Friends of Slovakia
NEWSLETTER
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FOS GALA DINNER
A MAJOR SUCCESS

On November 14, 2014, Friends of Slovakia and the Slovak Embassy hosted the fifth Slovak-American Awards dinner at the Slovak Embassy in Washington, DC. The event marked the 20th anniversary of Slovakia's entrance into NATO and the European Union, the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, and the 70th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising.

The sold-out event was a banner evening for FOS. The embassy building and the spacious heated tent over the terrace made an elegant setting to display the silent auction items, tasting area for Double Cross Vodka and a festive, delicious dinner. The event brought together more than 120 individuals along with corporate and fraternal representatives to celebrate Slovakia's being a fully contributing member of the EU, NATO, and the transatlantic community of democracies. Proceeds from this event support the FOS flagship Slovak Scholars' Program, the annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture and other programs promoting Slovak-American friendship. Half the income from the silent auction supports the Slovak Honorary Consuls' Peter Burian Roma Scholarship.

Joe Senko presents Amb. Burian with an award for diplomacy as Ed Zelenak looks on.

This year's keynote speaker was Peter Burian, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and formerly Slovak Ambassador to Washington. Minister Burian emphasized the economic, cultural and political ties binding the U.S. and Slovakia.

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(continued from page 1)

Amb. Peter Kmec with Dr. Jan Vilcek, Man of the Year.

Those honored with awards were:

Dr. Jan Vilcek, *Slovak-American of the Year.* Dr. Vilcek is a true renaissance man: a scientist, an educator, an inventor and a philanthropist. Born and educated in Bratislava, he and his wife defected to the West in 1964 and came to New York City. He has been on the faculty of NYU School of Medicine since then. He not only did groundbreaking work on interferon but also developed methods for using it. His work led to treatments for a number of chronic diseases, including Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis. In 2000 the couple created the Vilcek Foundation that awards grants to immigrants making contributions in biomedical science and the arts; thanks to royalties from the drug he helped develop, Remicade, the Vilceks are major donors to NYU School of Medicine.

Amb. Russell presents diplomatic award to Amb. Sedgwick at Awards Dinner

Ambassador Theodore Sedgwick, *Diplomacy Award.* In his travels throughout the country Ambassador Tod Sedgwick has underscored the vital U.S. interest in supporting Slovakia's success as a reliable trans-Atlantic partner in NATO and strong member of the European Union. He has fostered U.S. – Slovak cultural and educational exchanges, including personal support for the FOS Slovak Scholars program. He has worked tirelessly and effectively to strengthen U.S.-Slovak commercial ties and to encourage Slovakia's efforts to create a more effective judicial system and to fight corruption. In recognition of his notable contributions to building U.S.-Slovak friendship, Friends of Slovakia awarded Ambassador Sedgwick its Award for Diplomacy.

Peter Breiner, *Cultural Award.* An internationally acclaimed musician - conductor, pianist, arranger, and composer - Peter Breiner studied music in Bratislava. Among his many musical projects, he arranged all the national anthems of countries participating in the Olympic Games in Athens and in London. He is perhaps best known for his baroque arrangements of Christmas music and Beatles and Presley songs. He is currently working on a major piece based on Slovak dances. He has conducted many of the most prestigious orchestras and has recorded and released over 210 CDs.

Ken Bombara (l.) presents the culture award to Peter Breiner

The Fund for American Studies (TFAS), *Educational Award*. It is FOS' partner for the FOS Summer Scholars Program. TFAS and FOS, thanks to our generous donors, have provided over $200,000 for 30 FOS Slovak Scholars who participate in the eight-week summer academic and internship program at George Mason University.

Dr. Sharon Wolchik presents Mary Stankus of TFAS its award

This year's dinner attracted a record number of benefactors who purchased full tables and a record number of program ads. FOS thanks all who helped so generously to make this the most financially successful Slovak-American Awards Dinners held in the U.S. We are particularly grateful to Ambassador Peter Kmec and the Embassy staff for their hospitality and assistance with the event. ✦

FOS SALUTES AND THANKS THE DINNER BENEFACTORS:

AT&T • BAE Systems • ECO-INVEST, s.a. • ESET North America • HONEYWELL
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FOS TO PRESENT AEROMOBIL TO THE U.S.

As the world's economies seek economic growth and jobs, emphasis is increasingly placed on the key role played by innovation. A recent Washington Post op-ed by Fareed Zakaria noted, "Innovation is partly about entrepreneurship but also about technology." And there are some, such as billionaire Peter Thiel, who argue that, despite the hype, we don't actually live in innovative times. Thiel, of Founders' Fund, his venture capital firm, put it pithily, "We wanted flying cars, instead we got 140 characters," referring to Twitter.

Friends of Slovakia is proud to announce that not only do we now have a flying car, but it's designed and manufactured in Slovakia! FOS has recently been in contact with the Slovak firm, Aeromobil, which has designed and built a prototype of a road vehicle with flying capability. We are procuring a scale model of the vehicle, and will be sponsoring its display for the next three years as part of a traveling exhibit aimed at promoting aeronautical technology to young people and the public. This project presents an unusual opportunity to showcase the technological potential of Slovak firms and to promote Slovakia generally. FOS board member, Richard Marko, is coordinating the project, and we will be reporting on details as the project gets underway in the months to come.

THANKS TO THOSE WHO ADVERTISED IN THE DINNER PROGRAM:

Ambassador Vince and Annemarie Obsitnik
Double Cross Vodka
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Ladies Pennsylvania Slovak Catholic Union
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Slovak League of America
Slovak Catholic Sokol

Aeromobil is a Slovak firm co-founded by Stefan Klein, chief designer of the vehicle and Juraj Vaculik, who serves as Aeromobil's CEO. Klein has spent the past twenty years pursuing his dream to design a flying car, resulting in the latest prototype, Aeromobil 3.0. He received a degree from the Slovak University of Technology in 1983 and has studied design in France as well. He has led research projects for a number of companies resulting in the development of several commercially successful products. Juraj Vaculik has a background in theater studying at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. He was a key figure in the student movement during the Velvet Revolution from which a democratic Slovakia emerged. He subsequently founded a highly successful advertising firm that worked with many global companies. In 2010 Juraj co-founded AeroMobil and manages the company as its CEO. He also acts as an angel investor with investments into successful start-up projects in media content, IT and alternative transport sectors, throughout Europe and the US. You can view the flying car at Aeromobil's website: **www.aeromobil.com**. ✦

DEMES TALK COMBINES HISTORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Dr. Pavol Demes delivered the annual Czech and Slovak Freedom lecture on November 14 at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC. Dr. Demes, a leading exponent of Slovakia's civil society and his nation's entry into the EU and NATO, presented a fascinating "photo essay" documenting Slovakia's journey over the last 25 years and the US-Slovak ties that bind.

Amb. Russell Congratulates Dr. Demes

2014 is the celebratory year for four important anniversaries. The first is the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I after which Czechoslovakia gained independence, thanks to the efforts of T.G. Masaryk, M.R. Stefanik and Woodrow Wilson. The second is the 70th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising against the Nazis, and the third, the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution ending Communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Finally, the newest milestone: the 10th anniversary of Slovakia's entry into NATO and the European Union.

Since 1918, many factors have helped link the US with Slovakia including the examples set by noted Slovak Americans. Slovak citizen Sgt. Michael Strank, killed in action on Iwo Jima along with two other members of the six man unit he led to raise the large US flag on Mt. Suribachi, is represented on the Iwo Jima Memorial near Arlington Cemetery. Sgt. Strank was posthumously awarded US citizenship in a ceremony held at that memorial. Another famous American of Slovak heritage that Dr. Demes cited is the astronaut, Eugene Cernan, who brought back the moon rock on display in the National Air & Space Museum.

Dr. Demes recognized the contributions to Slovakia's progression towards democracy by Slovak dissidents and political prisoners, such as Silvester Krcmery and Vladimir Jukl, who led a religious underground movement and set the stage for the 1988 candlelight demonstration on Easter Friday that was brutally dispersed by the regime with water cannons. Krcmery answered his tormentors at his 1954 trial with the response, "You have the power, but we have the truth."

Describing the outbreak of the Velvet Revolution, Dr. Demes emphasized that dissenting students and intellectuals in Slovakia were dedicated to the principle of non-violence and democratic decision making. Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel articulated the meaning of the Velvet Revolution in his February 1990 speech to the US Congress.

Dr. Demes praised the reaction of US civil society to the Velvet Revolution and mentioned the contributions of various Americans: Ann Gardner and her Education for Democracy effort, Wendy Luers and her Foundation for a Civil Society and George Soros and his Open Society movement. He noted the celebratory reopening of the US Consulate in Slovakia in 1991 in the presence of former Consul Claiborne Pell who had been consul in 1948 during the communist takeover. This became the US Embassy after the peaceful separation of the Czechs and Slovaks in January 1993.

Dr. Demes described how Slovak civil society had gradually strengthened during the early years of Slovak independence through its vigorous sparring with the authoritarian Meciar government. In January 1994, the Visegrad 4

leaders of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary met with President Clinton in Prague and were offered a path towards eventual NATO membership. President Clinton subsequently met on several occasions with Slovak President Kovac, but not with Prime Minister Meciar.

Support for Slovakia's democratic progress was offered through visits by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and then-first lady Hillary Clinton. A successful get out the vote effort in 1998 led to the election of Prime Minister Dzurinda and Slovakia's move towards a successful market-oriented democracy. Dzurinda's extraordinary gesture of running in the NYC marathon in tribute to the victims of 9/11 was a sign of strong bonds between our two countries. The 2005 visit of President George Bush to Bratislava, which included a meeting with Russian President Putin, recognized Slovakia's role as a strong member of the EU and NATO. President Obama's meetings with Prime Minister Fico in 2013 and 2014 emphasized the strategic partnership between the US and Slovakia based on shared democratic values.

Dr. Demes concluded his memorable presentation by recalling the election of President Kiska in March 2014 and his tour of the US bringing young Slovak hi tech entrepreneurs, thereby hoping to move Slovakia from "iron to silicon." He emphasized that Slovakia's civil society has been characterized by the ability to "sit down and talk" in order to resolve the most complicated issues. He said he was grateful to live in Slovakia, which in spite of its ups and downs is a good member of the European family and will remain a friend, partner and ally of the United States. ✦

FRIENDS OF SLOVAKIA SELECTS FIVE SCHOLARS FOR SUMMER 2015

Five Slovak students have been chosen to take part in the summer program at the Fund for American Studies (TFAS). The TFAS program, which takes place annually in June-July, offers both course work and internships, providing students with real-world experience in an English-language setting.

Between 2004 and 2014, FOS sponsored 30 Slovak students for the TFAS program. This summer's program will bring that number up to 35. The FOS scholarships have been possible thanks to generous support from TFAS, as well as from the Slovak-American Foundation and private donors, including Ambassador Theodore Sedgwick and FOS board member Richard Marko. Here are the Summer Scholars 2015 and some information on their academic careers:

Lucia Cerchlanova comes from Skalice (near Cadca) and is currently studying international business at Northeastern State University in Oklahoma. She is president of the university's Entrepreneurship Club and captain of the tennis team.

Juraj Hostak is from Bratislava, and he is currently working on a master's degree in European Studies at Maastricht University in the Netherlands. He has worked for Accenture in Bratislava and as an organizer of the 2014 GLOBSEC conference.

Lukas Prvy was born in Slovakia but currently lives in Zurich, Switzerland. He recently completed a master's degree in entrepreneurship and innovation at the University of Amsterdam. Lukas is now in the training program at Deloitte.

Tomas Sakal is from Bratislava and is now studying computer science at Masaryk University in Brno, the Czech Republic. He has a wide range of interests, including foreign languages (he speaks Bulgarian and Chinese) and international affairs.

Monika Soltesova is from Michalovce, and she is currently a student of foreign languages and intercultural communication at the University of Economics in Bratislava. She has held internships at the US Embassy in Bratislava and at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS COME FROM SLOVAK-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Sabina Sabados

Sabina Sabados comes from eastern Slovakia and immigrated to the United States in the late 1980s. She received her B.A. in Political Science from Drew University in May 2003 with minors in French and in European Studies. During her undergraduate studies, Sabina participated in the Drew International Seminar which was hosted in Paris and Iceland. In December 2004, she received her master's in International Relations and Diplomacy from Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations.

She discovered her passion for leadership studies after participating in the Global Leadership Program in Prague hosted by the organization Leadership exCHANGE. She returned to Prague to intern with that program in 2004. In 2005 she became director and lead instructor of the Global Leadership Program in Cordoba, Argentina where she served for three summer terms. Sabina participated in exCHANGE for Peace program, hosted in Switzerland, and the Women as Global Leaders conference in Dubai.

Sabina is very active in the Slovak community, holding the position of president of the Slovak-American Cultural Center where she also serves as chair of the annual Slovak Ball (this year the 22nd Ball was hosted in NJ) which raises funds for the Joseph Stasko Scholarship Fund. Sabina also serves as Regional Director (Region 1) with the First Catholic Slovak Union. Among her other activities, Sabina is also active with the NY Chapter of the Diplomacy Alumni Board.

She is eager to bring her experience and love of Slovak culture, language, and history to the Friends of Slovakia Board.

Andrew Rajec

Andrew P. Rajec is Director of External Relations for the First Catholic Slovak Union (FCSU), an international fraternal benefit society headquartered in Independence, Ohio. Licensed in 27 states, the FCSU specializes in insurance and annuities, with assets over $350 million and annual revenues of approximately $25 million. He is the head of independent agent recruitment and responsible for recasting the brand and developing new sales, marketing, and social media strategies.

Prior to joining the FCSU, Mr. Rajec took on a number of significant roles in foreign policy, presidential and state politics, the U.S. Congress and the executive branch.
He was a member of the 2010 team that produced over 3,000,000 total voter contacts, leading to a switch in the governorship, a U.S. Senate seat, two congressional districts, and the State Senate and Assembly, in one of the most historic elections in the history of Wisconsin. As the West Virginia Director of Coalitions in the President's Re-Election Campaign in 2004, he was a significant component of the leadership team that delivered West Virginia by a 13% margin.

Mr. Rajec was also an integral part of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) where he served as the International Cooperation Specialist for Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Romania and as the Deputy Director for the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

He was awarded USAID's Meritorious Honor Award in recognition for exemplary service and leadership in furthering the Europe and Eurasia Bureau's Foreign Policy Interest and USAID programs. Mr. Rajec also participated as an international election observer for the crucial 2008 presidential elections in the Republic of Georgia, helping to boost domestic and international confidence in the country's election process.

Mr. Rajec began his career in Washington as personal assistant to United States Senator Mitch McConnell, the current Senate Majority Leader, and eventually became Special Assistant to Secretary of Labor, Elaine L. Chao, and served as a member of the Secretary's transition team.

A native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he graduated from Marquette University in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, specializing in Finance. Mr. Rajec currently resides in Broadview Heights, Ohio.

Friends of Slovakia is pleased to have Sabina and Andy join the Board of Directors. ✦

LETTER FROM BRATISLAVA

At the Newsletter's request, Ambassador Tod Sedgwick has contributed the following update on Slovak developments and U.S.-Slovak cooperation:

Amb. Tod Sedgwick dining with FOS 2014 Slovak Scholar Adam Sebesta

Slovakia's role as a security provider has climbed steeply in the past year given the dramatic events in Ukraine.

Slovakia is playing a pivotal role in annually providing up to 14.6 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Ukraine through reverse flow on the eastern border. In recent times, Ukraine has been receiving more gas from Slovakia than from Russia. Through its current leadership in the V4, Slovakia is also sharing with Ukraine its transitional experience of becoming an economically successful country with strong democratic pillars. It's also sharing its expertise in energy efficiency with the goal of reducing the gas demand in Ukraine.

In April, Slovakia is hosting a conference in Kosice to promote trade between Ukraine and Slovakia, which will be a beneficial consequence of the association agreement Ukraine signed with the EU.

US-Slovak relations continue to strengthen. We hope to conclude soon a Foreign Military Sales contract with Slovakia to purchase some Sikorsky helicopters, which will further modernize the Slovak military and make it more interoperable with NATO.

Moreover, in a recent meeting with Prime Minister Fico, I thanked him for his initiative in seeking legislation to fight corruption, reform the judiciary and open the legislative process to more sunshine. I offered to both the prime minister and Speaker of the Parliament Peter Pellegrini our assistance where desired in developing the government's proposals. Speaker Pellegrini is expected to lead a delegation of members of the Slovak Parliament to the U.S. later this year.

Foreign Minister Lajcak, who is highly regarded on the world stage, recently has had productive meetings primarily on Ukraine with Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State John Kerry and National Security Adviser Susan Rice.

Secretary of State Kerry recently presented Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Robert Kalinak with a special award for cooperation in counter-terrorism and border security.

Finally, let me stress how valuable and important the work is that the Friends of Slovakia do in funding scholarships for Slovak students in the U.S. There is no better way to strengthen our relations with Slovakia then sending Slovaks to study in the U.S. and learn about our way of life. My heartfelt thanks to all of you for your good work. If your travels take you to Slovakia, please let me know.

All the best,
Ambassador Theodore Sedgwick

2015 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Note: FOS has changed the membership dues cycle to be on a calendar year. Thus, all renewals made now will be valid through 31 December 2015 and all future renewal notices will be sent prior to 1 January of any given year. You may now also pay by credit card, see below.

❑ Yes, I would like to renew/start my annual individual membership.
Enclosed is my $35 membership contribution for 2015.

❑ Yes, I would like to renew/start my annual organization/fraternal membership.
Enclosed is my $250 membership contribution for 2015.

❑ Yes, I would like to renew/start my corporate membership. Enclosed is my 2015 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. Enclosed is my $_____ membership contribution for 20
and an additional contribution of $_____ for the following FOS sponsored program (please check one):

❑ FOS Scholarship Fund ❑ Corporate Involvement in Slovakia ❑ General contribution to FOS

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