change in the Slovak Republic five months ago. The purpose of this essay is to look at the nature of the new Slovak Cabinet run by Prime Minister Robert Fico and discuss its key challenges in domestic and foreign policy.

After one and a half years Iveta Radicova's government collapsed on the EU bailout vote and opened the door for Robert Fico's return. He not only convincingly won the March 2012 parliamentary elections but achieved a most unexpected result – an absolute majority of parliamentary seats (83 out of 150).

The landslide victory of Robert Fico, who subsequently filled all key positions in the government and parliament, has created numerous questions about the nature of his government, both domestically and internationally. The first five months of single-party SMER-SD government basically confirmed the earlier prediction that Fico is evolving into a mature and predictable politician, which may prove that he has learned from his past mistakes and those of other leaders.

Fico won in large part on a pro-social and pro-European platform, by offering voters stability and predictability following the complex coalition dynamics and eventual collapse of the center-right government. He did not play a nationalistic card in his campaign nor did he blame external actors for Slovakia's current problems.

Fico's post-election behavior has been a rather positive surprise. He has been more open toward the media and completely changed his style. Previously, he often verbally attacked journalists, accusing them of bias.

Second-term Prime Minister Fico has been rather consensual and generous toward the opposition, offering them important parliamentary or governmental posts. Probably the most interesting case was the nomination of Laszlo Nagy, a Slovak politician of Hungarian ethnicity from the opposition



**Pavol Demes is a Transatlantic Senior Fellow with the German Marshall Fund, a former Slovak Minister for International Relations and a member of the FOS Board of Advisors.**

Most-Hid Party, to be a governmental plenipotentiary for minorities. Although the five opposition center-right parties (of which four served in the previous government) are seriously weakened and fragmented, they comprise a competent and credible opposition.

Aiming to avoid improvisation and mistakes in several key areas, Fico invited experienced non-party personalities to serve as Ministers of Justice, Health, Economy and Foreign Affairs in his new cabinet. This suggests a commitment to tackle serious domestic and international problems rather than a focus on building his party's power base. The nomination of the experienced diplomat Miroslav Lajcak, who until recently worked as part of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton's team, to the role of Minister of Foreign Affairs, underpins Fico's pre-election promises that Slovakia's strategic goal would include remaining strongly anchored to European and transatlantic structures.

Slovakia is not only a member of NATO and the EU but is also the only V-4 country that is a eurozone member. It is therefore expected that Fico will not experiment with unique economic models nor will he ignore economic experts, experienced practitioners, and standard EU rules. At several meetings, he clearly stated that Slovakia's main strategic interest is to stay in the core of the EU. Highlighting the importance of the EU, the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be renamed this fall as the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. This has not only a symbolic meaning. The renamed ministry has gained new competencies – coordination of EU affairs and foreign investments along with the agenda of human rights and Slovaks living abroad. At the same time the Minister of Foreign Affairs was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister, thus being entrusted with greater powers and a higher degree of responsibility.

Robert Fico seems to be fully aware of the political risks coming out of single-party governance in a period of socio-economic hardship and is entering into unusual public-private partnerships. He allowed the so-called social partners – trade unions, employers, academia and churches to contribute to the government manifesto. Subsequently he created a new consultative body, the Council of Solidarity and Development, consisting of these groups as well as representatives of NGOs. Moreover, his government entered into dialogues with the main coalitions of Slovak NGOs (some of them previously critical of Fico's policies), which led to the establishment of the Government Council for Non-Profit Organizations, consisting of rep-

resentatives of ministries (state secretary level) and key leaders of alliances of issue-oriented NGOs. The government did not abolish the position of Plenipotentiary for Civil Society, created during the previous government, which will work together with the Minister of the Interior as a driving force of this body. During the first term of Prime Minister Fico this would have been simply unthinkable.

Robert Fico became prime minister on the threshold of the 20th anniversary of the Slovak Republic, which will be celebrated on January 1, 2013. After over two decades in politics, he is apparently still full of strength and ambitions, enjoying significant public support. It will be a difficult four year mandate for him (unless he decides not to run for president in two years) because of multiple domestic and international challenges. The policy of the center-left SMER-SD party is focused on a stronger state and state's guarantees. However, the economic and financial situation in Slovakia and across the eurozone is rather alarming. Prime Minister Fico simply has to start taking unpopular steps and instituting reforms which will affect large segments of society. Moreover, the evolution



**Eurovea - part of the new Bratislava - riverfront apartments, hotel, shopping center**

of the EU is full of unpredictability with unknown potential impact on all its member states.

The situation in the education, science and health systems will be among critical problems for the new government to deal with since there is a steady deterioration in these areas. What many consider worrisome is the state of the judiciary, which is one of the least trusted institutions among Slovak citizens. There has been chronic and widespread corruption and a peculiar interplay between political and business circles that has shaped public attitudes toward the state and its system. Robert Fico and his cabinet will be tested to see if they will contribute to increase transparency, fairness and justice in the country. ♦

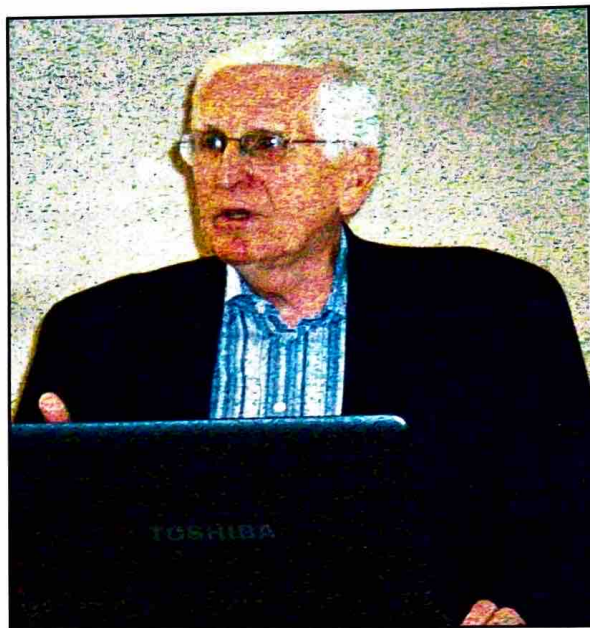
*-by Pavol Demes*



## FORMER AMBASSADOR OBSITNIK'S TALK WELL RECEIVED BY WASHINGTON-AREA SLOVAKS

Former U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia Vincent Obsitnik gave a talk to the Washington-area Slovak-American community on June 3 entitled "Reflections on My Time as Ambassador to Slovakia, and Slovakia Today." The Friends of Slovakia and the Slovak American Society of Washington DC co-sponsored the talk at the Arlington VA Central Public Library.

Amb. Obsitnik was the first U.S. ambassador to Slovakia to be of Slovak-American background. He was born in Slovakia and is fluent in Slovak. His parents came to the U.S. in the early 20th century, but eventually went back to Slovakia. Vince was born in 1938 in Moravany, near Kosice. However, after several months, his parents returned with him to the U.S. He grew up in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and had a successful career in the U.S. Navy and with several top corporations. He described the events that led to his appointment as U.S. ambassador to Slovakia as akin to a "miracle." Vince was originally selected by President Bush to be ambassador to Slovenia. However, when the then-current ambassador to Slovakia wished to return to the U.S., Vince was asked to take the post in Slovakia. He arrived in Slovakia to present his credentials to Slovak President Gasparovic on December 6, 2007, St. Nicholas Day. He joked that the date meant "you have to give a gift," which some months later turned out to be the acceptance of Slovakia into the U.S. Visa Waiver Program -- a long cherished goal of Slovak foreign policy.



Ambassador Obsitnik

In his discussion of Slovakia today, the ambassador noted the progress that Slovakia has made since obtaining its freedom (1989) and independence (1993). Progress has been particularly strong in the economic sphere, and numerous U.S. corporations have invested in Slovakia. But the foreign relations and friendship between the U.S. and Slovakia also have matured and grown as Slovakia has become well-integrated into Western institutions, among them NATO, the European Union, and the euro. Vince feels that the orientation toward the West and its values is now well-entrenched, and he is encouraged that the new Fico government appears to be supporting this course.

Vince also noted several economic and political challenges facing Slovakia. Slovakia faces high unemployment in many areas and yet, a limited supply of high-end labor. It has a heavy reliance on the auto industry and on exports to sustain economic growth. He highlighted the importance of education for the future workforce as a means of sustaining growth and fostering diversification of the economy. Tourism could also be given more emphasis, given the natural beauty of the country, he said. Vince also discussed the political situation, including the recent elections and challenges facing the new government going forward.

Amb. Obsitnik ended by emphasizing how the recent progress of Slovakia has led to a more European focus among Slovak young people who are free to travel and study throughout Europe. This implies less of a U.S. focus, which, perhaps, may be appropriate under the circumstances. However, he urged Slovak-Americans to continue to find ways to maintain and foster connections with Slovakia and Slovaks. Modern technologies may assist this process, but continued efforts must be made to maintain and promote the two nations' shared values. ♦



*(continued from page 3)*

*"I am in regular contact with several graduates from several years. I was very sorry to miss this year's alumni meeting in Bratislava but I hope that there will be another opportunity soon."*

**Martin Socuvka (2008)** – Institute on Comparative Political and Economic Systems

*"During Summer 2008 I had an excellent opportunity to attend the Engalitcheff Institute on Comparative Politics and Economic Systems. I would not have had this chance to come to Washington, DC without the FOS's generous sponsorship."*

*"I have stayed in touch with Miriam Svetkovska and my brother Ondrej."*

**Lubos Kuchta (2009)** – Institute on Comparative Political and Economic Systems. Now employed at Slovak State Health Insurance Company

*"TFAS summer program was very intense, but allowed all participants to better understand life in Washington, DC and meet amazing people, either among very intelligent students, or interesting and successful people from academia, politics and business."*

*"I am in personal contact with my Slovak colleague and in online contact with some classmates via social networks. Last month we had wonderful opportunity to meet Ms. Fisher, Ambassador Sedgwick and other TFAS/FOS alumni from Slovakia. This week we are going to meet with TFAS president Mr. Ream in Bratislava."*

**Pavol Babos (2009)** - Institute for Political Journalism. Currently finishing Ph.D. in Political Economy at Comenius University

*"Attending the TFAS program taught me a lot, however, I would like to mention two important points. Firstly, I learnt a lesson about how American students approach their studies and knowledge-building process, since this is considerably different in Slovakia. This helped me in my further studies, especially my post-graduate studies. Secondly, the work experience in Radio Free Europe was a fantastic lesson of professional and top-level journalism which is also quite different from the home experience I had had before. And although I am not currently active in journalism, the experience of working in such inspiring and professional environment is helpful in other fields as well."*

*"I have stayed in touch with a few graduates from the same cohort, including both American students and international."*

**Michal Demo (2010)** - Institute on Business and Government Affairs. At present Financial Controller at ELDISY, a company that provides the automotive industry with car sealing

*"It was a great opportunity to discover academic environment, political system, cultural identity and the way of living in the USA. I also got to know some inspiring people."*

*"I met the former scholarship recipients at the reception of U.S. Ambassador on August 22, 2012 in Bratislava. I am going to meet them at the reception of TFAS President on September 6, 2012 in Bratislava. And I will also meet some of them during the session of Youth Advisory Council on October 4, 2012 in Kosice."*

**Pavol Gavor (2011)** - Institute on Business and Government Affairs (IBGA). Now Project Manager, AT&T, Bratislava

*"It was a great opportunity to experience US schooling system and acquire new skills from business and lobbying environment in DC. I benefited from all the opportunities to meet Slovak representatives at the Embassy in DC, found new friends from abroad and even friends in business area in DC."*

*"I am in constant contact with some of the Slovak and international attendees. Me and Veronika Korcekova reunited with two other participants from Poland and Estonia this summer in Tallin, Estonia. We spent some time together and refreshed our memories from last summer in DC. We have decided to set up an annual reunion held in home countries of particular participants - on rotation basis. Next year shall be the reunion held in Slovakia."*

**Veronika Korcekova (2011)** - Institute of Philanthropy and Voluntary Service

*"TFAS summer program was for me a wonderful opportunity to broaden my knowledge about philanthropy, gain practical working skills and meet new and interesting people. I am sure this experience will shape my future."*

**Martin Teren (2012)** - Institute on Business and Government Affairs (IBGA). Accountant, Deutsche Telekom Shared Services, Bratislava

*"Great experience for the future."*

**Monika Izakova (2012)** - Institute on Economics and International Affairs

*"It changed my life and helped me to be more competitive." ♦*



## FOS WALL OF HONOR PLAQUES UNVEILED ON SEPTEMBER 12

The 2012 class of FOS Wall of Honor plaques was unveiled September 12 in the garden of the Slovak Embassy in Washington, D.C. The unveiling took place as part of the Embassy's annual commemoration of Constitution Day of the Slovak Republic, the anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising, and Slovak Armed Forces Day. The event drew hundreds of participants, including U.S. and other foreign diplomats and military officials, FOS members, and many area Slovaks, Slovak-Americans, and other friends of Slovakia.

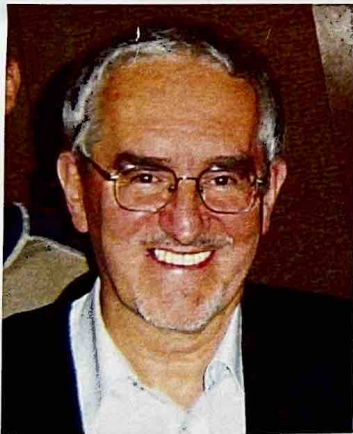
The FOS Wall of Honor program recognizes the generous benefactors who make FOS scholarships, lectures, and other events possible. The 2012 class of benefactors includes COL (R) Stephen C. Matula, Richard Marko, Frederick Frank (FOS board member), Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Vallee (former U.S. ambassador to the Slovak Republic), COL (R) and Mrs. John R. Miller (former FOS board member), Dr. and Mrs. George O. Krizek, and the Slovak Gymnastic Union Sokol of the USA. FOS corporate contributors ECO Invest, U.S. Steel, and BAE Systems also received plaques for renewing their substantial support for the Friends. ♦

### The following names are on the plaque from the 2011 Slovak-American awards dinner:

Sokol of the USA	Maria Balazova
First Catholic Slovak Ladies Assn.	Barbara Miller, Denver, Colorado
Honeywell International	Henry Kallan, HK Hotels
The Ed Zelenak Family	Dr. Lee Bailey OD JP, Jamaica
Mimi Danihel	Nina & Peter Burian
Drs. Cecilia Rokusek & Robert Petrick	Sally & Ted Russell
Slovak League of America	Ingrid Aielli
Czech-Slovak American Enterprise Fund	Washington Capitals
Hewlett Packard	Rodina Valko
George Sipko, Koger USA	

The plaques were engraved by Ludovit Urban in Bratislava and installed by Archie Casey of Everett, Pennsylvania.

Friends of Slovakia is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to FOS are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more information about participating in the FOS Wall of Honor, please contact Thomas W. Skladony at [skladony@verizon.net](mailto:skladony@verizon.net).



# 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, 6th floor

1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW.

Washington DC

## 2012 SLOVAK-AMERICAN AWARDS DINNER IS BEING POSTPONED UNTIL FEBRUARY OR MARCH 2013

The Slovak-American Awards Dinner, originally scheduled for November 16, has been postponed until February or March 2013 and will celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Slovakia's independence. The dinner will be organized in cooperation with the Slovak Embassy and will be held at the Washington Golf and Country Club in Arlington, VA. 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.

Friends of Slovakia will send out a Save-the-Date notice to our membership as soon as we have settled on a definite date. We hope that you can join us for the Awards Dinner in 2013 to celebrate the strong ties between Slovakia and the United States and the 20th Anniversary of Slovak independence. ♦