

## SLOVAK-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

### NEWSLETTER

September 2008

[dc\\_slovaks@yahoo.com](mailto:dc_slovaks@yahoo.com)

## NCSML in Cedar Rapids Continues Recovery Efforts

This summer has been marked by the sad event of the flooding of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library (NCSML) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Heavy rains in the Midwest during the month of June resulted in record flooding and on Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup> the Cedar River reached its crest, resulting in 15 feet of water inundating the NCSML. Just before the flooding occurred, the museum staff were able to remove two semi-trailers of items and print material, but much material was not able to be removed. In the aftermath of the flooding, staff found over an inch of mud covering the floors and much damage to windows, doors, furniture, and walls. Many books and other items within the Museum have suffered serious damage, including the exhibit "Remember 1968" which, ironically, had just been announced in the June issue of this newsletter. Although the main building has been deemed structurally safe to enter, architectural and engineering analysis is underway to fully assess the extent of damage and develop a plan for the future. The museum and library, of course, will remain closed indefinitely.

The sad news about the NCSML also had something of a personal impact on a member of our SASW community, Board member Kathryn Tatko. Last year, as part of closing out her mother's estate, Kathryn and her husband Jack decided to donate a family heirloom sewing machine and some other items to the NCSML. Kathryn's parents had operated a tailor shop in Pittsburgh for many years and had used the machine in the business. The sewing machine was a symbol of immigrant life and the NCSML was happy to receive it as a donation. Kathryn & Jack traveled to Cedar Rapids to personally deliver the machine and other items. When the flood hit, Kathryn feared that all the items had been lost as they were in the museum's adjacent warehouse near the riverbank. Subsequently, she has received a bit of good news from museum curator Stefanie Kohn, who informed her that the sewing machine and a suit made by her father have survived, as they were on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the collections center. However, it is too early to tell if her parents' wedding photo and Slovak phonograph records have survived. The museum reports that many dolls cannot be saved and it is uncertain about the condition of some of the *kroje*.

A number of Slovak and Czech organizations have established funds to help support the repair and renovation of the NCSML. At its August meeting, the SASW Board of Directors voted to send a donation to NCSML. If you would like to donate to NCSML via SASW, you can send a check, using the membership form at the back of this newsletter and mark your check "NCSML flood relief." We will make sure it is forwarded to NCSML. Of course, you can donate to the NCSML directly by sending a check to: NCSML, 30 Sixteenth Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52404-5904. You can visit the museum's web address <[www.NCSML.org](http://www.NCSML.org)> if you would like to donate using a credit card. Other organizations such as Friends of Slovakia (FOS) and American Friends of the Czech Republic (AfoCR) have also established funds. Remember, donations through SASW and these other organizations are tax-deductible.

The NCSML website will provide status updates and SASW will continue to forward updates via our 'dcslovaks' e-mail list.

## *President's Column*

Well, I last wrote this column at the beginning of the summer and the summer is now over! I hope you all spent it productively and enjoyably. In that column, I mentioned the June 14<sup>th</sup> Slovak movie "Iné svety," which we sponsored jointly with our friends from the Carpatho-Rusyn Society. The event was a big success---it was well attended and the movie was a very interesting take on contemporary Slovak society. Thanks to all those who turned out!

We also asked for input regarding member interest in a bus trip to the New Jersey Slovak festival in late September. While there was some interest, it was not anywhere near what we needed to make the trip financially viable, so we will not be doing the event. However, we still think it was an excellent idea and will keep it in mind for the future. New ideas are always welcome and your input and feedback is necessary to keep the Society moving forward.

The SASW Board has also been busy planning the remainder of the 2008 calendar, and we've got a really interesting program that you should enjoy. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, we will continue the SASW Speakers' Series with a talk by Prof. Martin Votruba on "Early Slovak Immigration." Prof. Votruba was the original featured speaker for the Series in 2003 and we are glad to have him back--as many people have requested. On October 8<sup>th</sup> we will sponsor a unique event of a literary nature with a book talk by Mr. Michael Genelin, who has written a novel that is set in Bratislava and has a Slovak heroine. See the attached flyer for details. Then on November 1, we will have a talk by Prof. T. Mills Kelly, of George Mason U., on "1989 in Slovakia: Why Communism in Slovakia Failed So Spectacularly." On this November date, we also plan to hold the SASW Annual Meeting prior to the talk. Then of course, on December 7<sup>th</sup>, we plan to hold our popular annual event, the Svätý Mikuláš Party. So, please mark your calendars and help support these events.

Also, I am extremely proud to announce the launching of the **newly-designed SASW website** <[www.dcslovaks.org](http://www.dcslovaks.org)>. We have been working on this project for quite some time, and while we have had a web address, the site has not been fully operational. Now, as of August 30, the new website is live!! The SASW extends its thanks to our web-designer, Ján Markuš, who has done a terrific job. I also want to thank Helen Fedor for her efforts in developing the website content and for organizing the Speakers' Series programs as well. Please check out the website and let us know what you think. Please note that it is still a work-in-progress and that we will continue to develop its content over time.

Let me also update you on some important organizational matters. As some of you may know, I am in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of my tenure as SASW president, and have continued working with the SASW Board on succession planning. In large part, the recent revision of the by-laws was aimed at strengthening and expanding the Board, and increasing flexibility in managing the organization. With these changes in place, at the Board meeting on June 11, I decided to step down as SASW president, for the remainder of my term; Kathryn Tatko has graciously agreed to step in as interim president. I am remaining on the Board in an at-large capacity. It has been an honor to serve SASW and I have enjoyed working with all the current and past members of the Board. However, an increase in my duties at work, and the desire to focus on some long-neglected priorities, including such things as spending more time with my new (first) grandson, make it prudent for me to reduce my role on the Board. I still plan on remaining active and involved ---but someone else needs to "drive the bus"...! I appreciate Kathryn's willingness to step in, and I know she will do well.

With succession planning in mind, I want to remind you all that the Annual Meeting is planned for November 1st and, per the revised by-laws, SASW will elect up to nine Board members. The new by-laws will institute a new structure of three-year terms of office where it will only be necessary to elect three Board members each year. Importantly, the new structure will have all Board members elected at-large and the new Board will choose its own officers at the first Board meeting. I think this will be a great opportunity to open up the organization to new blood and I encourage SASW members to consider running for a Board position. With that in mind, I have agreed to assist the Nominations Chair, Steve Matula, in putting together a slate of candidates for the Annual meeting. Please contact Steve (703)-671-3013 or me (703) 851-6035 if you would like to take advantage of the opportunity to serve SASW. I can assure you, as I have found, that the personal rewards are high compared to the amount of time you might spend on Board matters.

While on the topic of transitions, let me note two other important departures. First, Slovak Ambassador Rastislav Káčer has completed his highly successful five-year term, and returned to Slovakia at the end of June. Vice-President Anne McKeown presented the ambassador with a gift and graciously delivered farewell remarks on behalf of SASW at the farewell reception on June 23rd. Cultural Attache Stella Kukučková has also completed her four-year term and is returning to Slovakia on September 1. The SASW Board recently held an informal farewell dinner and presented her

with a gift as well. Both the ambassador and Stella were very supportive of SASW and made it possible for us to function effectively. In particular, the kindness and patience Stella exhibited in working with SASW will not be forgotten and she will be sorely missed. We wish her all the best in the future.

Ken Bombara

## SASW Calendar of Events

(All the events below will be held at the Slovak Embassy and are free of charge, unless otherwise indicated.)

**Saturday, September 20, 2008 --- 2:00 PM --SASW Speakers' Series**

*"CROSSING THE CONTINENTS AND THE ATLANTIC: AN EARLY SLOVAK ACCOUNT"*

Talk by Professor Martin Votruba, Head of the Slovak Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh.

\*\*\*

**Wednesday, October 8, 2008 --- 7:00 PM --SASW Speakers' Series**

*"SIREN OF THE WATERS"*

A book presentation and signing with author Michael Genelin. Mr. Genelin will read from his new book, *Siren of the Waters*, the first in a new series of crime novels featuring Jana Matinová, a commander on the Slovak police force.

\*\*\*

**Saturday, November 1, 2008 --- 12:30 PM --SASW Annual General Membership Meeting**

The SASW will hold its annual meeting at the Slovak Embassy prior to the talk by Prof. T. Mills Kelly (listed below). The Board of Directors will report to the membership, and elections for a new Board will be held. All members are urged to attend. If you would like to be a candidate for the Board please contact Steve Matula, (703) 671-3013 or [scmatula@aol.com](mailto:scmatula@aol.com).

\*\*\*

**Saturday, November 1, 2008 --- 2:00 PM --SASW Speakers' Series**

*"1989 IN SLOVAKIA: WHY COMMUNISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA FAILED SO SPECTACULARLY"*

A talk by Professor T. Mills Kelly, George Mason University. The 20th anniversary of the end of Communist rule in Central Europe is fast approaching. With the perspective of 20 years, how do we remember those exciting days and what have we learned about why Communism in Czechoslovakia failed so spectacularly?

\*\*\*

**Sunday, December 7, 2008 --- 1:00 PM --The SASW Svätý Mikuláš Party**

Our preeminent holiday event will feature Slovak food and entertainment, and Svätý Mikuláš himself will deliver gifts to the children. Admission will be charged. Details to follow later in the fall.

(For updates on the above events, check the SASW website <[www.dcslovaks.org](http://www.dcslovaks.org)>.)



## *SASW News and Notes*

**Annual Slovak Mass at the National Shrine** --- On Sunday, September 7, at 11:00 AM, a Slovak Mass will be celebrated in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, 400 Michigan Avenue, N.E., in Washington. The Mass will be offered in the Crypt Church, which is on the street level of the Basilica. The Mass is being celebrated to mark the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the Mother of Sorrows Chapel. This chapel was donated to the National Shrine by the First Catholic Slovak Union in 1965. Located about half way towards the altar in the main church, it received a prize for being the most beautiful chapel in the Shrine, the only chapel to receive such an award. All persons of Slovak descent should be proud of this memorial. Persons of Slovak heritage and their relatives and friends are encouraged to attend.

**Slovak Language Classes in Baltimore** --- The Czech and Slovak Language School is now accepting registrations for Czech and Slovak language courses that **begin on Saturday, September 6**, at the Maryland School for the Blind, 3501 Taylor Avenue, in Parkville, MD. Call (410) 435-1317 or (410) 243-1710 for detailed information and a registration form, or see <[www.czslha.org](http://www.czslha.org)> or e-mail <[LHybl@verizon.net](mailto:LHybl@verizon.net)>. The language school is sponsored by the Czech and Slovak Heritage Association and is open to anyone, elementary students to elders, interested in learning about the Czech and Slovak languages, history, and culture.

**Wilson Monument in Prague** --- The American Friends of the Czech Republic (AFoCR) is sponsoring a fund-raising drive to rebuild the Woodrow Wilson Monument in Prague. Tomas Masaryk and Woodrow Wilson played key roles in creating a free, democratic Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. Czechoslovakia recognized Wilson by naming Prague's main train station in his honor in 1919 and dedicating a monument there on July 4, 1928. The Nazis destroyed the monument, and a plaque that was dedicated there after WWII, marking the location, was destroyed by the Communists. In 2002, AFoCR dedicated a monument to Masaryk in Washington, D.C. and now, the organization plans to rebuild the Wilson Monument in Prague. For more information, check their website [www.afocr.org](http://www.afocr.org) or call (202) 413-5528.

**Upcoming Events in Pittsburgh** --- The Western Pennsylvania Slovak Cultural Association (WPSCA) is very active and sponsors numerous events in the Pittsburgh area. Two upcoming events of note include (1) WPSCA's fourth annual Testimonial Awards Dinner on Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, at the Greentree Radisson Hotel in Pittsburgh. The dinner will recognize five honorees who have shown leadership in enriching Slovak culture and heritage. Tickets are \$55 per person. Contact Joe Senko at (412) 531-2990 (w) or (412) 343-5031 (h); (2) The Slovak Radio Hour Annual Dinner Dance, which will be held Saturday, October 4, 2008, at 5:00PM, at the Slovak Sokol Club, 2912 E. Carson St., Pittsburgh, PA. Entertainment by Kontakty from New Jersey. For tickets call (412) 421-1204.

**New Jersey Slovak Festival** --- While our efforts to organize a bus trip to this event were not successful, some of you might still like to attend. Here are some details as far as we know them. The event will be held Sunday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008, at the PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel, New Jersey, close to NYC, from 10:00AM – 6:00PM. The location is off exit 116 of the Garden State Parkway. For information contact (732) 203-2500.

**Slovak Olympic Results** --- We can be proud that Slovakia had a very successful Olympics, winning a total of six medals including three gold, two silver, and one bronze.

Gold: Pavol Hochschorner and Peter Hochschorner, twin brothers, made history by winning their third Olympic gold in (double) whitewater canoe; Michal Martikan won the gold medal in single canoe slalom, his first since taking the top spot on the Olympic podium in Atlanta; Elena Kaliska won the gold medal in women's single kayak slalom by nearly 15 seconds, successfully defending her top finish at Athens.

Silver: Michal & Richard Riszdorfer, along with Juraj Tarr and Erik Vlcek, took the silver medal in the four-man kayak 1000-meter event; Zuzana Stefecekova earned a silver in women's trap shooting.

Bronze: David Musulbes earned a bronze medal in wrestling in men's freestyle 120kg.

\*\*\*

**SOHO  
CRIME**

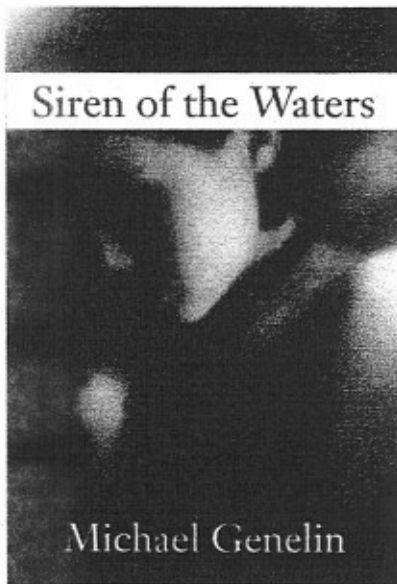
PLEASE JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE PUBLICATION OF

# SIREN OF THE WATERS

A Commander Jana Matinova Investigation

By

**Michael Genelin**



Author Reading and Signing  
Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
7:00 p.m.

at

## The Slovak Embassy

3523 International Court NW

Washington DC, 20008

(202) 237-1054

[www.slovakembassy-us.org](http://www.slovakembassy-us.org)

**International Criminal Law Expert, Consultant on Corruption to Governments all over the world, and former California deputy District Attorney, Michael Genelin will be here to talk about his book**

### Praise for Siren of the Waters

**“A terrific novel by a man who knows crime, knows Europe, and knows how to write. *Siren of the Waters* is a genuine pleasure.”**—Thomas Perry, author of *Silence*

**“A truly fine novel. It’s filled with exactitude of place and people, taking us into a world that seethes with dangerous secrets. On that treacherous journey, Michael Genelin makes unfamiliar worlds seem knowable, and does so with great style.”**—Pete Hamill, author of *North River*

**“There is plenty of misdirection and suspense here, not to mention details of how people lived in the Soviet bloc after World War II. In the end, we must acknowledge that we have been held spellbound by a master storyteller. Highly recommended.”**—*Library Journal* Starred Review

**“Solving the international murder-without-borders scheme becomes a puzzle even Agatha Christie would have been proud of ... well worthwhile.”**—*Kirkus Reviews*

Books for sale provided by Politics & Prose Bookstore and Coffeehouse: [www.politics-prose.com](http://www.politics-prose.com)