

**General Peter Vlčko
Funeral Remarks
September 9, 2004**

Dámy a páni. First, I would like to express my sincere condolences to the entire Vlčko family on the loss of their loved one. I am honored personally and as the United States Ambassador that you have included me in this ceremony.

I would like to say a few words about a Slovak patriot, both an American citizen and champion of human rights. Throughout his lifetime, General Peter Vlčko embodied the most important values shared by the people of both the United States and the Slovak Republic.

How fitting it is that only a few days after the 60th anniversary celebration of the Slovak National Uprising, we can honor a soldier who fought so valiantly in the uprising, to liberate his country from fascist oppression.

Motivated by a love for his country and his fellow countrymen and respect for the dignity of all people, General Vlčko risked his life to help Slovakia have its chance for freedom and democracy. When he saw his beloved homeland again slipping into the grip of oppression and tyranny, he worked tirelessly to bring his family to America for a better life. There he chose the state of Michigan to live, and worked at Ford Motor Company to pursue what we call the "American dream."

It struck me as ironic that not only am I also from Michigan, but that I am tied to Ford -- being a longtime board member of the Henry Ford Museum. It is also ironic that I just came here from a ceremony with Slovak President Gasparovic, where the chairman of the Israeli Parliament was giving the title of "Righteous Among the Nations" from the State of Israel to Slovaks who, while risking their own lives, saved Jews during the Second World War.

General Vlčko has been similarly honored in Israel for his heroism in saving 20 Jewish lives. During his lifetime he was also recognized and honored numerous times in

America, Slovakia, and Israel for these courageous acts and for his bravery in defending his country against the Fascists.

Peter Vlčko's "American Dream" is, in fact, the dream of all people everywhere- to live in freedom and peace and to have the opportunity to provide for their family, unfettered by state control and bound only by one's own imagination and industry.

Today, Slovaks and Americans are engaged in military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans. Our soldiers are facing difficult conditions and a determined enemy, but continue to fight for freedom and human rights so that one day, those people, who for so long have suffered under dictatorship and oppression, may also live in freedom, peace and economic prosperity. Slovakia is following Major General Vlčko's legacy- to always do what is right, regardless of the consequences or danger.

I am proud to have been asked to honor such a distinguished officer, fellow American and fellow Michigander. He will be missed by many and remembered by all. Ďakujem!

Ambassador Ronald Weiser