

# ZPRÁVY

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# SVU

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## SVU WORLD CONGRESS 2014 PLZEŇ

27<sup>th</sup> World Congress of SVU, June 29<sup>th</sup> – July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014,  
Plzeň, Czech Republic

For registration and submission of abstracts please see Zpravy  
January-February 2014 which are included in this mailing.



Square of the Republic in Pilsen



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## **EDITOR'S PAGE**

### **Rethinking the SVU? Ideas for an Émigré Learned Society One Generation after the Cold War**

At the end of 2013 a reader sent me this letter by email:

“I am responding to your Editorial Page in the Zprávy SVU in which you discuss how to increase the participation of the membership in the SVU Newsletter. One way how to accomplish that, perhaps, would be to organize an anketa about the meaning and the goals of SVU.

“The original purpose of SVU has ceased with the normalization of the political situation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To my knowledge, the goals and objectives of this organization in the new world have never been defined. And yet, such definition is essential for the long-term survival of SVU. An idea of elderly Czechs and Slovaks getting together for coffee and danish and to organize “conferences” with irrelevant programs is not a viable idea. In its present form, the SVU will disappear with the passing of the 1968 emigration wave. The leadership of SVU is unwilling, as well as unable, to address this issue.

“I wonder if your readership might respond to a call from the Editor to initiate a discussion on the meaning and the future of SVU on the pages of your Newsletter.”

This author writes with some “barbs” and reminds us to reconsider the existential questions of our association—and (I say) to keep reconsidering them. The people on our executive board think about how to make SVU viable, and they

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do their best. They always did. Thanks to the letter writer I can better recall the many discussions and efforts from my own experience in the SVU since the Brno congress in 1996. “Accent on Youth” was one campaign, and it will always be a good, simple name for a big idea and for a job that never ends. The SVU is an émigré learned society that made good sense at its founding in 1958 and for four decades. This year the Cold War is a quarter-century (and a generation) in the past, and the existential questions in our association are getting more ... I want to say “vivid,” to convey both urgency and risk but also life and possibility. The questions are too big for the executive board, which has many practical problems to solve besides and solves them well, problems of managing money, keeping the association solvent, putting out publications and organizing conferences. The *existential questions are for us all*, just as the letter writer suggests.

As scholars and artists, we ask questions in our work. Questions are our work. They are our profession, and our professions are many. So, we could ask and consider many productive questions from the perspective of our many disciplines, genres and communities of scholarship and art. We could do it in this newsletter, on the SVU Web site at [www.svu2000.org](http://www.svu2000.org), in our chapters and personal networks, by email and at the next congress in Plzeň this summer.

What is the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences? Does the name “Czechoslovak” do more harm or good? Should it be “Czech and Slovak” or something else? Would not the cost of changing the name outweigh its benefits? What is “Czech” and “Slovak” anyway? Did we ever imagine all the communities of origin and interest that these two names could include or at least tug at a little? In the 19th century Czech-speaking associations in Bohemia, America and elsewhere called themselves *českoslovanské*, or Czecho-Slavonic. It fenced out German-speaking Bohemians and Moravians, and it made the Czech-speaking ones part of the much larger world of Slavic speakers. A name means a lot. It conveys several broad and narrow meanings and messages, and each name empowers or imperils our efforts to interest and attract various communities and people. But SVU is also an established brand name, which cannot be changed without consequences in terms of recognition.

If the now “passing wave” of 1968 émigrés—the last wave of émigrés—really does loom so large in the SVU, as our letter writer suggests, then what can we do to attract more scholars and artists in the Czech Republic and Slovakia? And who can we find around the world? What might make someone interested in an international learned and artistic society focused on the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the European Union and on their diasporas in the West and the globalizing world? Ukrainian and Vietnamese immigrants tie the Czech Republic and Slovakia to two countries near and far away. The car industry ties them to India and Japan. What might attract someone to our society and its publications, conferences and networks? Each of us can imagine and perhaps

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find many different kinds of answers and people in our own professional and personal networks.

Did we ever imagine all the ways we could make SVU membership and service, reading papers at SVU conferences and writing for SVU publications more attractive to academics? Academics want to find audiences that will think about and use their work. They care about how their colleagues rate the conferences and publications where they contribute a paper, and they vary in all this by discipline and institution. Even at the macro level of natural scientists and humanists, an SVU conference differs in its uses for each group. Academics may also want to go to a conference because they can find sources for their research there or enjoy a charming and historic city, like the ones SVU chooses. And did we ever imagine all the ways we could learn from other émigré learned societies and work with them? Think of the Polish American Historical Association, Slovene Studies Association and Ukrainian Shevchenko Society. What about disciplinary and other kinds of learned societies? Change and success begin with productive questions and with imagination.

## GETTING INVOLVED

### **2014 NEH Summer Institute at Columbia University**

**America's East Central Europeans: Migration and Memory  
National Endowment for the Humanities  
Summer Institute for College & University Teachers  
Columbia University, East Central European Center  
June 8-29, 2014**

This NEH Summer Institute looks at 20<sup>th</sup> century Baltic, Western Slavic, South Slavic, Hungarian, as well as Jewish immigration to the United States from East Central Europe. Twenty-five NEH Summer Scholars will come together on the campus of Columbia University with some fifty master teachers and community representatives to address three core questions: **First**, what are some of the methodological and conceptual issues we should consider in the study of the East Central European emigrations? **Second**, how can we define the particular characteristics, motivations, and experiences of these immigrants? **Finally**, can we create a narrative synthesis of the “East Central European Experience” in America that could be integrated into broader courses on politics and immigration, sociology, and ethnic studies?

College teachers, independent scholars, museum curators, librarians and advanced graduate students are encouraged to apply for this competitive program. **The application deadline is March 4, 2014, and successful applicants are notified March 31.** Application information is available at [NEHsummer-inst.Columbia.edu](http://NEHsummer-inst.Columbia.edu) or contact Co-Director Robert Davis ([rhd2106@Columbia.edu](mailto:rhd2106@Columbia.edu)) 212 854-4701.

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## STIPEND, TENURE, AND CONDITIONS OF AWARD

Individuals selected to participate will receive \$2,700. Stipends are intended to help cover travel expenses to and from the project location, books and other research expenses, and ordinary living expenses. Stipends are taxable. Applicants to all projects, especially those held abroad, should note that supplements will not be given in cases where the stipend is insufficient to cover all expenses.

Seminar and institute participants are required to attend all meetings and to engage fully as professionals in the work of the project. During the project's tenure, they may not undertake teaching assignments or any other professional activities unrelated to their participation in the project. Participants who, for any reason, do not complete the full tenure of the project must refund a *pro-rata* portion of the stipend.

At the end of the project's residential period, NEH Summer Scholars will be asked to submit online evaluations in which they review their work during the summer and assess its value to their personal and professional development. These evaluations will become part of the project's grant file.

For those of you on Facebook, we have just created a Facebook "page" for the 2014 Institute. <https://www.facebook.com/NEHColumbia>. For those of you who are active in Facebook, please feel free to publicize this via your accounts. For those of you who aren't dabbling in social media sites, please point to our URL: <http://nehsummerinst.columbia.edu/>. We are trying to recruit as large an applicant pool as possible, so your help in getting the word out to possible applicants is appreciated!

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Note: You can also consult David Z. Chroust, editor of *Zprávy SVU*, who was an NEH Summer Scholar in last year's three-week NEH Summer Institute at Columbia University on "America's Russian-Speaking Immigrants and Refugees: Twentieth Century Migration and Memory." At this summer's NEH Institute David Chroust will present a paper and join the discussion on day sixteen, June 23, 2015: 10:00-12:00 *Roundtable: Ad Fontes: Community Based Archives, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Historical Memory*. David Chroust (Texas A&M, via Skype), Robert Davis, Marta Deyrup (Seton Hall),

## **Report on the November 17, 2013, Executive Board Meeting of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences**

The SVU Board convened at the home of President Petr Hausner in Potomac, Maryland. Bruce Vlk was present as a guest. Minutes from the last board meeting and Valná hromada (general assembly) in Seattle were approved. First year free membership for new members, who substantially contributed to the life of SVU was approved. The executive committee noted that the first issue of Kosmas was published under its new editor Hugh Agnew. Jaroslav Eliah Sýkora accepted the position of distribution editor of Kosmas. The 27<sup>th</sup> World Congress of SVU was discussed at length. It is going to be organized by Professor Ivo T. Budil from Západočeská Univerzita in Plzeň between June 29<sup>th</sup> and July 4<sup>th</sup> 2014. The theme will be Czechs and Slovaks in the making of the modern world.

### **WHAT OUR MEMBERS ARE DOING**

#### **A Letter from Louis Reith about Czech and Slovak-Related Activities in Nebraska**

Dear Petr and SVU Board members, also SVU members in the Washington, D.C. area,

While I continue to read about the adverse winter weather on the American East Coast, we here in Czech and Slovak lands in southeastern Nebraska are enjoying a weekend of 70-degree (Fahrenheit) temperatures and no snow. The following are some items of interest for SVU members and officers in the rest of the country:

The Nebraska Chapter of SVU held two breakfast meetings on February 1, 2014 (hosted by Joe and Mary Swoboda), and on March 2, 2014 (hosted by Prof Mila Saskova-Pierce and husband Layne). Concrete steps were taken to revive the SVU's Nebraska Chapter, centered around the University of Nebraska in Lincoln (UNL). Co-presidents of the Chapter are Joe and Mary Swoboda. co-vice-presidents are Prof. Mila Saskova-Pierce and Deb Polacek. Jane Kinsey is treasurer, Layne Pierce the secretary. Joe Swoboda announced that the Chapter has renewed its 501 status for 2014 tax purposes. The Chapter plans to sponsor at least two panels at the 27th World Congress of SVU in Plzeň, Czech Republic, from June 29th to July 4th, 2014.

Major business of both meetings was to plan for "Czech Week" (March 10-14, 2014) to be held in conjunction with the university's Jan Amos Komensky

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Club, Nebraska Czechs of Lincoln, and the local chapter of SVU. The week commences on Monday evening, March 10th, when Radim Brach, a dance instructor and former Czech national ballroom dancing championships finalist, and an exchange student in Lincoln, will teach the fundamentals of the Czech polka and other familiar folk dances of the region. On Thursday afternoon, March 13th, visiting scholar Benjamin Frommer, PhD (Harvard University) is delivering a public lecture on the topic “Unmixing Marriage: Czecho-German and Jewish-Gentile Intermarried Families in Bohemia and Moravia, 1938-1948.” The lecture, which is co-sponsored by the university’s departments of Judaic Studies, History, and Sociology, is related to Prof. Frommer’s current book project, “The Ghetto without Walls: Identification, Isolation, and Elimination of Bohemian and Moravian Jewry, 1938-1945,” which examines the wartime destruction of what was one of the world’s most integrated and international Jewish communities. After the lecture in the Great Plains Center in downtown Lincoln, the Komensky Club will sponsor a discussion and reception.

The major musical event of “Czech Week” is to be held on March 14th in the Lied Center. Edward Polochick is leading the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra in an all-Czech program, featuring Dvořák’s Prague Waltzes, three of the six movements of Smetana’s tone poem *Má Vlast* [My Country], and Dvořák’s Symphony No. 8 in G Major, which draws inspiration from Bohemian folk music. In the hour preceding the concert, the SVU Chapter and Komensky Club, with financial support from the Czech Heritage Fund, is sponsoring a reception with over 800 donated “kolaches”, to be served by two student reigning Nebraska Czech queens, Danielle Patzel and Emily Manning, in traditional kroje.

I am now taking my fourth consecutive Czech language class, Czech 202, at the UNL, with Dr. Hana Wasserova, a fresh SVU member, of Palacky University in Brno, now teaching in Prague, as the very capable professor. During the summer of 2013, I began my Czech studies with two five-hour Skype and Internet courses team-taught by Dr. Mila Saskova-Pierce and her husband Layne. My classmates in Czech 201 and 202 on campus, all from forty to fifty years younger than me (sad to say), are Carter Hulinsky, president of the Komensky Club, Sasha Denton, and Linda Taborek, with an auditor, Dani Patzel, the reigning Miss Czecho-Slovak Nebraska and first runner-up for the national title at the Wilber Czech Days last August. Carter and Sasha are also student assistants dealing with Czech-related materials in the Dept. of Archives and Special Collections of the University’s Love Library. As part of the final exam for Czech 201, our class memorized a play which Prof. Hana found for us, *Maryša*, written in 1894 by two Moravian brothers. But we were prevented from presenting the play on stage in the Wilber Sokol Hall by an early December snow storm and zero degree temperatures. We are rescheduling the play for a Nebraska Czechs of Lincoln production sometime this spring, perhaps as the final exam for Czech 202 (Intermediate Czech). I play Lizal, “a stingy old Czech

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farmer,” and Maryša, my lovely daughter, is none other than the reigning Miss Czechoslovak Nebraska, Dani Patzel – how cool is that?

Our recently rejuvenated SVU Chapter is planning at least two panels for the summer World Congress in Plzeň. One will discuss contributions of Czechs and Slovaks to the settlement of Southeastern Nebraska, and Prof. Hana and I are working on a panel about Magic Prague and Golemania; I am planning to present a paper related to the Golem of Prague as probable inspiration for the Superman comic strip of the early 1930s in New York City, or with no less than three films (from 1920 to 1960) based on the Golem. Prof. Waisserova wants to join SVU and also attend the summer World Congress, and she is looking for possible Czech-based contributors to our Golem panel.

In August 2013 the Komensky Club hosted a visit by Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič with a common meal in St. Mark’s Campus Episcopal Church. Layne Pierce presented the ambassador with a historical photobook about Lincoln. The ambassador announced his disappointment with the “mispronunciation” of the name of the Nebraska community of “Prague” with a long “a”. One of our two local student queens, UNL sophomore Emily Manning, attended in her kroj.

The Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center on the UNL campus showed the Metropolitan Opera’s HD filming of Dvořák’s opera Rusalka on February 8th, with Renee Fleming in the title role. Last October I drove about forty-five minutes north of Seward on a lovely autumnal Saturday to visit the Macovička Winery, the only Czech-owned of the many new Nebraska wineries. I tasted five of their wines, toured the vat room, and brought Petr Hausner a bottle of their wine for a future SVU Board of Directors meeting later this year.

That is all I can think of at the moment. We had a momentary scare earlier this winter when Prof. Waisserova’s elder daughter Amalka had to be rushed to a local Lincoln hospital for an emergency appendicitis, and again the following weekend to open up her stomach again. But she and younger sister Rose were on hand for a supper meeting of the Nebraska Czechs of Lincoln only one week later, and we are relieved that her parents enjoyed the University of Nebraska’s version of Obamacare health insurance to finance the operations.

Dukuju pro vsechno a tak nashle from Ludvik Jan (my Czech alias for the time being) Reith, SVU national board member.

## **Maryša a Victim of Winter in Nebraska**

The members of Prof. Hana Waisserova's Czech 201 (Intermediate) class at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, prepared a costumed Czech-language play, "Maryša", by the brothers Mrštíkovi. The play depicts the comic-tragic story of marriage brokering in a small Moravian village in the year 1894. The plot,



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somewhat reminiscent of Leoš Janáček's great opera "Jenufa", concerns a stingy old Moravian farmer, Lizal, played by Louis Reith, who, with his wife Lizalka (Linda Taborek) attempts to marry off his beautiful daughter Maryša (played with comic verve by the reigning Miss Czechoslovak Nebraska, Danielle Patzel) to Vávra, an older widower with three daughters and a lot of money. Opposing the marriage is Maryšas' young lover Francek, who unfortunately is recruited into the Austro-Hungarian Army for two years, essentially clearing the way for Maryša's marriage to Vávra. But the violent (and very ugly, in the bride's own words) Vávra beats his much younger wife and abuses her until she finally poisons him by slipping sweetener (really poison) into his coffee.

The members of the class applied themselves for several weeks, including a three hour dress rehearsal on the evening of December 7th. Unfortunately, a phone call on Sunday morning, December 8th, the day of performance, sadly informed the actors that the entire event, to be held in the Wilber Sokol Hall, site of the annual August Wilber Czech Days, had been cancelled, due to six new inches of powder snow and near-zero temperatures. Normally Nebraska Czechs are considered moc těžký, but concern for drivers on slippery roads caused cancellation of the entire event. There is hope of resurrecting the play for a springtime performance in either Wilber or Lincoln, perhaps for the next Josefská zábava. As Lizal remarks appropriately over his pivo near the end of the play, "Jsem smutný." (Ludvik Jan Reith (Czech alias for Louis John Reith), member of the language class and Board Member of SVU)

## **An Interview with Paul Burik, SVU Cleveland Chapter President**

By Virginia Parobek

VP: Hello Paul and how are you? Why don't we start this conversation by covering the basics. When and where were you born?

PB: I was born in 1954 in České Budějovice, but as a small child, we moved to Prešov (my father was of Carpatho-Rusyn ethnicity). Six years later we moved back to Bohemia—Prčice and then Sedlčany.

VP: How long did you stay in Sedlčany?

PB: Until August 23, 1968 when my father and I escaped from Czechoslovakia—at that time, of course, when Soviet tanks rolled into the country to establish "normalcy."

VP: Tell me about the 1968 leave-taking.

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PB: Well, as a 13-year-old at the time, I viewed it all as a kind of great adventure versus a daring and dangerous undertaking. I just packed some clothes and a sleeping bag. When we left, it was difficult to ultimately find the border, as all road signs had been changed. You had to follow by map or by memory.

VP: Where did you and your father go after leaving?

PB: We ended up in Vienna for three months. I attended English classes at the Berlitz language school there. By November 1968, we arrived in Cleveland and stayed with an uncle for a while.

VP: What did you do after graduating from high school?

PB: I enrolled in Kent State University to study architecture and eventually worked as an architect for the city of Cleveland. I retired in 2010.

VP: When did you become active in SVU?

PB: Dr. Stanislav Bohonek and I met in 2003 and reestablished the dormant Cleveland chapter, increasing chapter membership to presently over 20 members.

VP: But the Cleveland chapter was active before that, right?

PB: Yes, it was very active in the 1960s and 70s, organizing concerts, lectures and even hosting a national conference.

VP: Have you had the opportunity to attend an SVU conference?

PB: Yes, I attended the conference in České Budějovice in 2006 and gave a presentation on the Czech, Slovak and Rusyn Gardens in the Cleveland Cultural Gardens. It was a pleasant trip to my birthplace; I even got to go to city hall and obtain my birth certificate, which I did not have.

VP: You are still an active member of the Cultural Gardens, are you not?

PB: Yes, I am. I regularly organize and participate in the upkeep of the Czech gardens which contain the busts of Komenský, Palacký, Smetana, Dvořák and Masaryk, among other Czech luminaries.

VP: Professionally and personally, you are a greatly accomplished man. There is neither time nor space to tell of all of your accolades, so let us close with your receiving the Freedom Award in Cleveland.

PB: In 2011, the American Nationalities Movement gave me the Freedom

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Award, a trophy which says “in recognition of lifetime achievement of creatively perpetuating the cultural heritage of the Czech peoples.”

VP: Well, thank you very much for your time, Paul, and thank you for your service to SVU and other Slavic organizations.

PB: Thank you as well.

## EVENTS

On Wednesday, January 22, 2014, Jason Belz at [jbelz@kirshdem.com](mailto:jbelz@kirshdem.com) wrote:

“I’m writing to introduce myself - I am the Director of Booking and Artist Manager at Kirshbaum Demler & Associates in New York. We look after the prestigious **Smetana Trio** (founded in 1934) in North America, and I am now working on their next tour here for October 2014. We currently have dates scheduled for them in Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. I wonder if this is a group you might consider bringing during their upcoming trip.

“You can read a bit more about them on our website (below) and also hear a few samples of their incredible music-making. Their last tour (their first with us) this past April was a huge success with concerts in San Diego, Vancouver, New York and a mini-residency at the Colburn School in Los Angeles.

<http://www.kirshdem.com/artist.php?id=smetanatrio>

“Please let me know if you have any questions at all, and I look forward to hearing from you.”

## PUBLICATIONS

### ENCYCLOPEDIA of CZECH AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY

#### A Request from the SVU President

As most of our members know, our archivist and past SVU President Mila Rechcigl has been working diligently on a long-term project, which is so far the most ambitious SVU project ever, namely to prepare a comprehensive and up to date Czech American biographical encyclopedia. It is a momentous under-

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taking which, when finished, will comprise several thousand biographies of notable American personalities with Czech roots, starting from the time the first Czechs came to America.

Unlike Who's-Who-style entries, which are quite impersonal, terse, full of abbreviations which make them hard to read, and unpalatable, if not boring, Míla Rechcigl has chosen an encyclopedic style with a flowing narrative. For easier use, instead of alphabetical arrangement, he is organizing this monumental effort into specific sections of various facets and areas of human endeavor, covering business, religion, government & politics, law, music, dramatic art, visual art, creative writing, publishing, media, education, activism & reform, the humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, physical sciences & mathematics, engineering, medicine, military, exploration, espionage, sports, modeling, and recreation. The publication will also have an alphabetical index.

The manuscript is rapidly approaching completion and to make it as inclusive as possible Dr. Rechcigl would welcome your suggestions about other important people to include and your knowledge of their lives, personalities and accomplishments.

I heartily support Míla's effort and request SVU members and anyone else to send as soon as possible names of deserving individuals to Dr. Rechcigl at the following e-mail: [svu.one@gmail.com](mailto:svu.one@gmail.com). Please be sure to include the person's place and year of birth, as well as death (if applicable). You can also send a short biography if you have one. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Petr Hausner

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### *Czech American Timeline*

This is the title of new book by SVU Scholar-in-Residence and past President of SVU Míla Rechcigl. The book chronicles important events bearing on Czech-American history, from the earliest known evidence of Czechs in American to the present.

This comprehensive chronology depicts the dazzling epic history of Czech colonists, settlers, as well as early visitors, and their descendants, starting in 1519, with Hernán Cortés's soldier Johann Berger in Mexico, and in 1528, the Jáchymov miners in Haiti, through the escapades of Bohemian Jesuits in Latin America in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bohemian and Moravian pioneer settlers in New Amsterdam (New York) in the 17th century and the extraordinary mission work of Moravian Brethren in the 18th century, to the mass migration of Czechs from the Habsburg Empire in the second half of the 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries and the contemporary exodus of Czechs

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from Nazism and Communism. Historically, this is the first serious undertaking of its kind.

This is an invaluable reference to all researchers and students of Czech-American history, as well as to professionals and amateurs of Czech-American genealogy, and to individuals interested in immigration and cultural history. The book was published by AuthorHouse in Bloomington, Indiana, and in hardcover, paperback and E-book formats.

This is what the Czech Ambassador Petr Gandalovič has written in his foreword to Rehcigl's book:

“This is another first for Míla Rehcigl, SVU Scholar in Residence and one of the founders and Past Presidents of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences (SVU) for many years. Hardly two years have passed since the publication of his authoritative *Czech American Bibliography*, a comprehensive listing with a focus on the US and with appendices on Czechs in Canada and Latin America, and now Rehcigl is coming out with his new *Czech American Timeline: Chronology of Milestones in the History of Czechs in America*.

“His latest work, *Czech American Timeline*, is not a mere chronology of dates and events bearing on Czech Americans but it is a comprehensive chronicle of history of Czech pioneers and their descendants who affected American history, practically from the time the New World was discovered to the contemporary era.

“This unique publication is a magnificent testimony, not only to the fact that the Czech American immigrants found their new home in the New World, but also that they significantly contributed to its creation. The fruit of Míla Rehcigl's admirable efforts to trace these men and women, as well as their descendants, and to follow their phenomenal achievements and august contributions, is a permanent reminder of their sometimes hard and difficult but always absorbingly interesting life stories which form a strong and eternal bond between our two nations.

“This distinctly informative and thought-provoking vade mecum is delightfully readable, stimulating, enthralling and inspiring to the point that you won't be able to put it down, just as I could not. It is a must for anybody interested in Czech American history and culture. I highly recommend it.”

Petr Gandalovič  
Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the United States

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## *Dr. Oswald “Valdik” Holzer: From Czechoslovakia to China in World War II*

January 2, 2014  
Happy New Year!

Dear David,

I'm writing in response to your request in the September-October 2013 SVU Newsletter for members to take advantage of the opportunity for a short narrative. You specifically referenced perhaps “a letter ... something personal and social, a story or essay, a ‘something’ with expansive borders...” With that in mind, I bring you a tiny piece of a lost world discovered after my Czech-American father, Dr. Oswald “Valdik” Holzer, died in 2000—an excerpt from one of the 400 WWII letters, written by 78 (mostly Czech) writers, that my dad hid away after the war. The correspondents, my father’s family and friends, reached him after his escape from his Nazi-occupied homeland in May 1939, seeking safe refuge as a 27-year-old man of Jewish heritage.

Crossing five continents that my father traveled through, the letters continued until after WWII. Eventually he settled with my mom and three children in Melbourne, FL, in 1952 where he served as a beloved family physician until his death in January 2000. The letters were discovered then in Chinese boxes. I believe my father was an SVU member.

Amazingly, my dad kept 70 carbon copies of his own letters, written mostly from China in 1939-41. One wonderful 1940 letter exchange was between my dad and Miloslav Fabera, the Czech writer and scriptwriter (1912-1988). Fabera’s writing was much inspired by the adventures written down in the diaries of his father, a soldier and legionnaire (as was my grandfather Arnošt Holzer). Fabera had a passion for Asia, which often manifested in his work. Their conversation began with this April 1940 letter (translated for me into English by award-winning Czech filmmaker Lukáš Příbyl). At the time my father wrote this, he was serving as a doctor at the American Brethren Hospital in Ping Ting Hsien, Shansi (Shanxi) Province, North China:

*Dear Mr. Fabera,*

*It is not my habit to write to the writers of books I have read. In this case I nonetheless do so, only out of interest. I sort of live in the region and in the circumstances you write about. My hospital is in the interior of China, in a region alternatively controlled by the Japanese and the Chinese guerillas. I almost cannot believe you have not been to the region you describe, it clicks so*

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*well. However, in details you tripped a few times nonetheless. You changed the fighting units into the uniforms of the former Czechoslovak army, Siberian hills you transferred to Krkonoše a bit. But generally your account fits, even for us here in the East. Particularly the mentality of the inhabitants of the Far East, the international atmosphere in the mercenary company is good.*

*And now how I got to your book: it was sent to me, “via Siberia”, directly from Prague. Of course I will not keep it and it will travel farther, to a Czech brewer in Peking, a doctor in Tiensin, a Škodovák in Dairen and so it will slowly make its way down south, it will wander like your Hall.*

*Finally, I want to offer you a little bit of cooperation. Should you write something more about Far East, I will be happy to answer all question so you could avoid some “mistakes of regie (direction)”, which would not benefit an eventual translation.*

*Please, I ask you to use this letter only for your private purposes, as I absolutely do not wish my name be publicized in any way.*

*Yours Valdik*

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I know your readers will recognize the mountain range on the Czech border with Poland, “Škodovák” as an employee of Škoda factory, and Hall was a fictional character in Fabera’s book. The exchange between the two men that followed I believe is magical. Unfortunately the words extend well beyond your request for 1,000-word max for newsletter but if you wish to read, perhaps you could include them in a few ‘sequels’ of the newsletter? I’d be glad to share them with you—translation and originals.

As you can see below with my name, I’m writing a series of nonfiction books that spring from my father’s WWII life, letters, and taped interviews I did with my father. The first book, *Adventurers Against Their Will*, won the 2013 Global Ebook Award for Best Biography. (Please see book trailer below my name or look at my author website: [www.joanieschirm.com](http://www.joanieschirm.com).)

The second book, *My Dear Boy - The Discovery of a Lifetime* (my father’s chronicle) I hope to publish in the near future. Both books I hope to get published in Czech and other languages and will continue working on that during 2014.

Thank you for your consideration of publishing this in the newsletter. I’d be glad to speak by telephone if you wish: 407-466-8841. If you’d like to read the book, I’d be glad to mail you a copy or I can give you a coupon for a free Ebook.

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## IN MEMORIAM

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**Hana Jane Barton (1924-2014)** died on January 24, 2014. Born in Tábor on May 29, 1924, she wrote two books about her journey to the US as a young woman, *With a Nugget in My Shoe* and *Collages*. She earned master's degrees from the universities of Maryland (education) and Connecticut (arts). She was a dedicated and caring teacher in Montgomery County schools in Maryland for over twenty years and a leader in the school district's program for gifted and talented students. In retirement from 1986, Barton was adjunct professor on George Washington University's education faculty. Mrs. Barton helped develop the "Art around the Corner" program at the National Gallery of Art for Washington, DC's, school children, and volunteered her time generously at the National Institutes of Health, where she served on the Board of Suburban Hospital. She was also a docent for many years at the National H Gallery and coordinated volunteers at the Montgomery County Thrift shop to benefit Planned Parenthood in Washington, DC. She put her enthusiasm for art into more than 25 art shows that she curated for her fellow residents at Maplewood Park Place. (Mila Rechcigl)

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**Václav Horák (1922-2014)**, a long-time SVU member passed away on January 12, 2014 at the age of 91. He was born in Prague on December 9, 1922. His university education was interrupted by the World War II. After Czechoslovakia was occupied by Germany, he was forced to work in German labor camps in 1941 for the duration of the war. After the war he continued his education at Charles Univ., receiving his doctorate in organic chemistry in 1948. He was associated with Charles Univ. (s. 1948), becoming university assistant the same year, a 'pro dean' during 1955-57, and a docent in 1959. In 1968 he left for the US, where he was soon joined by his wife Zdena and son David. He accepted a professorship in chemistry at Georgetown Univ. in Washington, DC, becoming professor emeritus in 1992. During his productive career at Charles Univ. and at Georgetown he mentored over 70 students for M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. He wrote several books and numerous articles on organic synthesis and chemistry of sulfur compounds. He organized the First International Symposium on Sulfur Chemistry which continues to date. Dr. Václav Horák was an authority on organic electrochemistry, organic synthesis, quinines and redox polymers, and pharmaceuticals. He loved the outdoors, camping, canoeing, skiing, hiking and travel, having visited five of the seven continents. He was an amateur photographer, and a connoisseur of music who played original pieces on the piano. It was also his music which supported his spirit during the last six years of his life when he was struck by complete blindness. Eva and I have known him well ever since he and his wife moved to Bethesda and we became close friends. He had a keen interest in everything and everybody. Vašek was a great friend and we, as well as his many good friends, will all mourn his demise. (Mila Rechcigl)



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**P. John Komarek (1934-2013)** died at the age of 79 on November 27, 2013. He was born in New Prague, Minnesota, on August 14, 1934. Czech immigrants built this town and the farming region around it in the 1850s. Komarek graduated in veterinary medicine from the University of Minnesota in 1958 and set out on a 46-year professional career. On his visits to farmers, “Doc Komarek” would explain and endorse ways to improve the land and make it better for ducks and wildlife. This was the beginning of his conservation efforts in southern Minnesota. He would find landowners who wanted to create wetlands, and then he arranged for the contracting work. Doc made common cause with the newly formed Minnesota Waterfowl Association in 1969, and together they worked for their own version of the noble quest to leave things better than they found them. Doc Komarek’s efforts led to many private wetland restorations and state-protected Wildlife Management Areas. Doc won the “Golden 50” Award from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 2001 and the Rice County Wildlife Enhancement Award in 2006. In 2011 he was inducted into the Minnesota Wildfowl Hall of Fame. (Mila Rechcigl)

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**Jan Kryšpín (1924-2010).** We have belatedly learned about the death of our SVU member Jan Kryšpín who passed away on January 31, 2010. He was apparently struck by a car while walking on Winon and never recovered. He was born in Kolín, Czechoslovakia on July 17, 1924. He received his MD from Charles University in 1950 and his Ph.D. from ČSAV in 1959. He immigrated to Canada in 1967 and taught at the Univ. of Toronto. His interests centered on theoretical and philosophical problems of clinical medicine. He published papers on electromagnetic properties of tissues, dimensional analysis and information theory in clinical medicine and theories of homeostasis and chronic intractable pain. He directed the Kryšpín Pain Clinics in the Toronto area. He devoted his life in Canada with missionary fervor to help recognize the psychogenic condition that today is defined as chronic pain syndrome. (Mila Rechcigl)

I knew **MUDr. Jan Kryšpín, CSc.** (Honza) well and loved him. In 1960, he established at the "House of Pioneers" in Havlíčkovy sady, Prague, under the umbrella of the Czechoslovak Pioneer Organization, a club for children ages 12 and up, who were interested in natural sciences. He also established there a "Youth University" (Univerzita mládeže). At the Youth University, the latest advances in mathematics, chemistry, biology, molecular biology, philosophy and electronics were presented by top speakers, all of whom were respected leaders in their respective fields. For example the inventor of the still most widely used bio-friendly polymer and of plastic contact lenses prof. Otto Wichterle, the biologists and future SVU members professors Pavel and Otakar Koldovský, academician František Šorm and many others lectured there. My 6th-grade mathematics teacher suggested that I consider joining the group. Soon I was introduced to Jan Kryšpín's own physiology experiments performed at the Plastic surgery and Burn unit established by professor František Burian, the world leader in cleft lip and cleft palate repair. We looked

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forward to our weekly meetings since there was always something substantial and profound to learn and also enjoyed the gift of company of other clever girls and boys interested in sciences. These kids under Honza's guidance became the most important formative experience of my life. Here, I learned love for science, knowledge, culture and the arts, nature, medicine and eventually chose my future carrier in medicine. The information acquired at the Youth University e.g. about DNA was so advanced, that it gave me a competitive edge 6 years later in medical school. Honza also organized summer camps, in which sports, appreciation of nature and science were mixed with music, unforgettable evenings at the camp-fire with Honza playing the accordion and acquisition of life-long friendships. Honza was a great improviser, a non-pretentious admirer of knowledge and progress, a deeply moral, friendly and good human being. He has launched innumerable young lives into critical thinking, love for science and prominent professional carriers. I often reflected on how Honza could achieve so much with so little and came to the conclusion that it was through his honest and sometimes naive trust into the extraordinary abilities of youngsters. Honza gave us the self-confidence, some knowledge, the love for critical thinking and the company to thrive on. His refreshing enthusiasm knew no boundaries and contrasted sharply with the then prevailing communist passivity. I will always cherish the memory of Jan Kryšpín who turned out to become, along with my parents, the most important influence in my life. (Petr Hausner)

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**Otto Kuchel (1924-2012)** died on September 2, 2012 at the age of 88. He was professor emeritus of medicine at the University of Montreal. Kuchel studied endocrinology at Prague's Charles University, turned to hypertension research as an academic, and became associate dean for research at Charles University. After the Soviet invasion in 1968, Kuchel took his career and family to Canada, where he joined the Institut de recherches cliniques de Montréal and Hôtel-Dieu Hospital. He made contributions to our understanding of neurohormonal relationships in cardiovascular diseases, especially the autonomic nervous system's role in hypertension. He better revealed the role of dopamine in hypertension and its important diagnostic and therapeutic implications. Kuchel's awards include one from the Canadian Society for Hypertension and the Prix Marcel Piché, Prix du Québec (Wilder Penfield) and Prix de l'oeuvre scientifique of the Association des médecins de la langue française du Canada. He was fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine in London and chevalier of the Ordre nationale du Québec. (Mila Rechcigl)

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**Gordon G. Pejsar (1928-2013)** died on July 8, 2013. He earned his D.D.S. degree from the University of Nebraska in 1955 and practiced dentistry in Lincoln for fifty years, the last twenty with his son Steven, to retirement in 2005. Pejsar was a president of the Lincoln District Dental Association and the Nebraska Dental Association, and a vice president of the American Dental Association. He was a dental consultant and vice president of Ameritas, and he served eight years in CRDTS, a testing service for graduating dental students.

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Pejsar joined the SVU, Nebraska Czechs of Lincoln, Czechoslovak Genealogical Society of Illinois and the Czech Language Foundation. In the Christ United Methodist Church he taught many Sunday school classes. (Mila Rechcigl)

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**Paul I. Trenský (1929-2013)** died on March 10, 2013, at his home in New Paltz, New York. He was a professor of Russian literature and comparative drama at Fordham, the Jesuit University of New York. Trenský was born on March 24, 1929, in Ostrava and went to the US in 1956, after one year at Vienna University. Trenský earned his Ph.D. in Russian literature at Harvard in 1962 and taught at Fordham from 1964 to 2008. Always interested in Czech drama and theater, he wrote *Czech Drama since World War* (1978) and contributed to theater journals in New York, Berlin and elsewhere. He also wrote *The Fiction of Josef Škvorecký* (1991), which appeared in Czech translation three years later, and he edited the SVU's *Czechoslovak and Central European Journal* (now *Kosmas*) in 1990-1993. The Prague journal *SaD* (i.e., *Svět a divadlo*) published Trenský's reports and essays on the annual Salzburger Festspiele from 1993 and the annual Berliner Theatertreffen from 2001. He is survived by his second wife, Misha Harnick; a son from his first marriage, Michael, in Connecticut; and two granddaughters. (Mila Rechcigl)

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**Stanislav Reiniš (1931-2012)** died on July 7, 2012, at the age of 80 at St. Mary's Hospital in Kitchener, Ontario. He was born on December 22, 1931, earned a MUDr. degree at Prague's Charles University (1957) and a CSc. in pathology and physiology at Charles University in Plzeň in 1962. He joined the University of Toronto in 1970 and later became professor of physiology at Ontario's University of Waterloo. Reiniš's interests were neurophysiology, neurochemistry, neuropsychology and the physiology of consciousness. He wrote *The Development of the Brain* (1980) and *Chemistry of Behavior* (1982). His books in Czech were *Dvě věty znuděné jeptišky* (1999), *Sázka na kulhávého koně* (1999) and *Největší omyl dějin* (2001), and he often wrote to Czech periodicals abroad. He is survived by his wife Milada; children Renata Kuss, Stan, and Teresa; and grandchildren Justin, Brandon, Nikola, and Jonas. (Mila Rechcigl)

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Opportunities for Czechs Living Abroad and their Descendants

Dr. Robert Řehák from the Czech Embassy in Washington would like to draw your attention to opportunities which are available for Czechs living abroad and their descendants namely studying in the Czech Republic. Every year, there is a unique opportunity to receive a **1) scholarship for a 4-week course in the**

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**Czech language for Czechs living abroad and their descendants, for 2) a 2-week course for teachers of the Czech language and 3) a scholarships for one or two semesters at Czech universities.**

**1) Four-week course of the Czech language for Czechs living abroad and their descendants:** Four-week summer Czech language course (from July 25th to August 22nd, 2014) is intended for Czech compatriots aged 18 years and more who live abroad and would like to learn their predecessors' language or improve their existing Czech language skills. The course gives them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Czech culture and get to know parts of the Czech Republic. Classes take place in groups according to language skills and is led by experienced teachers. A generous extracurricular program (forums, excursions, lectures, weekend day trips, etc.) is arranged for course participants. Tuition, board, and lodging will be provided to select participants free of charge. These participants will also receive a financial contribution towards travel to and from the Czech Republic. Health care costs are covered for them within the scope laid down in Act No. 326/1999 Coll., on Residence of Foreigners in the Czech Republic and on Amendment of Some Other Acts, as amended. Upon completing the course, participants receive a graduation certificate. Application forms may be submitted only via the Embassy of the Czech Republic or Czech Consulate, and must be submitted by March 15, 2014! To apply you should:

- Fill out an electronic application;
- Print out the application and send it to the Embassy or Czech Consulate. The original application must be received by the Embassy or Consulate at least two working days after the application deadline.

The online application form can be found at:

<http://www.databaze-krajane.cz/modules/krajane/?h=langcourse>

**2) Two-week course for teachers of the Czech language – 8/25/2014 – 9/5/2014** – Travel, accommodation, paid under some conditions. Fill out on line form] [www.dzs.cz](http://www.dzs.cz) in the menu item “Krajané” and sent to the Czech Embassy in Washington by 3/15/14

**3) Scholarships for studying one or two semesters at Czech universities – for Czech speakers** with a stipend of 9000 – 9500 Kč. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

Dr. Robert Řehák, Cultural Attaché, Embassy of the Czech Republic

e-mail: [robert\\_rehak@mzv.cz](mailto:robert_rehak@mzv.cz)

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**The Czechoslovak Studies Association Book Prize  
Review Committee is pleased to announce  
the winner of this year's prize**

The committee, consisting of Owen Johnson, Karla Huebner, and Hugh Agnew, has selected one prize winner and two works for honorable mention from the pool of submitted books. Each of these works is an interesting, original and significant piece of scholarship and it was difficult to select a single winner.

In the end, the committee decided to award the CSA Book Prize to **Mark Cornwall's *The Devil's Wall: The Nationalist Youth Mission of Heinz Rutha***. In this ambitious and masterfully-researched book, the author interweaves an understanding of the developing of a Sudeten German identity separate and apart from a larger German identity with the story of the repressed homosexuality of one of its most important advocates, Heinz Rutha. In superb fashion he incorporates previous research into the Sudeten German question with the fascinating details of Rutha's life drawn from previously unused archival sources, especially the police and the courts. In several instances Cornwall uses his thorough understanding to make superbly educated guesses about what was happening. Cornwall gives special attention to the Sudeten German foreign policy as Rutha served as the foreign minister for the party. In sum, Cornwall has offered us a superbly-written story about the complicated historical narratives in the nationally-volatile world of East Central Europe in the first part of the twentieth century. It will long be a must read for historians of East Central Europe, of Sudeten Germans specifically and Czechoslovakia generally, and of sexual identity and politics.

The committee would like to single out two other submitted books for honorable mention. One of them is **Jonathan Bolton's *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism***. The committee considered this gracefully written book an intellectual history of a kind rarely seen anymore. It recovers the context of the lives of Czechoslovakia's dissidents, returning to it some of the complexity and contingency that characterized the "worlds" in which they lived. Bolton focuses on the practices of dissidents more than on their works of political theory, and he returns to the center of the story some names that have been eclipsed in public and popular historical memory. Far from being an organized "movement," dissent was a community created by the state's condemnation of its members, who often did not agree with each other about what they should be doing and to what ends. In this successful return to the original complexity of the "worlds" of dissent Bolton makes perhaps his greatest contribution, which should inspire others to explore the phenomenon in this way further and in other locations in Czechoslovakia.

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The other work receiving honorable mention is **Kimberly Elman Zarecor's *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960***. The committee considered this a pioneering work in that it places the period of Communism in the center of its discussion. Focused not on aesthetics but on structural issues (both in the sense of physical structure and, more importantly, the structure created by the historical context), the book reveals how postwar architects sought to resolve long-time housing shortages within Czechoslovakia. The architects' efforts are placed in the context of modernist design and of projects undertaken outside as well as within Czechoslovakia. The shift from individual artist-architects to architectural-technical teams also comes into play. As the author notes in the Epilogue, "From the perspective of architectural history, the transition chronicled here, from an artistic model of professional practice to one reliant on technology and industrial production, is a critical aspect of the history of modernity that needs more scholarly attention. ... Architecture is much more driven by manufacturing processes, production capacities, and the limitations of materials than most of architectural history allows." Kimberly Elman Zarecor challenges us to consider that, while it may be more fun to think about beautiful designs, we also need to contemplate the problems involved in the production of mundane buildings, the buildings where most people must spend most of their time.

Posted on behalf of the Czechoslovak Studies Association.  
<http://www.czechslovakhistory.org>

Melissa Feinberg, President  
Department of History, Rutgers University

Kimberly Elman Zarecor, Vice-President  
Department of Architecture, Iowa State University.

## The Václav Havel Project

Performance Venue: Artisphere, 1101 Wilson Blvd, Arlington VA

Performance Dates and Times:

Wednesday May 7 – 7:00 pm & 9:00 pm

Thursday May 8 – 7:00 pm & 9:00 pm

Sunday May 11 – 2 pm

Wednesday May 14 – 7:00 pm & 9:00 pm

Thursday May 15 – 7:00 pm & 9:00 pm

Sunday May 18 – 2 pm

**Tickets available at <http://newmusictheatre.org>**

**SVU ZPRAVY NEWS (ISSN 0036-2050)**  
**P.O. Box 34617**  
**Bethesda, MD 20827**

**Periodical**

**Synopsis:** The Václav Havel Project consists of a double bill – Vaněk Unleashed and Unveiling, that celebrates the life and work of Václav Havel, playwright, dissident, and first president of the Czech Republic. The central character in both works is Ferdinand Vaněk, who represents Havel’s dramatic alter ego, who observes society around him, enduring painfully funny angst of alienation.

Vaněk Unleashed, an original music-theatre work premiering in Washington DC, was written by Susan Galbraith, Artistic Director of the Alliance for New Music-Theatre with music composed by Maurice Saylor. Vaněk Unleashed takes its performance style from two of our country’s most popular forms, the American musical and silent screen comedy. These works extend Vaněk beyond the boundaries of Havel’s plays, space, and time, as a tribute honoring the imagination and legacy of Václav Havel, poet, playwright, human activist, dissident, political prisoner, and then president of his country.



Unveiling, one of Havel’s most intense plays was originally performed to wide acclaim as part of the Czech Embassy’s 2013 Mutual Inspirations Festival. As the critics wrote, it is “*Artful. Brilliant. Irreverent. Simple, yet genius. Everything - from the writing to the stage direction and the acting itself – is a marvel to watch in the Alliance for New Music-Theatre’s salute to Vaclav Havel.*”