Friends of Slovakia
NEWSLETTER
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AMB. BUTORA REFLECTS ON SLOVAKIA'S FIRST 20 YEARS

Martin Butora, former Slovak ambassador to the United States, delivered the 13th Annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture on November 16, 2012. He was introduced by Wilson Center Executive Vice President and COO Michael Van Dusen. A capacity audience filled the Woodrow Wilson Center auditorium to hear his thoughts on "20 Years of Independence: Reflections on Freedom and Democracy". The lecture was simulcast on the web and is available together with the lecture text at www.wilsoncenter.org.

Ambassador Butora takes a question

Ambassador Butora began by describing the dramatic developments in Slovakia since 1918. He believes that future historians will "probably evaluate Slovakia's last two decades favorably."

Regarding recent developments, both Slovakia and the Czech Republic are doing rather well according to various economic indices. Nevertheless, the public in both countries "is rather pessimistic and skeptical." A certain "malaise" is still widespread. There is still corruption and inefficient government bureaucracy.

Amb. Russell at podium presents medal as Joe Senko, Tom Dine and Amb. Butora look on

The most problematic area is the judiciary. Butora cited the recent case of former- President Kovac being ordered to apologize to the former chief of the intelligence service and to pay a large fine. Less than one third of the population has any confidence in the judiciary system, according to a July 2012 study.

The ambassador then described the mindset of many Slovaks today. He described a picture of certain so-called "real capitalism" which is as unattractive as infamous pre-1989 "real socialism" has been. It is not a regime but rather a metaphor about certain codes of behavior: if one wishes to get ahead, one must accept that corruption and clientelism is simply a part of the new order and to adapt to it. Also, most Slovaks appreciate their increased freedoms, but only a third thought that honest work would lead to success. "More freedom doesn't automatically mean more satisfaction."

Butora spoke of the challenges to the current government, a one-party government that is a first in Slovak history. "The good news [is]: it doesn't include the bad guys. It is a pro-European cabinet. Slovakia evidently wants to be a part of a ...more integrated Europe."

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However, political opposition is weak and fragmented and has not been able to make its policies part of government policy. The ruling party has done as it wished in some areas: e.g., the president has blocked the elected prosecutor general from filling his job.

A major ongoing challenge is to deal with living conditions for Roma and their relationship to the majority population. Their employment rate is deplorable, education opportunities very limited, and life expectancy is a shocking 15 years less than for other Slovaks.

Regarding the economy, Slovakia's industrial area is growing, unlike the rest of the E.U. The auto industry is doing very well. He regretted that U.S. Steel is considering leaving because they not only provided many jobs but also showed corporate responsibility in the community and initiated a Roma employment project.

Ambassador Butora concluded his talk by declaring "one thing is indisputable: the United States and Europe and the Slovak Republic as part of Europe have very similar challenges and to discuss them more regularly on the highest possible level in an imaginative way might bring benefits for both sides."

At the conclusion of the lecture, Friends of Slovakia Chairman Joe Senko and Founding Chairman Ambassador Ted Russell presented Ambassador Butora with the FOS Medal of Honor. American Friends of the Czech Republic President Tom Dine presented the speaker with a Certificate of Appreciation. ✦

BUTORA DINNER HELD AT WASHINGTON GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

FOS hosted a festive dinner for Martin and Zora Butora on November 16, 2012 at the Washington Golf & Country Club following his presentation of the Annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture at the Wilson Center in Washington. Among the 48 guests were Slovak Ambassador Peter Kmec, Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovic, Martin Palous, former Permanent Representative to the UN for the Czech Republic. former Czech Ambassador to the US and currently head of the Havel Foundation in the US; Pavol Demes, German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Fellow and former Slovak Minister of International Relations, Greg Fasing, Slovak honorary consul in Denver, and Tom Dine, former president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Prague and president of American Friends of the Czech Republic. FOS board members Ted Russell, Joe Senko, Bill Tucker, Julie Slavik, and Ken Bombara acted as table hosts.

Oliver Gunovsky, Amb. Martin Butora, Pavol Demes and Amb. Peter Kmec

Former Czech Amb. Martin Palous, Bill Tucker, Amb. Butora and Czech Amb. Petr Gandalovič

Amb. Russell, Joe Senko, Zora Butora, Amb. Butora, Greg Fasing, Bill Tucker, Pavol Demes

Richard Marko, Zora Butora, Amb. Butora and Jana Fodorova

Martin, as one of the founding members of Friends of Slovakia, presented some remarks about the close relationship between Slovakia and the US and the value of an organization like FOS in promoting U.S. – Slovak friendship and cooperation. Several members of the FOS board of directors recalled the founding of FOS and the critical role that Martin played in the early life of the organization as Slovak Ambassador to Washington. ✦

PAVOL DEMEŠ' NEW BOOK ON US-SLOVAK RELATIONS

On November 15, Ambassador Peter Kmec hosted a reception and book launch co-sponsored by Friends of Slovakia for Pavol Demeš' new book on Slovak-American relations. A large audience, including many members of Friends of Slovakia attended, some of whom, like Wendy Luers, had been deeply involved in efforts to strengthen Slovak civil society. After brief remarks by Ambassador Kmec and FOS Founding Chairman Ted Russell, Pavol Demeš discussed the role U.S. private organizations, individuals and the U.S. government played in helping to build Slovak civil society starting immediately after the Velvet Revolution of 1989.

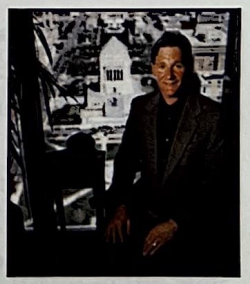
Amb. Kmec, Amb. Russell, Pavol Demeš and Amb. Butora

Pavol Demeš spoke with particular authority having been a leader in working to strengthen Slovak private and voluntary organizations and also serving as foreign policy advisor to President Michael Kovac during a challenging period for Slovak democracy during the Meciar government 1994-98. Former Slovak Ambassador to Washington, Martin Butora, contributed to the discussion and emphasized the importance of this help in getting Slovakia into NATO and the European Union. Pavol Demeš went on to point out how Slovak civil society and the Slovak government are now helping other nations in Eastern and Southern Europe and North Africa to build their own civil societies.

Pavol Demeš' book, *"A Collective Portrait: The U.S. Contribution to the Development of Civil Society in Slovakia"*, is available in digital format and may be read or downloaded via the Friends of Slovakia website: **www.friendsofslovakia.org**. The book was earlier presented at a book launch at the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava at an event hosted by Ambassador Tod Sedgwick. ✦

STEVE ZLATOS, INDIANA HONORARY CONSUL

Steve Zlatos is Slovakia's honorary consul in Indianapolis, Indiana. He has worked for over 30 years as a patent and trademark attorney for the Woodard law firm in downtown Indianapolis, helping inventors and small businesses protect their inventions. He is a graduate of Purdue University in Engineering Studies and the Indiana University Law School in Indianapolis. Steve's consular territory covers the states of Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee. Steve's wife, Betsy, is also an attorney, and she counsels the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. They have two children, Megan, a teacher of English as a Second Language, and Bryan, currently in his senior year of studies at Wittenberg University in Ohio.



Steve Zlatos

Steve's Slovak grandparents immigrated from Pruské, a small town located in the foothills of the White Carpathian Mountains not far from the Moravian border. His father was one of thirteen children, three of whom stayed in Slovakia and due to the world wars were not reunited with their siblings and family in the United States for over half a century.

Steve's first visit to Slovakia was in 1985 during the time of communism, the Cold War and the Iron Curtain. Since then he has visited numerous times, always taking opportunities to enjoy the food such as *bryndzové halusky* and beer, particularly Zlatý Bazant, and hiking among the beautiful Tatra Mountains and seemingly endless castle ruins. ✦

1ST ANNUAL AMB. PETER BURIAN ROMA SCHOLARSHIP PRESENTED IN BRATISLAVA

Joe Senko congratulates Vladimir Gaspar

The Slovak honorary consuls in the United States were honored to join Amb. Peter Burian, now State Secretary of the Slovak Republic, in presenting the first annual Ambassador Peter Burian Roma Scholarship in Bratislava. The 2012 scholarship was awarded to Mr. Vladimir Gaspar, who will be studying at the School of Management in Trencin. This school is affiliated with City University of Seattle.

Consuls with Amb. Burian and scholarship winner, V. Gaspar with certificate

The money raised for the scholarship, which includes the student's tuition, board and tutoring expenses, is the result of the efforts of all the honorary consuls who, in collaboration with Friends of Slovakia, have been sponsoring silent auctions during the annual Slovak Gala Dinners held in Arlington VA.

In the past three years, the consuls have raised over $13,000. In addition to the silent auction, individual donations from people who wanted to honor Amb. Burian have also contributed to the fund.

The scholarship winner was selected from among the top Roma students who achieved the highest academic grades in high school (gymnasium). Students who applied needed to complete an application as well as an essay on why they wished to pursue higher education and what they envisioned themselves doing in the future. Peter Muzila, Massachusetts honorary consul, and Martin Valko, Texas honorary consul, reviewed the applications and made the final recommendation to the Slovak Embassy in Washington.

It is the hope of the consuls that this scholarship can be awarded annually. Anyone wishing to donate to this fund may send a check for the Slovak Consuls Scholarship Fund to: **Cecilia Rokusek, 13325 Arch Creek Road, North Miami FL 33181**

In addition, items may be sent to: **Friends of Slovakia, 704 Blueberry Hill Road, McLean VA 22101** for the silent auction to be held in conjunction with the next annual gala dinner to be held soon. ✦

FOS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM JOINS WITH THE FUND FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

Richard Marko and Amb. Tod Sedgewick have each generously agreed to fund a 2013 FOS Slovak Scholar, and the Slovak American Foundation will again fund two FOS Slovak Scholars as they did in 2012. FOS will fund an additional Scholar out of general funds bringing the total to five FOS Slovak Scholars for 2013.

The Fund for American Studies has again agreed to fund half of the cost of a full scholarship. The cost of a full scholarship at TFAS is $11,000 and the cost to FOS and individual donors has thus risen to $5500 because of an increase in tuition, housing and fees.

The Fund for American Studies Summer Institutes were at Georgetown University for 42 years, but in 2013 George Mason University (GMU) will become the academic partner, with students housed at George Washington University. GMU is ranked as the "Number one upcoming university in the US" by US News. It is ranked in the top 20 universities by the Academic Ranking of World Universities. The Economics Department is highly renowned; it has had two Nobel Prize winners on its faculty.

FOS urges members who believe in the enormous importance of educational exchanges to promoting Slovak-American friendship to consider supporting this capstone FOS program. ✦

REMARKS BY THE HON. JOHN L. MICA IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD DATED JANUARY 3, 2013

Honorable John L. Mica

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate our ally and friend, the Republic of Slovakia, on her 20th anniversary of independence.

In two brief decades, Slovakia has dramatically transitioned to an independent, democratic and economically viable free nation.

As some of my colleagues may know, my great grandparents emigrated from Slovakia to the United States at the turn of the last century. Like so many others, my family was drawn to America by the promises of freedom and opportunity. My ancestors would be proud to see both the progress of America over that century and the positive development of the Slovak Republic in its 20 years of independence.

For a millennia, the Slovak people were ruled or governed by others. After centuries of power shifts and realignments, in 1989, the Velvet Revolution brought down the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Democracy came to that nation as formerly jailed dissident and political activist Vaclav Havel was elected to the presidency. However, the Slovak people's yearning for self-governance was not realized until 1993.

Following the peaceful separation of the Czech and Slovak Republics, January 1, 1993 marks the birth of the Second Slovak Republic. As fate would have it, days later I was sworn in as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. As one of the Members of Congress with Slovak ancestry, I have been proud to work with many who have been so successful in strengthening US-Slovak relations and to aid in the political and economic development of the Slovak Republic.

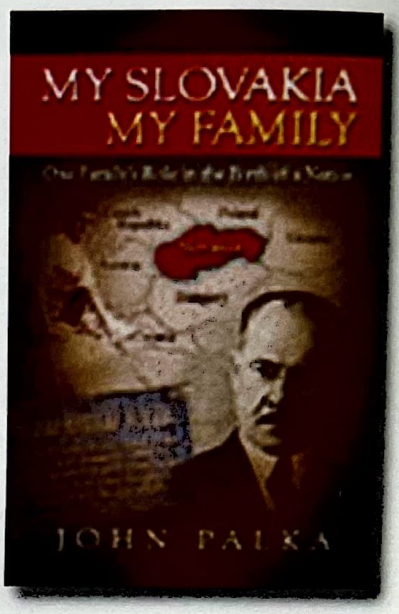
Like any new democracy, the Slovak Republic has experienced some growing pains. After President Michal Kovác's service as the first president, my good friend and former Košice Mayor Rudolf Schuster was elected president after a constitutional amendment changed the presidency to a directly elected position. His successor is now President Ivan Gašparovič. I commend these and all the other Slovak leaders who have helped fashion a new era for their people.

Even with many difficult challenges as a new nation, the Slovak Republic made outstanding progress over the last 20 years, and I am proud to have played a very small part in its history. In 2000, Slovakia became a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and in 2004, joined both NATO and the European Union. The Republic of Slovakia and its people continue to provide international leadership both in Europe and throughout the world.

For the United States and the American people, we are fortunate to have such a strong ally and friend in the family of nations. So today we salute and congratulate the Slovak Republic on the special occasion of their 20th anniversary of independence. We wish them every continued future success as they mark this historic milestone.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Slovak Republic and look forward to peace and prosperity for both of our countries for decades to come. ✦

"MY SLOVAKIA-MY FAMILY"
by John Palka

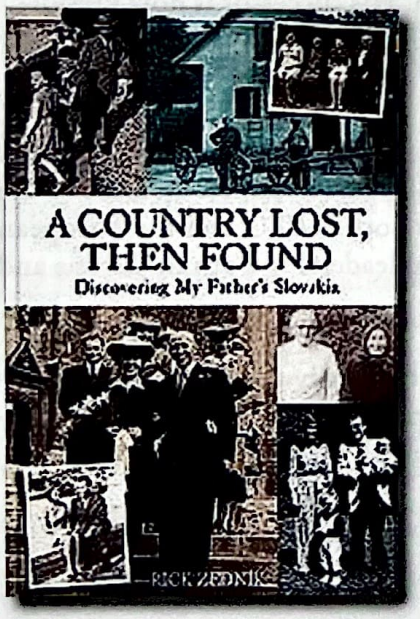


John Palka, scion of one of the most distinguished families in the history of Slovakia, has written a masterful account of Slovakia's history. The Hodza and Palka families played a significant role in Slovakia's history. John Palka's mother was the daughter of Milan Hodza, the last prime minister of interwar Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Palka attended the Embassy's reception on January 31, 2013 where he made brief remarks about his book and his book was available for purchase by those attending. It can also be ordered through the publisher at:
http://www.kirkhouse.com/Books/My_Slovakia_My_Family. ✦

A MULTI-GENERATIONAL SAGA OF A SLOVAK FAMILY

Country Lost, Then Found by Rick Zednik is a highly personal account of his Slovak family. It particularly highlights his father, Juraj "Jay" Zednik, who was fortunately out of Czechoslovakia when the Warsaw Pact troops invaded in 1968 so he requested asylum in West Germany and eventually ended up in the US, married to his American wife. He made only one brief visit back to Czechoslovakia in 1980. His sister had also fled with her family, and his parents were punished by being moved into a tiny *paneloky* apartment.



Rick reversed his father's path and moved to Slovakia in 1994. He wished to be helpful to his aging grandparents and particularly the ailing Dedko. He also wished to "journalistically cover and metaphorically uncover this newly free and independent country." He was a co-founder of the still-flourishing *Slovak Spectator*. At the same time he was learning from his grandparents, residents of Bratislava, much of the family's stories.

The story is most interesting when it focuses on Rick's time with his grandparents and the work involved in beginning a newspaper from scratch. His grandfather was already ailing when he arrived but Rick was able to spend time with his grandparents until the grandfather died in 1995. Rick stayed until 2000 when he left to marry, attend graduate school and go to work in Brussels where he is now CEO of EurActive.com.

This book is available through Amazon.com, both as a paperback and a Kindle download. ✦

COMMEMORATE 20 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE WITH A WALL OF HONOR TRIBUTE

As we celebrate Slovakia's remarkable achievements since its independence, Friends of Slovakia hopes you will take this opportunity to memorialize this benchmark anniversary with your plaque or inscription on the FOS Wall of Honor at the Slovak Embassy.

Begun in 2001, the Wall of Honor salutes donors' Slovak heritage and families and Slovak-American friendship. FOS offers a wide selection of Wall of Honor opportunities – from an inscription on each year's group plaque and several sizes of individual plaques. This allows for a donation range that fits most every budget!

Each year, in September, the new plaques are unveiled at the Embassy's Constitution Day Reception. As part of the celebration, all donors are invited to attend and have both a group and individual photograph taken with the ambassador at the Wall.

We hope this will be a banner year for the FOS Wall of Honor. The 2013 deadline for receipt of your selection is April 15th.

For more information, please contact:
Thomas W. Skladony
6230 North 27th Street
Arlington, VA 22207-1103
Tel: 703-534-6575
skladony@verizon.net or complete the form below:

FOS WALL OF HONOR INSCRIPTION INFORMATION FORM

Please indicate how you would like your tribute inscribed on the FOS Wall of Honor on the grounds of the Slovak Embassy in Washington, DC. **Please type or print clearly**:

Your name: _____
Your address: _____
_____
Your phone number: _____
Your email address: _____

Individual - Please note that for an individual the name of the contributor and spouse or family name is allowed for a contribution of $250-$999 on the group plaque. There is a limit of **30** characters for each inscription on the group plaque.

Corporation, Organization or Society – A corporation, organization or society must contribute $1,000-$2,499 to have its name inscribed on the **group** plaque. There is a limit of **30** characters for each inscription on the group plaque.
Tom Skladony can give further information for donations over the amounts shown above.