

## And now to 2009...

We wish to extend our sincere appreciation to all who have supported the Fund throughout the past year and would encourage you to attend our programme of events for 2009. The Committee welcomes any fresh suggestions or novel fundraising ideas and, as ever, we look forward to you joining us for yet another year of enjoyable social and cultural events in order to promote our charitable aims. It only remains to wish each and everyone a Joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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Lida Paterova - Honorary Vice President

Dr Halla Beloff - Chair

Dr Alena Linhartova - Secretary

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Yvonne Baginsky

Maria Gray

Zuzana Kadurova

Duncan MacGruer

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### The Book Group

Lida Paterova

Dr Halla Beloff

Busa Cochrane-Muir

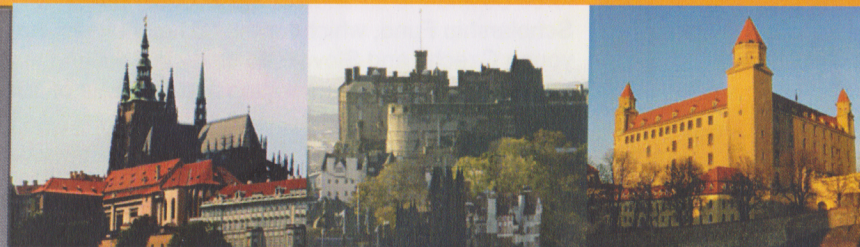
### Webmaster

Duncan MacGruer



## Scottish Czech & Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund

### SCSSSF Newsletter - December 2008



*Amazing* to think that it's forty years since the Prague Spring. Those of us who were around then remember well how hopes ran high and people in East and West dared to believe again, twelve years after the Hungarian uprising of 1956, that a liberalising 'thaw' had begun in earnest in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Czechoslovakia had been under Communist rule since the coup of 1948, but in 1968 the party boss Antonín Novotný was overthrown by a coalition in the Politburo, and a new General Secretary, the Slovak Alexander Dubcek, promised 'socialism with a human face'. Alas, it was not to last. On 20 August 1968, half a million troops from the Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia without warning. The reforms were halted, Dubcek was flown off to Moscow and subsequently replaced by Gustav Husák – and for the next 20 years it was to be 'business as usual'.

As from Hungary in 1956, a great wave of émigrés, including a large number of students, found their way to the West, where many of them settled for good. A total of 14 Czech students finished up in Edinburgh, among them the 22-year-old Lida Paterova, who had been in Sweden en route for Scotland on 20 August. Lida, who was half way through a degree course at Charles University, Prague, had the idea of continuing her studies at the University of Edinburgh, and got together with other students in a similar situation. They hadn't the money to pay for tuition and accommodation, so they sought help from the university and the people of Edinburgh – and help was given (one would like to think things would still be the same in our current cost-conscious world).

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*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year - Veselé Vánoce a Štastný Nový Rok  
- Veselé Vianoce a Štastný Nový Rok - Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year  
- Veselé Vánoce a Štastný Nový Rok - Veselé Vianoce a Štastný Nový Rok*

SCOTTISH CZECH AND SLOVAK SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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Ludmila Paterova (22), one of the Czech students who may go to Edinburgh University, before an interview with the university accommodation officer who is helping to find her somewhere to stay.

The university waived tuition fees, the Edinburgh students launched an appeal for funds, accommodation was provided by members of staff, and the Czech students were able to study in Scotland.

Lida stayed on in Edinburgh after graduating and worked in the university for many years – and it was she who was the driving force behind the creation of the Scottish Czech and Slovak Summer Scholarship Fund, which for the last eight years has been bringing young Czechs and Slovaks to study in Scotland, and which is now organising this commemoration of the events of 1968.

Peter France  
Honorary President SCSSSF

## This special event

to commemorate the events of 1968 in the former Czechoslovakia took place on Friday 28th November in the Music Room of the Edinburgh University Office of Lifelong Learning. The SCSSSF had invited a panel of speakers consisting of:

- Dr Pavel Millar, Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic
- Jonathan Wills, Journalist
- Patrick Richardson, Travel writer
- Yvonne Baginsky, Film producer, lecturer and SCSSSF Fund Committee member

Members of the audience were invited to share their own experiences. The Book Cafe, Radio Scotland, broadcast earlier in the week an interview with Lida Paterova in which she recalled her own experiences of that period (see above); listeners were informed about the work of the SCSSSF Fund and this special evening was also mentioned.

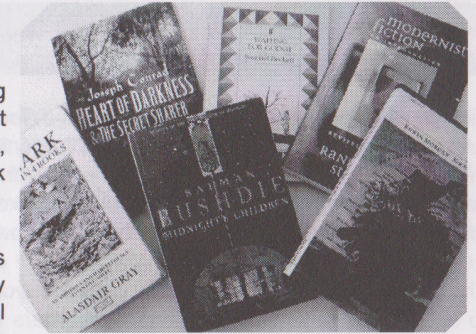
The evening was very well attended. Members of the SCSSSF Committee provided some delicious Czech baking and refreshments. The general public and SCSSSF members continued to discuss their memories over a glass of wine. Many thanks to all who helped in making this evening such a successful event.



## The Book Group

It has been said that books are the building blocks of civilisation. It can even be said that books make us. Without getting too high-flown, some of us think that books can be a warm link between widely separated groups of people.

So the Book Group of the Trust continues its work sending books to students and university departments to support the Summer School preparations and to enhance learning all the year round. We are fortunate in Edinburgh in having a series of specialist charity bookshops which deal in a variety of genres from literary theory, through post-colonial fiction to children's literature, all of which cover special interests of our 'clients'. We are pleased to support Magda Kubikova's Celtic Literatures Dictionary work at Pizen University.



This summer our three students in Edinburgh could hear authors at the Book Festival, get books signed and even have their photographs taken with some of their 'heroes'. A good time was had by all. The emails which fly regularly, confirm that the books actually arrive (often via kind supporters who are travelling and post locally) but also give us feedback about the enthusiastic use of our parcels. This year so far more than 100 books have been sent to seven universities. We are supported by kind donors, not necessarily members of the Trust, and also by a regular, most generous member donor. It is a rewarding enterprise.

## C H I L D R E N ' S C L U B

I am writing this after my wife, Martina, our 6 year old twins, David and Duncan and I, have enjoyed another visit to the Czech and Slovak Children's Club. For the boys travelling by car, train and taxi from Tillicoultry to Edinburgh makes for an exciting day, but, by adding a visit to the Czech and Slovak Children's Club, this makes for a heady cocktail.

The Club started out in January of this year based on an idea from Barbora Skarabela's talk on bilingual children and brought to life by Zuzana Kadurova! We meet, usually every second Saturday, in the Central Library in George IV Bridge and rent a room there, which is probably still not sound-proofed enough for the keen Saturday morning Edinburgh library goers! The aim of these meetings is obviously for Czech and Slovak people (and spouses) in the surrounding area to come and meet – to exchange ideas and opinions, to discuss problems and to pass on experiences of living in a foreign country. The children get involved with Arts and Craft activities (ably organised and supervised by Zuzka Kadurova – I'm sure she saw Blue Peter on Slovakian TV!), reading Czech books and getting up to the usual mischief that "deti" indulge in.

As a Scot I am always keen to meet any spouses who are Scottish and, to be honest, I look forward to trying out my pigeon Czech (Chinglish) on the unsuspecting Czechs and Slovaks. As well as being able to speak Czech and Slovak freely at the meetings there is also a big effort in bringing over traditional Czech traditions. We have celebrated Velikonocce (Easter) and soon we are to meet St. Mikuláš (December 6<sup>th</sup>). Personally I think that experiencing these celebrations and traditions is brilliant for our boys and all the other children who attend.

And so, to sign off, I would have to say that we all look forward to our trips to the Club and there remains only one question .. Who will we see on December 6<sup>th</sup>, St. Mikuláš or Cert ?

Duncan McConchie



First of all I would like to thank SCSSS fund, for giving me the chance to be part of such an amazing project as SUISS definitely is. Scottish Universities International Summer School has given me the chance to meet such an inspiring people, visit such a beautiful place like Edinburgh and to discover many new fields and authors that I had not known.



The project brings people from all over the world together; it teaches how to understand each other and lets the borders among people, cultures and traditions disappear. This lecture of tolerance and understanding is mixed with academic lectures that enrich students by new impulses, opinions and attitudes that help them to be better in what they do, to share their passion for literature and to meet such personalities in this field that they would not be able to meet otherwise.

The lectures were given on very professional level and very interesting, full of new information and they also enriched my knowledge of literature. I enjoyed all of them but the lectures on Scottish poetry were the most remarkable and were a real feast for poetry lovers. Also the lectures on postcolonial works were very important for me because my studies are focused on postcolonial translation. The seminars after the lectures were very vivid and amusing but on the other hand the discussions we had, taught me that there are many other points of view and that I have to look at literature from many angles. The Scottish Universities International Summer School was very well organized. I enjoyed many events that it offered. I got a bit closer to Scottish history and culture and I enjoyed spending some time with my colleagues. There were such events as readings of works of our tutors, watching films, discussions, beer tasting, bus tours, Ceilidh and many others I have not mentioned but not for lesser importance.

I am very grateful that I could attend the course on postmodern literature. It has been only 2 months since I have returned home, but I know that it was one of the most important steps in my career and in my life. I decided to continue in educating myself in postmodern literature and to become a translator of literary texts. I can incorporate the information gained during the course into a project that I am helping to organize at our University that is called 'Across Cultures' and is focused on intercultural relationships, literary translation and cultural differences. The course made it possible to confront my attitudes and ideas with those of my colleagues; to confront not only my attitudes to literature but also to life, philosophy and other affairs of everyday world around us. I enjoyed attending Fringe performances and the readings of authors at the book festival.

Since I would like to become a translator of literary texts I consider it very important to have knowledge in literature and in styles of many authors. SUISS offers the opportunity to reach this particular goal. The course also helped me to get the books and sources for my diploma thesis on postcolonial translation that is the field of literature not very known in my country, so that it is very hard to get these books.

These three weeks in Scotland inspired me to continue with studying literature, to follow my dreams and to do what I love the most. SUISS gave me the opportunity to stay in one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen, that is full of culture, literature and life. I will remember this forever.

Paula Panikova

I would like to thank you for the SCSSSF Award, which I was given in order to become one of the SUISS students. It is my duty and pleasure to comment on this experience which enabled me to meet new people with same interests and visit new places. I have tried to take the advantage of the SUISS as much as possible and I must but declare that I am more than satisfied. Early from the beginning everybody has been very helpful. From the administrator and the secretary to the student hosts, every one of them was always at hand to help me with my problems and questions to which they have listened carefully.

I cannot find a single error concerning the SUISS itself. The structure of the lectures and seminars was highly organized as well as the social and cultural programme. Speaking of the SUISS staff, our teacher Stella has been a brilliant tutor and friend as well. Her professional and friendly approach has been an essential basis of the seminar. Thanks to SCSSSF Award I was able to experience completely different academic environment which differs from the one at my university. It was amazing to take part in everyday discussions of the literary subjects. I have seen absolutely diverse working atmosphere here which has inspired me for my future studies. People were not only willing but rather eager to speak and express themselves.

Last but not least, every single day was like an awakening for me. Before this summer course, I had thought that simple presentation of one's own opinions suits the purpose well. Here, I was forced to admit many mistakes and rethink several arguments, which I had taken for granted. The truth is that this is the only way how I can learn from my previous mistakes. A credit of criticism and various critical approaches is therefore one of the biggest contributions of this course for me.

In conclusion, I must state that not only the study itself but the interaction with people from all corners of the world has proved as a source of deep knowledge and understanding. This has provided me with further energy and study fervor which I needed so desperately. I am proud to say that I have not being absent at any lecture or seminar so far.

Jan Horacek

Jan can be seen on the left hand at the base of this circle of SUISS students. With him students from Egypt, Poland, India, Turkey, Italy and Croatia.







Just a taste of good things to come: photos from this year's Art of Czechoslovakian Easter Egg Painting: fun, informal workshops held every year by Yvonne Baginsky and friends in the lead-up to Easter...Look out for more details and booking information in February 2009.

**Report from Busa Cochrane-Muir  
Compatriots' Czech Language Summer School Course 25.07.08 – 22.08.08 Dobruska**

The town of Dobruska lies some 80 miles north east of Prague in the foothills of the beautiful countryside of the Orlicke Mountains close to the Polish border featuring deep river valleys and many nature reserves. It is a delightful small town (pop 7,000) which has for the past 18 years welcomed students on the Compatriots Czech Language Course run by Charles University, Prague. The whole ethos of this 4 week course is to offer intensive Czech language tuition and an opportunity for students to experience the rich cultural heritage that includes dance, drama and song. The course is sponsored by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and 60 students receive full scholarships.

Students came from 28 different countries including the Americas, China, Australia, the Middle East and Europe. Nowhere had I experienced such cultural diversity at the same time in one place. The common link was our Czech roots or a strong attraction to Czech culture. We were divided into 6 classes according to our previous knowledge of the Czech language. The lesson sessions were quite intense, but this was well balanced with organised trips to many interesting natural landmarks, castles and parks of the Hradec Kralove Region.

Originally this course was established in 1990 and most of our teachers had taught students at Dobruska from this time. I cannot praise their commitment enough. Their support in helping us learn and progress further with our knowledge of the language was always helpful and encouraging on a daily basis. This has led me to a greater confidence to use the language I have both in speech and in writing. This time spent in Dobruska enabled me to forge new international and national links. It provided me with a strong sense of belonging to my Czech heritage. I must thank the SCSSSF for their support in recommending both John Wilson and myself for sponsorship on this wonderful experience.

## *Our ninth year = Fundraising events 2008*

The Committee can report on another year's successful fundraising, which was greatly augmented by the Inland Revenue's Gift Aid tax rebates for several past years and participation in the reconstituted Meadows Festival in June, a Garden Party and two ceilidhs. This has resulted in an increase on last year's total income with the impressive sum of £3514.01 being raised. The Book Group has continued to provide valuable support to Czech and Slovak universities by provision of literary and critical texts. Two Czechs and one Slovak student were awarded bursaries to attend summer schools in Edinburgh and their reports can be read elsewhere in this Newsletter.

One event to which the Fund lent its support was a travelling exhibition "*Czechoslovak Parachutists during World War II and their Training in Scotland*" organised by the Foundation Dobromysl and largely sponsored by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Assistance was given with translation of a documentary film, photographic captions and other documents. Whilst it has been on display in Dundee and Forfar thus far, it is intended to bring the Exhibition to Edinburgh in the coming months.

Despite the annual threat of wind and rain, the AGM and Garden Party were once again enjoyed in St. Albans Road by kind courtesy of Tony and Olga Franks. This has proved a very popular venue for this event, which contributes much revenue to our coffers and a convivial afternoon for members and friends. Once again the Committee are grateful to all those who donated raffle prizes and contributed to catering arrangements. The AGM, chaired by our Honorary President Peter France, was presented with the annual and financial reports and several changes to the membership of the Executive Committee were agreed. Maria Gray, Acting Treasurer, was elected Treasurer and two new nominees, Yvonne Baginsky and Duncan MacGruer, the Fund's webmaster, were elected to serve on the Committee. The Committee recorded its appreciation for the work of Amanda Miller, who resigned after five years of enthusiastic service on the Committee. A proposal to include the recently established bilingual Children's Club as a sub-group of the SCSSS Fund was approved following a submission from parents and members.

Although this newsletter has been our principal means of communication with the membership, our website has been developed and it is now regularly updated. Members are now urged to consult our website <http://www.scsssfund.org.uk> for details of social and cultural events organised by the Fund.

As we go to press, we are happy to congratulate our Treasurer Maria Gray on the imminent arrival of her second child. This happy event has, however, created a vacancy for the post of Treasurer from mid-March 2009 (end of financial year). Anyone willing to fill this post is urged to contact the Secretary.

*Pavel and Brewmaster Ken at the SCSSS Fund Garden party*

