

SVU Scores a Home Run in České Budějovice

SVU Congresses and Conferences of late have been remarkably successful. The just completed 23rd SVU World Congress, held in the South Bohemian Metropolis Ceske Budejovice, has not been an exception. While the Czech soccer team did not perform as well this year in the World Cup as expected, one can say, without any reservation, that the SVU Congress was a real hit, and, in fact, "scoring a home run."

The University of South Bohemia, which hosted the Congress, provided visitors from all over the world a truly warm welcome. The warmth of the welcome was also reflected in the temperature which exceeded 33 degrees Celsius, making it one of the hottest seasons in the city's and region's history. Fortunately, there was a gentle breeze which made it agreeable in the shade to some, or even pleasant to others. In the evening, and in the subsequent days, the temperature dropped down significantly, partly due to minor and intermittent showers, so that the lack of air conditioning in the city was not a problem.

The Congress, as a whole, was a remarkable event, both in terms of its contents, a plethora and variety of topics and high quality of individual papers. There was a general consensus that this was the best Congress SVU ever staged.

Although a few of us came already on Saturday, June 24, the majority of overseas attendees began arriving on Sunday in the early afternoon. Most of them came directly from the Prague-Ruzyně airport in one of the buses provided by the University. The buses brought them to the University campus, in the vicinity of the University Hostel "Bobik", where the registration desk was located, enabling the participants to register immediately upon their arrival. The registration went relatively smoothly because most of the overseas participants were already preregistered in the US, thanks to the efficient work of Blanka Kudej and her husband Svata.

After registration, the Congress participants moved their bags to their rooms in one of the University dorms which were conveniently located next to the Hostel "Bobik". Having done so, most of them then hurried to the close-by city bus stop to take part in the guided tour through the historic part of the city. Immediately after the tour, which lasted about three hours, there was a Social-Get-Together which was attended by a large crowd of overseas, as well as local Congress participants. The food was plentiful and the famous local beer "Budvar" enhanced the prevailing joyous atmosphere and exuberant mood.

The long day was crowned with the final event on the famous Ceske Budejovice square, bearing the name of its founder the Bohemian King Premysl Otakar II. Here our Congress participants were treated to a concert performed by a noted South Bohemian Chamber Philharmonic which performed Carl Orff's "Carmina

SVU Website: www.svu2000.org

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Burana." It was a fabulous performance by one of the leading orchestras in the Czech Republic. Afterwards, most of us went to bed, but, as I later learned, a sizeable group ended up in one of the local pubs to get more taste of famous Czech brew.

The SVU Congress officially opened on Monday, June 26, with a ceremony held in the recently completed cultural center "Bazilika" in the midst of the City to which the Congress participants were transported by the University buses. The kickoff time was at 10 AM but several of us, who were responsible for the organization and preparation of the Congress, were there earlier so that we could take part in the scheduled press conference. Subsequently, together with Rector Vaclav Buzek, I had the pleasure of welcoming President and Mrs. Klaus upon their arrival in front of the building and escorting them to one of the Bazilika's elegant receiving rooms.

Here was already assembled a group of Ambassadors from both sides of the Atlantic, together with other VIPs. After a few formalities of small talk, I raised a glass of Champagne and toasted the President, and others joined me. He reciprocated, commenting on the importance of the SVU Congress and the role SVU has played on behalf of the Czech Republic.

We were then taken to the head table in the large Bazilika Hall which was already full to the last seat by the Congress participants. The academic procession followed, consisting of University Presidents, Rectors, Provosts and Deans from overseas, as well as from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, dressed in their traditional academic attire, to the tune of Janacek's music. It was quite a sight.

I then officially opened the Congress. Then came the welcoming speeches by the University Rector Vaclav Buzek and the Governor of the Ceske Budejovice Region Jan Zahradnik. Afterwards, President Klaus presented a brief address in English.

After a short recess, the ceremony continued with the greetings and short messages from a number of Ambassadors from the US, Canada and the Czech and Slovak Republics and other dignitaries, including President of the Czech Learned Society, Scientific Secretary of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Vice President of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Rector of Charles University. The whole proceedings was very impressive and, as some people who saw it on TV, commented, "it had a majestic look."

As the academic procession left the hall and the audience followed, the Congress attendees were treated to an enormous "rout," the Czech word for a festive buffet. The tables were overflowing with a large variety of warm and cold dishes, meats, salads, assorted cheeses, sweets, hors d'oeuvres, vegetable trays with tangy dips, stuffed mushrooms caps, marinated foods, mini quiches, meatballs, wines, soft drinks and ever present "Budvar" beer. In spite of large crowds, I am sure, nobody went hungry. Here you had the chance of meeting many interesting people from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as from overseas.

At about 2:30 PM the attendees reassembled in the main hall where the Plenary Session was about to start which I had the honor to chair. The theme of the session was "Diplomatic Relations between North America and the Czech and Slovak Republics." The panelists comprised the respective Ambassadors from the Czech and Slovak Republics, the United States and Canada. It was a highly informative and amiable session in which the Ambassadors, not only charted the official course of their Governments' positions and actions but also a meeting in which they showed their human side and talked about their experiences in their assigned country posts to which they showed an obvious attachment, admiration and love.

When it was over, most attendees were taken back by the University buses to the University grounds. A sizeable group, however, went with me to the Theology Faculty building where an exhibit of the "Czech Bible through the Course of Centuries" was housed. Together with the Faculty Dean, the City Bishop and the director of the exhibit we opened the exhibit. It was a beautiful display of rare texts from the time of the Sts. Cyril and Methodius to date. The exhibit was open during the duration of our Congress so that other Congress participants could view it at their convenience.

Those who previously purchased tickets had supper at the University "menza" (cafeteria) but, as I suspect, most of the attendees skipped it because they were still full from the scrumptious "rout." The busy day ended "with a crescendo" at the University Congressional Hall in "Bobik" where the piano virtuoso Radoslav Kvapil gave a memorable performance of Mozart, Smetana, Suk and Martinu's works. It should be noted that Radoslav Kvapil, who is our SVU member, performed gratis, without any compensation.

The days that followed were just as exciting as the first two. The attendees could select from as many as twelve concurrently run academic sessions from Tuesday morning till Friday noon, held on the premises shared by the University of South Bohemia and the Czech Academy of Sciences. A lack of space does not allow me to give a description of individual panels. Suffice it to say that practically every area of human endeavor was covered, ranging from history, literature, philosophy, the arts, education, politics, law, business, economics, trade, and the media to natural sciences and engineering, medicine, agriculture, and environment.

This time, there was a strong representation of medicine and natural sciences, including three medical panels, one in mental health, two in public health, another in neurosciences, five in biological sciences and another in physical sciences and engineering. Most of the panelists were scientists of international standing.

Apart from specific disciplines, the program featured a number of highly stimulating symposia. One dealt with the "University Leadership on Both Sides of the Atlantic," in which high-level university officials participated, including presidents, chancellors, vice presidents, rectors, provosts and deans.

Equally enticing was a panel on "University Partnerships and Cooperation between the US and CR and SR," in which the university representatives with active programs in the referenced countries recounted their experiences with collaborative arrangements and projects. In another symposium, members of the Czech and Slovak diplomatic core discussed their experiences and the role in representing the Czech and Slovak Republics abroad. Among the Czech symposia, one of the most

interesting ones was a two-day seminar on the Czech archives and resources relating to history of Czechs abroad. A number of leading archivists took part in the seminar, including Jiri Krestan of the Czech National Archives and Milena Secka of the Naprstek Museum.

An entire section of the Congress was devoted to Czechs and Slovaks abroad in which such topics as emigrations and re-emigration, US settlements and communities, Czechs and Moravians in Texas, cultural contributions of Czechs and Slovak emigrants, and preservation of national heritage abroad were discussed.

What was unique among the English panels this time was the fact that a considerable proportion of the panelists were individuals with interest in some aspect of Czech and Slovak culture or affairs without roots or any Czechoslovak background.

Two other events need to be mentioned. In the early afternoon on Tuesday, there was a book showing (“knizni prezentace”) during which recently published SVU publications were shown and discussed by Dean Ivo Barteczek and myself. They included the Proceedings of the last SVU Congress in Olomouc, bearing the title *Moravia from World Perspectives. Selected Papers from the 22nd SVU World Congress*, published in two volumes by Repronis in Ostrava in 2006. Also shown were recently issued two CDs – one containing Selected Papers from the 2003 SVU North American Conference, Ceda Rapids, Iowa, and another containing a revised SVU Directory.

At about the same time on Wednesday, Prof. Joseph Kohn and his colleagues made a presentation of the planned Vaclav Havel Library. Inspired, in part, by the American model of Presidential Libraries, the Vaclav Havel Library will house Havel’s works and papers, document the complex battle for democracy and freedom in the second half of the 20th century, and stimulate discussion, research, and publications on the ongoing struggle for human rights and the challenges of post-communist political and civic engagement.

Practically every evening some concert or other cultural attraction was featured. Thus on Tuesday night there was a performance of South Bohemian Philharmonic with the repertoire of music works by Mozart, Dvorak, Pablo Sarasate and Beethoven. The added attraction was the noted Czech violin virtuoso Pavel Sporcl. After this concert, the Congress attendees could go to the Premysl Otakar II Square where a special program, entitled “Co Cech, to muzikant” (Every Czech a Musician) was given. On Wednesday night, there was a special performance in the Bobikis Congressional Hall by two SVU members, Budimir Zvolanek – clarinet and Marie Bobkova – piano. Later that very evening, one could view, on the city courtyard, Theatre J. K. Tyl, performing the play “Svetaci.” On Thursday evening, one could attend the Theatre Street Festival “Kvelb” – a popular puppet theatre – from 7 to 11 P.M. If you preferred, you could have attended instead a flute recital, featuring Hana B. Colombo – flute and Fabrizio Vanoncini – organ. Their program consisted of music by Vivaldi, three music pieces by Bach, and one piece by Handel. On Friday night, the Congress attendees could again hear the music performance by South Bohemian Philharmonic which played Edvard Hagerup Grieg, Josef Myslivecek, Antonin Dvorak and Bedrich Smetana. And finally, on Sunday night, there was a swing concert “Muses on the River,” featuring Zatrestand from Trest which presented popular music and songs from Jerry Herman, Jaroslav Jezek and Frank Sinatra.

At the conclusion of the academic program on Friday noon, the Congress attendees moved to the cultural center “Bazilika,” where the remainder of the Congress program was held and where it was concluded. It started at 2 PM with a Plenary Session over which I had the pleasure to preside. The first item on the agenda was a keynote address by the President of the Czech Academy of Sciences Vaclav Paces who talked on “Czech Science in the Globalized World: Challenges and Pitfalls.” After his thoughtful and brilliant presentation came a discussion panel “What Have We Learned and Where We Are Going” in which Zdenek Brandl, Vladimir Papousek, Libor Grubhoffer, Michael Bauer, Vaclav Paces, Karel Raska and I took part.

During the SVU Award Ceremony, which followed, I had the pleasure of acknowledging several individuals for their assistance in organizing the present Congress by awarding them SVU Presidential Citations, i.e., Prof. Vladimir Papousek, Prof. Libor Grubhoffer, Docent Michal Bauer, Vladimir Matajs, Zuzana Galatikova, Gabriela Dudova, Blanka and Svata Kudej, Cecilia Rokusek, Karel Raska and George Tesar. Presidential Citations were also presented to Clinton Machann, Andrej Elias and Jiri Eichler for their continuous and sustained contributions to the Society, as a whole. Last but not least, two other individuals have been singled out for a special recognition by awarding them “Beyond the Call of Duty Award” for “they have been always there, whenever needed, always loyal and always dependable: Frank Mucha, SVU Treasurer and Eva Rechcigl, my wife.”

The occasion was also used to present SVU Fellow certificates to several Fellows who have been honored with such distinction and who were present at the meeting. They were: Prof. Vaclav Paces – for his achievements in the area of biological sciences, Prof. Leopold Pospisil – for his achievements in social sciences, Prof. Frantisek Sehnal – for his contributions to biological sciences, Prof. Vaclav Vitek – for his contribution in engineering and Prof. Josef Jarab – for his contributions to humanities.

The Award Ceremony was concluded with the presentation of Andrew Elias Humanitarian and Tolerance Award to the noted Czech journalist Petra Prochazkova for her humanitarian work and for calling to public attention violations of human rights. After acceptance of the award, together with an honorarium of \$1000, Petra Prochazkova gave a talk in Czech on “Iluze zapadu o dopadu humanitarni pomoci” (Illusion in the West about the impact of humanitarian aid), based on her personal experiences.

The very busy afternoon ended with SVU General Assembly meeting, followed by a press conference. Then came a beautiful music performance by the South Bohemian Chamber Philharmonic, mentioned earlier, and a “rout,” hosted by SVU member Jan Seyfried, for which we are very grateful to him.

Some of us took also the advantage of the two scheduled excursions on Saturday and Sunday, to Cesky Krumlov and Hluboka, respectively, which was a pleasant way of finishing our sojourn in South Bohemia.

All in all, the Congress and everything else connected with it were great. The memories of the beautiful South Bohemian region and its friendly and hospitable people will stay with us for ever. Thanks again to everyone for making it such a memorable and unforgettable event.

MILA REHCIGL

23rd SVU World Congress

University of South Bohemia

25 June – 2 July 2006

Monday, June 26

Location: Kulturni centrum “Bazilika,” Prazska 1247/24

10 AM - 12:30 PM Opening Ceremony

Academic Procession

Opening of the SVU World Congress by SVU President **Dr. Miloslav Rechcigl, Jr.**

Words of Welcome by Rector, University of South Bohemia **Prof. Dr. Vaclav Buzek, CSc.**

Address by the President of the Czech Republic **Hon. Vaclav Klaus**

Welcome by the Governor of the Ceske Budejovice Region **RNDr. Jan Zahradnik**

Greetings by the Ambassador of the Czech Rep. to Canada **H.E. Pavel Vosalik**

Greetings by the Ambassador of the Slovak Rep. to the US **H.E. Rastislav Kacer**

Greetings by the Ambassador of Canada to the CR & SR **H.E. Bruce Jutzi**

Greetings by the Ambassador of the USA to the CR **H.E. William J. Cabaniss**

Greetings by the Ambassador of the USA to the SR **H.E. Rudolph Vallee**

Greetings by the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the US **H.E. Petr Kolar**

Greetings by the President of the Czech Learned Society **RNDr. Jiří Grygar, CSc.**

Greetings by the Deputy Scientific Secretary of the Slovak Academy of Sciences **Prof. MUDr. Fedor Ciampor, DrSc.**

Greetings by the Vice President of the Academy of Sciences of the CR **Prof. PhDr. Jaroslav Panek, DrSc.**

Greetings by Rector of Charles University **Prof. RNDr. Vaclav Hampl, DrSc.**

The National Anthems

12:30 - 2:30 PM Gala Buffet (“Rout”)

Music Performance of “Dyskanti”

2:30 - 5:30 PM PLENARY SESSION

Diplomatic Relations between North America and the CR and SR

Miloslav Rechcigl Presiding

H.E. William J. Cabaniss, Ambassador of the US to the Czech Republic

H.E. Bruce Jutzi, Ambassador of Canada to the Czech and Slovak Republics

H.E. Rudolphe M. Vallee, Ambassador of the US to the Slovak Republic

H.E. Petr Kolar, Ambassador of Czech Republic to the US

H.E. Rastislav Kacer, Ambassador of Slovak Republic to the US

H.E. Pavel Vosalik, Ambassador of Czech Republic to Canada

6 PM Opening of the exhibit “Czech Bible in the Course of Centuries”
Teologicka fakulta USB, Knezka ul. 8

8 - 9 PM Music Performance of Piano Virtuoso Radoslav Kvapil

**Remarks by SVU President Miloslav Rechcigl
at the Opening of SVU World Congress
University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice
26 June 2006**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Magnificences, Spectabiles, Distinguished Guests:

It gives me great pleasure, in my capacity as President of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences, to open our SVU World Congress in this beautiful city of Ceske Budejovice.

Those in the audience who are not familiar what we are all about, SVU, as our Society is generally known in short, is an international organization devoted to the advancement of scholarship of and interests in Czech and Slovak studies and fostering cultural relations with CR and SR. The Society has been existence almost 50 years, having been established in 1958 in Washington, DC. It is not by accident that we have selected Ceske Budejovice for the Congress' site. We were attracted by the beautiful landscape, pure air and, of course, by the rich cultural history of the region. This beautiful Metropolis of Southern Bohemia is famous for its historic renaissance and baroque buildings, for the biggest and one of the most attractive squares in the Czech Republic and, above all, for its famous beer Budvar. This local beer, also known as Budweiser, inspired the name of the American beer Budweiser, but, as any beer connoisseur will tell you, the Czech beer is by far better.

This 23rd Congress of our Society, with its central theme "Czech and Slovak Culture in International and Global Context" has been orga-nized jointly with University of South Bohemia (USB), Statutory City of Ceske Budejovice and both the Czech and the Slovak Academies of Sciences, under the aegis of President Vaclav Klaus and President Ivan Gasparovic. We are, of course, delighted that the President Klaus is here with us, as there are a number of Ambassadors, University Presidents and Rectors and many other distinguished guests from the Czech and Slovak Republics, as well as from abroad. As you can see from the printed program, this will be an exceptional event, if not the pivotal event of the year for anyone interested in the Czech and Slovak culture and affairs.

As has been our practice, the subjects covered on the program encompass just about every aspect of human endeavor, including the arts, humanities, social sciences, science and technology, medicine, agriculture, environment, civil society, law, business and trade, news and media, and much more. This time, the Plenary session will be devoted to the "Diplomatic Relations between North America and the Czech & Slovak Republics," with the participation of the respective Ambassadors. Another feature of the program will be a Presidential Symposium on the "University Leadership on Both Sides of the Atlantic," in which Uni-versity Presidents, Rectors, Provosts, Chancellors, Deans and other high ranking university officials from the US, Czech Republic and Slovakia will recount and compare their experiences in running their respective institutions of higher learning. There will also be a special session relating to the "University Partnerships and Cooperation between the US and the Czech and Slovak Republics."

In addition to our extensive academic program, numerous exciting cultural and social events have been organized, including concerts, social get-togethers, banquets, guided walking tours through the historic City, bus excursions through the beautiful South Bohemian environs – with castles, palaces, cloisters, chateaus, ancient galleries, baroque theatre, and much more.

The music performances by the South Bohemian Philharmonic, recital of the piano virtuoso Radoslav Kvapil and the "Muses" on the banks of the River Vltava should really be a treat.

The logistics is all in place and in the best order, thanks to our University of South Bohemia co-organizers, who have gone to great length to make the meetings most enjoyable. In this regard, I would like to single out and express our profound appreciation to Vice Rector Prof. Vladimir Papousek, Dean Prof. Libor Grubhoffer, Docent Michal Bauer, Ing. Jana Zbiralova and Vladimir Matajs for all the effort and time they put into the preparation of the Congress. Our thanks go also to our official hosts, Rector Vaclav Buzek, Lord Mayor Miroslav Tetter and the Region Governor Jan Zahradnik for their cordial welcome in their City.

If I am allowed one commercial, I would like to bring to your attention that you will be able to see and purchase collections of selected papers from our last Congress in Olomouc, as well as our new SVU Biographical Directory on CD at the Book showing ("Knizni prezentace") tomorrow at noon in the University Bldg. "Bobik."

Without further ado, I wish everyone to get most out of the meetings and have a good time.

Uvítací projev rektora Jihočeské univerzity Prof. PhDr. Václava Bůžka, CSc.

Pane prezidente České republiky, pane prezidente československé Společnosti pro vědy a umění, páni velvyslanci, páni rektori, dámy a pánové,

jsem velmi potěšen, že mám příležitost se podílet na slavnostním zahájení 23. světového kongresu čs. Společnosti pro vědy a umění, k jehož pořadatelům patří Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích. Považuji si za čest, že mohu jménem svým i jménem vedení Jihočeské univerzity krátce přivítat a pozdravit všechny zahraniční a domácí účastníky kongresu na akademické půdě naší almae matris, která právě v letošním roce slaví 15. výročí od svého založení.

K akademické obci Jihočeské univerzity patří v současné době přes 1 300 akademických pracovníků a 10 000 posluchačů a posluchaček bakalářských, magisterských a doktorských studijních programů, které se uskutečňují prozatím na šesti fakultách a dvou vysokoškolských ústavech. Jihočeská univerzita nachází přirozené zázemí své tvůrčí existence především v česko-rakousko-bavorském prostoru, jehož symbolický výraz představuje partnerství tří univerzitních měst – Českých Budějovic, Lince a Pasova. Svěbytný historický a kulturní vývoj této části středoevropského regionu, jeho mimořádné přírodní bohatství a lidské zdroje dlouhodobě ovlivňují a podněcují výzkumné směřování Jihočeské univerzity, která zvláště v oborech přírodních, historických, zemědělských, ekonomických a sociálních věd dosahuje uznávaných výsledků mezinárodního významu.

Důrazu na rozvoj základního výzkumu odpovídá příkladná vědecká spolupráce Jihočeské univerzity s ústavu Akademie věd České republiky, které jsou umístěny ve společném univerzitním a akademickém kampusu v Českých Budějovicích, jenž se bude rozšiřovat o nové objekty, nebo mají svá sídla v Praze. V biotechnologicky zaměřených vědeckých oborech buduje Jihočeská univerzita první technologické inkubátory, v nichž dochází k bezprostřednímu přenosu vědeckých poznatků do technologické praxe široce pojatého regionu, jak dokládá společné technologické centrum Jihočeské univerzity a Akademie věd v Nových Hradech.

Úzké propojení vědy a výzkumu s univerzitní výukou v bakalářských, magisterských a doktorských studijních programech ovlivňuje rovněž míra internacionalizace univerzitního organismu. Vědečtí pracovníci Jihočeské univerzity se podílejí na řadě výzkumů ve vzdáleném zahraničí, ať jde ku příkladu o výzkum Antarktidy, studium flóry a fauny v oblasti Nové Guiney, ryb v řekách Číny či biologických dokladů o civilizacích starověkého Egypta. S partnerskými univerzitami v nejbližším zahraničí uskutečňuje Jihočeská univerzita „přeshraniční“ studijní programy, o čemž svědčí nedávná úspěšná akreditace oboru biologická chemie s Univerzitou Jana Keplera v Linci. S Univerzitou v Pasově se připravuje propojení studijních programů zaměřených na problematiku středoevropských studií. Řada posluchačů a posluchaček z univerzit v Evropě, Americe a Asii se každoročně zúčastňuje v Českých Budějovicích letních škol, v nichž si studenti prohlubují nejen znalosti vybraných vědních oborů, ale seznamují se rovněž s minulostí, kulturou a současností České republiky.

Široký mezinárodní kontext vědeckého a pedagogického rozvoje se stal klíčovou hodnotou dalšího směřování Jihočeské univerzity v Českých Budějovicích, která navzdory svému mládí překročila výsledky tvůrčích činností v řadě vědních oborů regionální rámec. Tomuto úsilí akademické obce naší almae matris plně odpovídá volba hlavního tématu 23. světového kongresu Společnosti pro vědy a umění, jež bude nahlížet na českou a slovenskou vědu a kulturu v mezinárodních souvislostech. Jihočeská univerzita je velmi poctěna, že se může podílet na přípravě tohoto kongresu, od něhož očekává především prohloubení vědeckých vazeb s předními zahraničními a domácími odborníky řady vědních oborů. Právě ve vyšší míře internacionalizace vědeckých, výzkumných a jiných tvůrčích činností spatřuje vedení univerzity jeden ze základních předpokladů žádoucích kvalitativních proměn českého vysokého školství v následujících letech. Akademická peregrinace, která má své hluboké kořeny v tradici středověkých univerzit, může být dokladem dějinné hloubky této pravdy. Akademická svoboda bádání, konkurenceschopnost vědeckých týmů v mezi-národním prostředí, přenos badatelských výsledků do vysokoškolské výuky zvláště v magisterských a doktorských studijních programech i do technologické praxe představují na prahu 21. století hlavní znaky moderní výzkumné univerzity, k jejímuž obrazu v mnoha vědních oborech směřuje také Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích.

Závěrem tohoto krátkého pozdravu mi dovoluji, abych všem účastníkům světového kongresu popřál příjemný pobyt na Jihočeské univerzitě v Českých Budějovicích, bohatou diskusi v jednotlivých sekcích a hodně nových vědeckých a kulturních zážitků.

Vivat, crescat, floreat Universitas Bohemiae Meridionalis!

Ambassador William Cabannis
Introductory Remarks
for the 23rd World Congress of Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences 2006

České Budějovice

June 26, 2006

President Klaus it's an honor to be here with you today. President Rechcigl thank you for inviting me to this years SVU Congress. Fellow Ambassadors, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for coming.

That we are here in České Budějovice at the 23rd World Congress of Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences means three things to me. First, it is a sign that the SVU and with it the exchange of culture and knowledge among the U.S., Czech Republic and Slovakia is alive and well. Second, it shows how great a role individual regions and cities play in strengthening ties among our nations. And finally, and I dare say most importantly, it exemplifies the crucial but often overlooked connection between projects such as this and the current world context of humanity, knowledge and tolerance fighting ignorance, hatred and violence. I'm convinced that it's through endeavors like this that the former will prevail.

I would like to thank the organizers for putting together this important conference and wish them a lot of success in their efforts here this week and in the future.

Thank you.

Greetings from President of the Learned Society of the CR
RNDr. Jiří Grygar, CSc.

Mr. President of the Czech Republic, Excellencies, Dr. Rechcigl, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel very privileged to greet the participants of the biannual World Congress of the Czechoslovak Society for Arts and Sciences on behalf of the Learned Society of the Czech Republic. Our Society was established in 1994 upon the initiative of two great Czech chemists, Otto Wichterle and Rudolf Zahradník. They built the Learned Society by following the grand tradition of the Czech Royal Learned Society founded already in the year 1784 and of its younger counterpart called Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts, established by the outstanding Czech architect and benefactor Josef Hlávka in 1891. These distinguished societies flourished after the creation of Czechoslovakia but succumbed during the Nazi occupation and were finally abolished by the Communists in 1952.

Our Learned Society is trying to re-establish the pursuit for excellence in science and humanities by electing first-class Czech scientists as fellows of the Society, by awarding prestigious prizes to senior and junior researchers as well as to gifted grammar-school students and by having public lectures and presentations on radio, TV and the Internet. After the last XIIth annual assembly in May of this year the Society has 104 fellows and 39 honorary fellows – most of them are Czech scientists who achieved great results in their specializations while living in exile.

In this way our societies are obviously very closely interconnected because at least two dozen of your Society's members are our honorary fellows, actively helping us pursue our common goal of promoting science as indispensable constituent of national culture. I am pretty sure that our close ties will bring further mutual advantage to both Societies as well as to the Czech people in general.

Pozdravný preslov predsedy Učenej Spoločnosti SAV Prof. MUDr. Fedora Ciampora, DrSc.

Vážený pán predseda, dámy a páni,

dovoľte mi poďakovať sa Vám za pozvanie na Svetový kongres spoločnosti pre vedu a umenie a odovzdať Vám pozdrav predsedu Slovenskej akadémie vied. Ja zastupujem Učenú spoločnosť Slovenskej akadémie vied a je pre mňa veľkou ctou zúčastniť sa na kongrese a podieľať sa na jeho konaní. Južné Čechy, pracoviská AV ČR, predovšetkým Parazitologický ústav AV ČR a Juhočeskú univerzitu navštevujú naši vedeckí pracovníci veľmi často a podieľajú sa na vedeckej spolupráci a na spoločných projektoch. Návraty do Južných Čiech sú vždy inšpirujúce a pocit dobrého priateľstva a pohostinstva sa ničím nedá nahradiť.

Albert Einstein povedal, že „Čaro poznávania je tým najkrajším darom prírody“ a je to práve to, prečo sa tu stretávame, poznávame a vymieňame si poznané a nápady na nepoznané. Vedecká práca, poznávanie nepotrebujú veľa slov, najmä nie od politikov, ale potrebujú uznanie, ktoré im pre ich činnosť patrí. Potrebujú dobré finančné zázemie a nie prázdne slová o podpore vedy, ktoré zaznievajú v predvolebných programoch, ale skutočnosť je úplne iná.

Prajem Vám všetkým, aby Vaše stretnutie, Vaše rokovanie bolo darom pre vedu a umenie, aby aj Vaše úsilie posunulo snahy vedeckých pracovníkov mať také miesto v spoločnosti, aké hodnoty vedeckí pracovníci prinášajú.

Ďakujem Vám za pozornosť a teším sa na ďalšie stretnutia.

**Friday Afternoon, June 30
Kulturní centrum “Bazilika,” Prazska 1247/24**

CONCLUDING PLENARY SESSION

Miloslav Rechcigl Presiding

2-2:30 PM

Keynote Address by Prof. RNDr. Václav Pačes, DrSc.

President, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

“Czech Science in the Globalized World: Challenges and Pitfalls”

2:30-3:30 PM “What Have We Learned and Where We Are Going”

Zdeněk Brandl, *Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, University of South Bohemia*

Vladimír Papoušek, *Vice Rector for International Relations, University of South Bohemia*

Libor Grubhoffer, *Dean, Biological Faculty, University of South Bohemia*

Michal Bauer, *History Department, PF, University of South Bohemia*

Václav Pačes, *President, Academy of Sciences of CR*

Miloslav Rechcigl, *SVU President*

Karel Raška, *SVU Vice President*

3:30-4:15 PM SVU Award Ceremony

Address by Petra Procházková, *Czech Journalist and Humanitarian Worker and Former War Correspondent from Conflict Areas of Former Soviet Union*

“Iluze Západu o dopadu humanitární pomoci”

4:15-5:30 PM SVU General Assembly Meeting

5:30-6 PM Press Conference

6-7 PM Music Performance of South Bohemian Chamber Philharmonic

7-10 PM Gala Banquet

From Executive Board Meeting

On March 18, the Executive Board had another of its regular meetings. It took place in SVU President's house in Rockville and was convened at 10 AM. Sufficient number of Board members was present to fulfill the requirements for a quorum. In the absence of Frank Safertal, Zdenek David was appointed Secretary General de tempore.

After the approval of the minutes, Mila Rechcigl informed the Board about several news items, such as the confirmed attendance by President Vaclav Klaus of the forthcoming SVU World Congress. Slovak President Ivan Gasparovic may also attend, if his presence won't be required in Slovakia, following the elections there. He also informed the Board about the ceremony in the Slovak Embassy during which Com-missioner Jan Figel received Andrew Elias Humanitarian Award, and about his successful meeting with representatives of Moravian College in the Czech Embassy. As a result of this meeting, the College will send several of its professors to take an active part in the forthcoming SVU World Congress. The Board noted with sadness the death of several SVU members, including Miloš Halouzka of CA and Frank Kaňka of NY.

Since he could not be present, Treasurer Frank Mucha sent his report to SVU President via e-mail. Because of the computer problems, the report could not be accessed in sufficient time for the meeting. The Board was pleased to hear that some 25 new membership applications have been received since the last meeting.

With reference to Local Chapters, Florida SVU Chapter has started a good program, thanks to Blanka Kudej in her role as the Chapter's President. With the enlistment of Josef Cermak Rechcigl expressed hope that the Toronto Chapter will soon be reactivated.

Some concern was expressed about the difficulties Editor of *Kosmas*, Clinton Machann, is experiencing at his University, which may affect the future publishing of this important periodical. As for the newly planned publications, the *Theatre* monograph edited by Vera Borkovec, is on track. Dagmar White also restated for the record that the manuscript of the Czech Opera monograph should be in publisher's hands soon and available at Congress. The CD, with selected papers from the 2003 Conference, will hopefully be published at the time of SVU Con-gress, as will the SVU Directory CD, thanks to the efforts of Jiri Eichler. Based on the latest information from Dean Bartecek, the Congress Proceedings from the Olomouc SVU Congress should be available at the June Congress in Ceske Budejovice.

Last on the agenda was a discussion of the program for the SVU Congress. Rechcigl distributed a draft of the program which included some 40 panels. He pointed out several features of the program, including Plenary session on "Diplomatic Relations between the North America and Czech & Slovak Republics," with the participation of at least five Ambassadors. In addition, a special Presidential Symposium is being planned on "University Leadership on Both Sides of the Atlantic," with the participation of University Presidents, Rectors, Provosts, and other high-level university representatives from the US and the Czech and Slovak Republics. There will also be a discussion panel on the "University Partnerships and Cooperation between the US and the Czech and Slovak Republics" and much more.

The Board noted with thanks SVU President's enormous effort to organize most of the panels and find suitable speakers for them. Rechcigl stated that he was indebted to several Board members for their assistance, particularly Karel Raška and Cecilia Rokusek who enlisted a large number of speakers. Some panels will need additional speakers but this did not appear to be insurmountable.

As the meeting was coming to a close, the Board agreed to have one more meeting scheduled for June 17.

From New SVU Rolls

H.E. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary **MARTIN PALOUS** was appointed Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the United States by Czech President Vaclav Havel in the summer of 2001. He presented his letter of credence to President George W. Bush on October 10, 2001.

Born in Prague on October 14, 1950, Mr. Palous received a RNDr. degree (Doctor of Natural Sciences in chemistry from Charles University, Prague, in 1973), and went on to study philosophy and social sciences (graduating in 1977). He also studied law (1996-1999).

Mr. Palous was one of the first signatories of Charter 77 and served as spokesman for this dissident human rights group in 1986. A founding member of the Civic Forum (November 1989), he was elected to the Federal Assembly in 1990 and became a member of its Foreign Affairs Committee. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia as adviser to Minister Dienstbier and was Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from October 1990 to October 1992.

Mr. Palous has held a number of teaching positions at Charles University since 1990. He became a member of the Faculty of Social Sciences (Foreign Relations Division) in 1994 and served for some time as the Faculty's Vice-Dean. In 1993, he joined the Centre for Theoretical Studies (research centre run jointly by Charles University and the Czech Academy of Sciences, headed by Ivan M. Havel). He has lectured extensively in the United States. Until 1998 he was also active in various non-governmental organizations (Chairman of the Czech Helsinki Committee, Co-Chairman of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly). In October 1998, he became Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Palous is the author of numerous publications, including the chapter on the Czech Republic in the European Commission publication *Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe*, "Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism," in the *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict* (1999) and "Between Idealism and Realism: Reflections on the Political Landscape of Postcommunism," in *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and their Aftermath* (2000). He translated the works of Hannah Arendt.

Mr. Palous is married to Pavla Palousova, nee Nemcova. They have two children: Michal (1986) and Johana (1989).

As his term of office is nearing to completion, Mr. Palous is getting ready to assume a new post of the ambassador of Czech Republic to the United Nations.

CHARLES JAROMIR KULP is employed as a financial economist with FDIC in Washington, DC. He is a native of Chicago and holds academic degrees from the University of Kansas (B.A. in Languages and Literatures, 1983; M.A. in Economics, 1987) and Kansas State University (PhD. in Economics, 1992). He specializes in banking and capital markets.

YVETA GRIGNON is a realtor, residing in Miami, FL. She is a native of Handlova, Slovakia and holds academic degree from Vysoka skola ekonomicka, Bratislava (1987-1984), where she specialized in inter-national and national trade. She also has M.B.A. degree from the Uni-versity of CAEN, France (1987-1988), specializing in management of enterprises.

ANNE-LAURIE GRIGNON is a student at the New College of Florida in Sarasota, majoring in molecular biology and French literature. She is a native of Paris, France. On March 19, 2005, at the joint ACSCC Heritage Festival & SVU Conference in North Miami, Florida, she was crowned Miss Czech-Slovak Florida 2005. On August 7 at the Miss Czech-Slovak US competition in Wilber, Nebraska, she was crowned Miss Czech-Slovak USA 2005.

AMELIA FALTIN CANALI is Past President of ACSCC of North Miami. She is a retired teacher, and former head of Basic Skills Program, Spruce St. School, Lakewood, NJ. She was also a professional singer, financial planner and hotel owner and manager. She was president of women's investment club and vice president of Ocean County Chapter, NJ of ZONTA (international organization of executive and professional women). A native of New York City, she was educated at Georgian Court University (B.A. in Education 1976), with post-graduate courses in child-hood. Her interests are in elementary and adult education, English as second language, singing of classic operettas and Czech and Slovak songs.

STANA NOVAK is a research clinical specialist and is employed by the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery in Miami, FL. She is a native of Prague, Czechoslovakia and holds Nursing Diploma (1954) from Prague and that of Registered Nurse from the same place (1965). She has also taken post-graduate courses at the University of Miami (1991). She has co-authored numerous papers as well as the posters.

REBECCA LYNN KOMAREK is a student attending the Holy Family Catholic High School in Shakopee, MN. She is a native of Shakopee, MN and is interested in nursing. <mailto:czechmeout0506@yahoo.com>

LACY CHRISTINE GIBBS is a dance instructor with Sons of Herman. She is a native of Victoria, TX. Her interests are in dance and childhood education. Mail to: lacy-gibbs@yahoo.com

CATHERINE ANNA DOWLING is a student pursuing studies in music at Kansas State University in Manhattan, KS. She is a native of Great Bend, KS. Her major interests are in music and vocal performance. She was the first runner-up in the Miss Czech-Slovak USA Queen contest during 2005-06. Mail to: cdowling@ksu.edu

RICHARD EDWARD SAPON-WHITE is Catalog Librarian at Oregon State University-Valley Library in Corvallis, OR. He is a native of Los Angeles and received academic training at University of Toronto (B.Sc., 1977), UCLA (M.P.H., 1979) and Southern Connecticut College (M.L.S., 1989). His interests are in cataloging and classification, subject analysis and academic librarianship. Mail: richard.sapon-white@oregonstate.edu

YVONNE SPURA resides in Stanford, CA and is pursuing her studies toward Ph.D. degree at the Technical University in Darmstadt which expects in 2007. She is a native of Offenbach, Germany and has a degree from Technical University in Darmstadt (Mag. Art History, 1999). She is doing research on Czech migration. Mail to: yspura@yahoo.com

LOIS GLEASON HYBL lives in Baltimore, MD. She has just retired from her position as Curriculum Developer at the Success for All Foundation. She is a native of Cedar Rapids, IA and obtained her education at Cornell College at Mt. Vernon, IA (B.A., 1962) and Johns Hopkins University (M.A.S., 1986). Her specialty is First Grade reading. Mail to: lhybl@bcpl.net

In Memoriam

MILOS HALOUZKA (1922-2006)

Born July 23, 1922 at Kladno, Czechoslovakia, died January 28, 2006 in Laguna Hills, California, surrounded by his children and his wife Irene.

After February 1948, when he completed the Law School at Charles University in Prague, he left his homeland with his wife of only three months, Irene, to fight for a free Czechoslovakia. After moving to Montreal, Canada, he started to cooperate with Radio Free Europe to satisfy his desire to return Czechoslovakia into the camp of free nations. He started working in the banking business. Two years later he accepted an offer to move to the USA while working for a major international Insurance Corporation AIG, for which he worked during the following 36 years. He worked his way up to a very important position and was delegated to several countries to establish branches, among them in Puerto Rico, Philippines, Japan, and Argentina. While working in these countries, he always searched for his countrymen in order to fight for freedom for his beloved homeland.

In Canada he began his activity in the Council for Free Czechoslovakia, later in the USA he became a very active member of the Czechoslovak National Council in America, as its President of the Los Angeles Chapter, the Czechoslovak Society for Arts and Sciences in America, the American Sokol and as a member of the Czechoslovak Exile Social Democratic Council. His favorite among these organizations was the Czech Catholic Mission in Los Angeles, where he acted as its President for many years.

He was always ready to offer his helping hand and traveled to Czechoslovakia after the Velvet Revolution to offer his expertise and many years of personal experience to help to get the Czech economy on its feet again. He was awarded a medal for his efforts to support the inclusion of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary into NATO.

He participated in several of the SVU World Congresses in recent years giving reports about the activities of the Los Angeles Chapter. He was a true patriot in the best sense of the word. We will never forget.

HANA M. PAULSON

JAROSLAVA MOSEROVA (1930-2006)

The long-time SVU member who attended practically all its functions, veteran politician, doctor and literary translator Jaroslava Mose-rova passed away in the early hours of Friday morning, April 10, 2006, after a long illness. She was 76.

She was something of a renaissance woman and her extraordinarily varied career defies easy description. She was a significant figure in Czech life in the fields of politics, where she stood as a presidential candidate in 2003, and in diplomacy: she was an ambassador in Australia and New Zealand and a prominent member of UNESCO. In medicine she was a top skin specialist, and in literature she excelled as playwright, translator and illustrator.

She became one of Czechoslovakia's leading experts in caring for burn victims and skin grafting. That specialty did become profoundly political for a few days in January 1969, however, when she was called in to treat Jan Palach, a student who had set fire to himself in Wenceslas Square in Prague a few months after Warsaw Pact troops had invaded Czechoslovakia to suppress political reform.

She was above all a powerful voice of conscience in Czech society, articulating her generation's struggle to come to terms with the compromises of life lived mostly under communism, and the new challenges of a post-communist society which sometimes seemed to have lost all moral bearings.

Her sudden passing was a shock to everyone and she will sorely be missed. Only a few days earlier she was in correspondence with the organizers of the 2006 SVU World Congress which she was planning to attend.

FRANK KANKA (1926-2005)

Na Hod Boží v časných hodinách ranních zemřel po vleklé nemoci v sanatoriu Lotos u Benešova v âechách bývalý redaktor RFE Frank Kanka.

Narodil se v roce 1926 v Prostějově. Když byl vyloučen z Karlovy university, odešel do exilu. Od samého začátku v roce 1951 pracoval pro Svobodnou Evropu v Mnichově a zůstal s radiem celý svůj život. Později byl přeložen do Lisabonu a po osmi letech přešel do New Yorku. V roce 1995 byla stanice v New Yorku zavřena a dějiště radia se přestěhovalo do Prahy ve zmenšené kapacitě. Frank byl jediným zaměstnancem, který působil ve všech třech místech RFE: Mnichov, Lisabon a New York.

Za hlubokého komunismu natáčel nejen rozhovory s významnými stranickými potentáty, kteří se rozhodli pro exil, ale také s bratry Mašiny, Waldemarem Matuškou, Jiřím Voskovcem, Karlem Krylem a mnoha jinými.

Frank byl členem Directors Guild of America, Newspaper Guild of America a SVU.

Activities of SVU Local Chapters

SVU Chicago Chapter

February 18, 2005 – INSIDE THE FILM WORLD. Stories from the set presented by free-lance cinematographer and cameraman K.J. CAPEK.

March – no meeting as several board members traveled to Florida to attend the North Miami SVU Conference.

April 15 – Travelogue NEPAL (INDIA) presented by Ing. VAC-LAV KURES from his travels to mystic Katmandu, Taj Mahal and surrounding countryside.

May 20 – VOICES OF SPRING: VITEJ JARO VITEJ. Poeticke pasmo hudby, basni a svetelných obrazu v prednesu reci-tatorek Very Roknicove a Vladi-miry Williamsove.

September 14 – HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL AND ESTATE THEATRE IN PRAGUE. English narrated video and artistic slides of these most famous theatres in Prague presented by SVU vice president Anthony J. Jandacek.

October 4 – Dr. JOSEF POD-ZIMEK, professor Emeritus, University of Rolla, Missouri lectured on the subject of THE BEAUTY OF YELLOWSTONE PARK IN THE WINTER and his fond memories of studies of ice crystals.

November 1 – Short commemoration of the 87th anniversary of the founding of the Czecho-slovak Republic on October 28, 1918. Congratulatory letter to SVU from Cook County Treasurer, Maria Pappas; also Halloween program PRAGUE HAUNTED HOUSES – KDYZ V PRAZE STRASILO. Researched and pre-sented by Vladimira Williams, SVU president.

December 3 – English and Czech Christmas stories and poetry readings with musical presentation of traditional, painted, carved and moving “Bethlehems” followed by Christmas carols and refreshments.

Starting in February 2006, SVU meetings are held on second Tues-days of the month in the newly remodeled meeting room of the Czech Mission in Cicero, IL.

February 14 – THOSE WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS (V Praze bejvalo blaze). A video program depicting how our parents and grandparents celebrated and wel-comed the end of a long winter with dance and song. Prepared by SVU secretary Vera Roknic.

March 21, 2006 – Dr. JOSEF KREN, professor of biology at Midland Lutheran College and Doane College in Nebraska on BIRDS OF THE CZECH RE-PUBLIC – Pleasure for birdwatch-ers – Treasure for researchers.

Planned for April – SALUTE TO MOZART, program celebrating W.A. Mozart’s 250th birthday.

May – to be announced.

June – several members plan-ning to attend SVU World Con-gress in Ceske Budejovice.

Submitted by Vera Roknic, secretary SVU Chicago

SVU Edmonton Chapter

2004

Akce ROK CESKE HUDBYV EDMOTONU. Organisace (ci spoluorganisace) prednasek a sestí koncertu propagujících ceskou hudbu ci ceske interpretu:

Leden – prednaska Prof. Szabo (University of Alberta): BOHE-MIAN COMPOSERS FROM ENLIGHTENMENT TO LATE ROMANTICISM. Vyroční členská schůze SVU.

Unor – MILOS KRAJNY (Praha), klavírní recital.

Brezen – MARTIN KASIK (Praha), solista koncertu Canadian Chamber Orchestr.

Duben – ANTONIN KUBA-LEK (Toronto). Klavírní recital, cestný host SVU Banketu.

Zari – KONCERT UNIVER-SITNIHO SYMFONICKEHO OR-CHESTRU (Dvorakovy Slovanske tance, prvni kompletne provedeni v Edmontonu).

28. a 29. rijna – SLAVNOSTNI KONCERT KE STATNIMU SVATKU. Universitni symfonicky orchestr. Program: A. Dvorak: Domov muj; Te Deum; violoncelovy koncert, solistka Prof. Tanya Prochazka.

Listopad – KVARTETO KAPRALOVA s JAROMIREM KLEPACEM hralo Dvorakovo trio, kvarteto a kvinteto. Ve spolupraci s Edmonton Chamber Music Soc.

2005

Produkce nasi druhe CD (za-znam Dvorakova koncertu – viz vyse); k disposici u clenu vyboru SVU Alberta za 20\$ Can. Vvydelek jde na projekt „Navsteva Ceske Filharmonie v Edmontonu 2008“.

Prednaska: ceska stazistka LUCIE BARTOSOVA na Institutu Rakouskych a Stredoevropskych studii. „Ekonomicka situace v Ces-ke republice.“

Oslava 28. rijna – KLAVIRNI RECITAL BORIS KRAJNY v Ed-montonu; 29.-30. rijna v Calgary.

2006

Leden – Prednaska PROF. SZABO: MOZART AND HIS CZECH FRIENDS. Vyrocní clenska schuze SVU.

Brezen – Prednaska LUCIE BARTOSOVA: CZECH AND GERMAN IN THE BOHEMIAN LANDS: PEACEFUL CO-EXIS-TENCE, OR MILITANT COM-PETITION? (V anglictine pro uni-versitu, v cestine pro SVU.)

Pripravujeme 28. rijna KON-CERT PANOCHOVA KVARTE-TA (Praha), ve spolupraci s Ed-monton Chamber Music Society.

12.-17. listopadu — Vystou-peni chlapeckeho sboru BONI PUERI z Hradce Kralove.

Prosinec–kytarovy recital vir-tuosa Milose Kratkeho (Calgary).

PAVEL JELEN, Edmonton, Canada

ANDREW ELIAS SVU HUMAN TOLERANCE AWARD

Presentation To Jan Figel

Andrew Elias SVU Tolerance and Humanitarian Award was presented to **Ing. JAN FIGEL** by SVU President Miloslav Rechcigl on February 6, 2006 at special ceremony at the Slovak Embassy, hosted by H.E. Rastislav Kacer.

Statement by Dr. Miloslav Rechcigl:

In its Resolution adopted at the occasion of the historic 20th SVU World Congress held in Washington, DC in the year 2000, the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences (SVU) reaffirmed its resolve to work “toward enhancing the values of human tolerance and of freedom of spirit and thought.”

With sensitivity so uncommon in these times, and expressing his deep and long-held convictions, Dr. Andrew Elias has decided to sponsor, through the Society, an annual Human Tolerance Award. In an age marked by animosities and strife among human beings around the globe, the quest for human tolerance is the fundamental imperative of this day. Without human tolerance, democracy itself decays, culture is warped, civil society becomes uncivilized. Human tolerance cannot be decreed. It has no institutions and no structures. It either lives in men and women as their innermost value guiding their feelings and thoughts and deeds, or it does not live. Therein lies the meaning of the Andrew Elias SVU Human Tolerance Award: to keep on reminding us that human tolerance begins in human beings, and to do so by recognizing and honoring those whose life and work have been guided by tolerance and compassion.

Beginning with the year of 2001, the first year of the third millennium, the Society bestowed its first Andrew Elias SVU Human Tolerance Award on Father Anton Sroholec of Skalica, who was jailed under the Communists and who later became the founder and the director of “Roseta” Home for the Homeless in Podunajske Biskupce, Slovakia. The Second Andrew Elias SVU Tolerance Award was presented to Rev. Tomas Halik, Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies at Charles University in Prague, one of the strongest voices for tolerance across all human boundaries.

Today, it is a great honor for me personally to bestow the Third Andrew Elias SVU Tolerance and Humanitarian Award on an equally deserving person – who holds the imposing title of European Commissioner for Education – Jan Figel, a native of Caklov, in the district of Vranov nad Toplou, Presov Region in Eastern Slovakia. He is a real “Vychodnar”, just as our sponsor Dr. Andrew Elias, who comes from Hanusovice, a stone’s throw away from there.

Commissioner Figel, it gives me a great pleasure to present to you Andrew Elias SVU Human Tolerance and Humanitarian Award. In addition to the certificate you will receive an honorarium of \$1000 and one year membership in SVU.

*MILOSLAV REHCIGL, SVU President
Washington DC, February 6, 2006*

JAN FIGEL’S BIOGRAPHY

Ing. Jan Figel was born on January 20, 1960 in Caklov, a small village in eastern Slovakia. After the primary and secondary schools, he enrolled at the Technical University in Kosice, from where he graduated in 1983 with a degree of Engineer in Power Electronics. Later he completed one semester of special education at the University of Antwerpen (USFIA), Belgium, and at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

Jan Figel, a very popular Eastern Slovak intellectual, worked in Research and Design Engineering, but became publicly and politically active soon after the “Velvet Revolution” in 1989. His high moral standards in private and in public life and his non-combative, tolerant, professional approach to the political debates led to his election to the Slovak Parliament and earned him the respect of his allies and his opponents alike and, in spite of his young age, propelled him into a small circle of leading Slovak political and diplomatic personalities. His special hobby – English language – was a valuable asset to his appointments as a representative of Slovakia at various international organizations.

Jan Figel served in several top positions in the Council of Europe and is still serving as the Slovak Government Representative in the Convention on the Future of Europe and as the Chief Negotiator of the Slovak Republic for Accession Negotiations with the European Union. He was also elected Chairman of the Pan-European Union in Slovakia. On November 22, 2004, he was appointed European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, which also includes responsibility for youth and sport and relations with civil society.

In spite of his meteoric rise in the world of politics and diplomacy, Mr. Figel is a very modest, humble and private person. He does not look for headlines or to see his name in print. But through some of his close friends, we were able to learn about at least a few cases of his tolerance and humanitarian activities. For instance, as a father of four children, he is also taking care of his adopted son in India and of another child in another country; he organized life-saving help for the children of western Ukraine after the tragic floods in 2001; he is actively involved in various charitable organizations helping sick children; and is a leading functionary in the Society for Help of Mentally Disadvantaged.

In his present position, he is considered the “commissioner” in whose portfolio is one recurring theme: the citizens and their quality of life. The building of a citizen-friendly Europe is at the center of all his activities.