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January 2008

Sinfo

A Historic Opening Meeting:
The European commission and the Slovenian
government discuss key challenges

Janez Janša:
Presidency Wants to Increase satisfaction of EU

Andrej Bajuk:
I am convinced that any increase in salaries, which
would in real terms exceed productivity, is destructive

Our excellence:
Dreamachine, when the sky is the limit – custom
made motorcycles

QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT



Janez Janša /Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia/
Presidency wants to increase the satisfaction of EU, Strasbourg, 16 January: "It is our greatest wish that our contribution will, month by month, increase the general happiness of European citizens. That, in time, some day any person you meet on the street anywhere in the European Union will without hesitation answer, when asked whether he or she cares about the future of the European Union, "I care about Europe because I know that Europe cares about me."



Jan Figel /European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth/
One and one always makes more than two, Ljubljana, 7 January: "We wish to exceed multicultural societies, where cultures and cultural communities simply cohabit and live parallel lives. The study of racial disturbances in Great Britain, where they 'only live side by side' is worrying, so genuine dialogue that is not a sum of individual quotes is the more important – in it, one and one always makes more than two."



Danilo Türk /President of Slovenia/
The European Parliament is the biggest place of European synergy, Ljubljana, 8 January: "The European Parliament is actually the biggest and most interesting place of European synergy. There, all the political forces of Europe meet and show an additional, new expression of European identity. Within that framework, Slovenia will do everything to strengthen this synergy."



Hans-Gert Pöttering /President of the European Parliament/
Enlargement is the triumph of our faith in the human being, Ljubljana, 8 January: "The Eastern enlargement of the European Union is not only a political change, but also a triumph of our faith in a human being as being responsible for himself and for his community; with this, the democratic understanding of a human being has triumphed over the totalitarian one."



Olli Rehn /European Commissioner for Enlargement/
The new Croatian government must urgently solve the EFPZ issue, Brdo pri Kranju, 8 January: "After the new Croatian government takes up their duties, they will have to solve the Ecological and Fisheries Protection Zone (EFPZ) activation for the EU Member States urgently. Everything is 'in the hands of Croatia'; otherwise the consequences for further Croatian movement towards the Union will be definitely negative."



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eu2008.Si – Si.nergy for Europe

Slovenia holds the Presidency. A Member State with a population of 2 million which joined the European Union only four years ago began to preside over a community which unites almost 500 million citizens on 1 January 2008. "You are obviously a land of James Bonds," joked one of the foreign journalists who was guest on the traditional Brussels Press trip at the beginning of the Presidency.

Slovenia has prepared itself thoroughly for the Presidency of the Union. A successful visit of the European Commission on which we report in detail in this issue of Sinfo bears witness to that. But this was just an intensive warm-up for the six-month diplomatic marathon which Slovenia 'is running' in the sensitive year 2008. The energy-climate package, the Lisbon strategy and the Lisbon treaty, Kosovo and other countries of the Western Balkans will guarantee that Slovenia will not disappear from the front page headlines at least until the end of June 2008. James Bond would indeed come in very handy, but considering the three years of intensive preparations, we are confident that we will manage without him. We will certainly need the collaboration of our partners from the European Union though.

With the year 2008, the Sinfo publication is becoming a bi-weekly magazine. Thus you will be able to read the reviews of the most important events, hear the words of the people who create the Slovenian and European future and get to know Slovenian culture, customs, cuisine and accomplishments every two weeks all in one place. If this news still does not satisfy your curiosity, you can follow Slovenia each step of the way on the web site of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU: www.eu2008.si.

And a New Years wish – may the year 2008 be a year of ideas, success, energy and most of all synergy – Si.nergy for Europe!

Government Communication Office: www.ukom.gov.si
Government Institutions: www.gov.si
Slovenian Tourist Board: www.slovenia.info
Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: www.gzs.si
Slovenian Chamber of Craft: www.ozs.si
Public Agency of the RS for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments: www.japti.si
Ljubljana Stock Exchange: www.ljse.si
Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: www.stat.si
State Portal of the Republic of Slovenia: <http://e-uprava.gov.si>



JANŠA, SARKOZY DISCUSS EU PRESIDENCY TASKS

On 17 december the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Janez Janša, travelled to Paris where he met the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, the French Prime Minister, François Fillon, and the Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Angel Gurría.

As the next presiding member state, France will inherit Slovenian Presidency agenda. This, according to Janša, includes tasks which are in the interest of the entire EU. »One of the key priorities of both Slovenia and France are preparations for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty – following the ratification process and carrying out all the activities that will enable the Treaty to become truly enforced as of 1 January 2009,« the PM stressed. To this end, there have been a number of coordination meetings, not only at the highest, but also at the working level. »This is about one year, two Presidencies and one task« Janša said. Among joint tasks is also the issue of climate change and the related Energy Efficiency Action Plan, which the EU will tackle in March. »This topic will most probably not be concluded during Slovenia's Presidency, and will continue in the second part of 2008 and possibly beyond, when the Czech Republic takes over the EU Presidency« said the Prime Minister of Slovenia. Mr Janša and Mr Sarkozy also discussed the situation in the Western Balkans. The French side asserted that it supports EU enlargement to this part of Europe. »I believe that in this respect French foreign policy has taken a major step forward. In the last weeks, France has played a very positive role by calling on the EU to adopt a framework that will enable resolving the most burning issues in the region in the next year,« said the PM after the meeting. The French side also expressed support to Slovenia with regard to Kosovo's future status. »This is all the more important in the light of the fact that during its Presidency, Slovenia will probably have to handle the most demanding issues relating to Kosovo's future status,« stressed the Slovenian PM.

FIRST SERBIAN AMBASSADOR TO ASSUME OFFICE IN LJUBLJANA

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel on 18 December accepted a copy of credentials from the first Serbian Ambassador to Slovenia Predrag Filipov. Rupel welcomed Serbia's decision to appoint its first ambassador to Slovenia after Montenegro became independent. The pair discussed bilateral relations and Serbia's progress towards the EU, according to the Foreign Ministry. Rupel was hopeful for the Slovenian presidency to help Serbia in its efforts to join the EU, as Slovenia has already been very active in this respect. Besides urging the EU stabilisation and association process for Serbia, Slovenia also contributed to granting Serbia the status of a candidate country at the last meeting of EU foreign ministers.

Rupel added that such aspirations were part of country's consistent policy, which has been evident in the September letter of PM Janez Janša to the EU leaders and member states and that Slovenia would hold this course in future as well. Rupel and Filipov also discussed the future status of Kosovo. Rupel emphasised the complexity of the issue, pointing out that Serbian accession to the EU was a separate matter. The EU estimates the current situation as unendurable, which makes it a European problem, he said, adding that Slovenia would definitely make the Kosovo issue a top priority for its presidency. Predrag Filipov is the first Serbian ambassador to Slovenia. After the break-up of the union between Serbia and Montenegro in May 2006, its Montenegrin Ambassador to Slovenia Branko Perović was recalled, leaving the post in Ljubljana to charge d'affaires.



PM SAYS GOOD COOPERATION WITH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEANS BETTER RESULTS FOR THE EU PRESIDENCY

Prime Minister Janša, together with ministers of the Slovenian Government, held a working meeting with the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament, on 19 December. He also met separately with the President of the European Parliament, Mr Hans-Gert Pötering. Discussions with the Members of the European Parliament centred on the priorities of the Slovenian EU Council Presidency. Special attention was paid to the energy and climate change package and to the situation in the Western Balkans, with particular emphasis on the question of the future status of Kosovo, all topics that, according to the Prime Minister will require greater coordination between the European institutions. As Janez Janša stated at the press conference, the European Parliament is involved in many major decisions under

the legislative co-decision process, and so "good cooperation with the European Parliament also means better results for the Presidency". It is the Prime Minister's firm conviction – as has already been confirmed during its present parliamentary term of office – that the European Parliament will have no difficulty in also taking on the enhanced role given to it by the Lisbon Treaty signed a few days before.

PRIMOŽ KOZMUS AND PETRA MAJDIČ NAMED BEST ATHLETES OF 2007

Hammer thrower Primož Kozmus and cross-country skier Petra Majdič have been selected Slovenia's male and female athletes



of the year by the Association of Slovenian Sports Journalists, which conferred the awards on 20 December. Kozmus (28) took the limelight in the track and field competitions by winning silver in hammer throw at the 11th Athletics World Championships in Osaka, in what was the best outdoor result for Slovenia ever. This year Kozmus also broke the Slovenian record (82.30 metres) in hammer throw and was named the athlete of the year by the Slovenian Athletics Association (AZS) in November. Slovenia's best cross country skier Petra Majdič (27), who won the award for the second year running, has won four World Cup events this year and won silver at the World Nordic Ski Championships in Sapporo, which secured her 390 votes from journalists. Kozmus (262 votes) beat out gymnast Mitja Petkovšek (247) and NHL hockey player Anže Kopitar (117) for top honours. In the women's section, Majdič beat sport climber Maja Vidmar (114) and track and field athlete Brigita Langerholc (87).

RUPEL PROMISES »SI.NERGY FOR EUROPE«

Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel said in Brussels on 20 December that Slovenia wanted to contribute to creating synergies in Europe during its stint as EU president in 2007. For this is reason it has selected »Si.nergy for Europe« as its presidency motto. According to the Slovenian foreign minister, being the first newcomer from the recent rounds of enlargement to hold the presidency is an honour and a major responsibility and challenge. This is a »historic project« for Slovenia, Rupel said. »Our motto is Si.nergy for Europe, SI being the country code for Slovenia,« said Rupel. According to him, the goal is for Slovenia to contribute to creating synergies for Europe. »Kosovo and the Western Balkans



- this is the top challenge for the Slovenian presidency,« he said. »It is clear that Slovenia will face the most complex processes during its presidency,« he added in a reference to the future status of Kosovo.

DANILO TÜRK INAUGURATED AS PRESIDENT

Daniilo Türk was sworn in as president at a ceremonial session of the National Assembly on 22 December, becoming the third head of state since Slovenia gained independence. Laying out a policy blueprint for his five-year term, Türk stressed that he would



strive for »constructive, coordinated and balanced cooperation with the government and parliament.« In foreign policy, he said he intended to participate in the shaping of foreign policy decisions and their implementation, in accordance with Slovenian legislation and the best interests of the state. Presidential powers include calling general election, declaring laws, appointing and dismissing ambassadors and granting clemency. The president's power lies in appointments, as he nominates the prime minister designate, central bank governor, human rights ombudsman, Court of Audits president, information commissioner and Constitutional Court judges.

OFFICIAL CEREMONY CELEBRATING SLOVENIA ENTRY INTO THE SCHENGEN ZONE

EU, Portuguese, Italian and Slovenian officials hailed the historical elimination of borders at the last big celebration on 22 December, a day after the expansion of the Schengen no-passport zone to nine countries which joined the EU in 2004. The celebration at the Škofije/Rabuiese border crossing with Italy featured among others European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša and Italian Interior Minister Giuliano Amato. »This is something that we did not even dare dream of 15 years ago,« Janša said. »It is a historical day that it will truly be grasped only in the future.« Indeed, the prime minister pointed out that 20 years ago people wanting to illegally cross the border to get to freedom on the other side would have been shot. Janša also underlined that the falling of the border signaled the arrival of a



new era for the Italian and Slovenian minorities in the respective countries. Similarly, European Commission president José Manuel Barroso said the dismantling of borders sent a »very powerful signal of unity« of Europe around values such as freedom, democracy and peace. What is more, the elimination of borders is a tangible benefit for the people. »I firmly believe that if we want to have a stronger Europe we need to show our people that Europe brings concrete results, not just words«, president Barroso said. Playing down fears that the new Schengen members will not be able to guarantee security, Barroso pointed out that the EU had earmarked a billion euros to beef up security on the new Schengen borders. Italian Foreign Minister Giuliano Amato also underlined that the fall of borders would not affect security, but instead increase freedom. »Cooperation with Slovenian authorities is very good and we will try to keep it that way,« he said. Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates meanwhile noted that the ceremony wrapped up Portugal's presidency of the EU the best way possible. »We are celebrating the best Europe has, values which have always inspired European integration.«

PRIME MINISTER JANŠA RECEIVES THE SECRETARY - GENERAL OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

The Prime Minister Janez Janša, received on 9 January Mr Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, who was in Ljubljana attending an international conference at the beginning of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. PM Janez Janša and Mr İhsanoğlu both agreed that intercultural dialogue was important both for the co-existence of Europeans in their cultural and religious diversity and for the EU's relations within a complex global environment. The Prime Minister thanked the Secretary-General for the favourable reception of Slovenia's initiative to establish a Euro-Mediterranean University with a seat in Piran, Slovenia, and received Mr İhsanoğlu's assurance of further support for this important project. Mr İhsanoğlu underlined the strengthening of cooperation with international organisations, such as the OSCE and the EU, as one of the goals of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. In this connection, he also remarked on the positive experience of Slovenia's Presidency of the OSCE and expressed his belief that the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union would offer the opportunity for close cooperation. Prime Minister Janša agreed that there was still a great deal of untapped potential in this area. Mr İhsanoğlu also welcomed the Agreement on the legal status of the Islamic community in the Republic of Slovenia, concluded by the Islamic community and the Slovenian Government in July 2007, describing it as a model of its kind in Europe.

MINISTER RUPEL ATTENDS THE MEETING OF THE EUTC AND NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATIONS

Slovenian Foreign Minister and President of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, Dimitrij Rupel, on 11 January attended the meeting of the European Trade Union Confederation (EUTC)



and national trade union confederations from Slovenia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany and Portugal. In his address, Minister Rupel emphasised that the Presidency of the Council of the EU is a great honour for Slovenia and outlined the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency.



MATEVŽ TOMŠIČ, PhD
Faculty of Applied Social Studies

Research on media freedom and autonomy in **Slovenia in the year 2007**

In December 2007, the Faculty of Applied Social Studies in Nova Gorica conducted research on freedom and autonomy of Slovenian print media for the year 2007. Researchers who participated in the team were: Matevž Tomšič, PhD (research coordinator), Matej Makarovič, PhD, Tamara Besednjak, Urša Šinkovec and Ennie Vardijan. The purpose of the research was to differentiate the level of freedom in Slovenian print media in the context of either presence or absence of political, economic and other intervention and pressures on print media entities. The research is based on the triangulation method, i.e. a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. In that context two methods were used, namely analysis of contents (analysis of comments in four Slovenian daily newspapers) and analysis of interviews and focus groups (conducted with representatives of journalists with different perceptions of the current situation in Slovenian media space).

On the basis of the results of the analysis (especially discussions with media creators) it was established that pressures on media undoubtedly exist in a way that in certain cases can have significant influence on its activity. That is a key opinion shared by the journalists, who may be very different in their political views, convictions and beliefs. However, assessments about the source of these pressures vary. On one side is a numerically larger group of journalists (advocates of petition against censorship), who see the government as the main culprit, while on the other side is a smaller group of journalists (critics of petition), who are of the opinion that the pressures are introduced mainly by the people from the former government group. This smaller group also points out the prevalent stream of journalist thought whose members attack the journalists who think differently. We can

conclude that in practice it is a combination of different sources of pressures, all sharing the notion that they are performed in a systematic way with the intention to discipline the 'disobedient' journalists.

In Slovenian media circles over the past years there were frequent reproaches about certain government pressures on the work of journalists. Those pressures were expected to intensify especially after the current government came into power in 2004. Existence of such pressures, of course, cannot be dismissed; however, the analysis of comments from four Slovenian daily newspapers (given the confines of a limited time interval) does not show existence of its effectiveness, i.e. realised pressures by the current government. For none of the journals examined can we say report in a way to promote the government and the governing coalition. Furthermore, none of them in the covered period contain more comments that can be considered in favour of the government compared to comments critical of the government. In that respect, they range from presenting a high balance (Večer) to a strong and consistent anti-governmental orientation (Dnevnik).

On the basis of analysis of contents, it is unfortunately not possible to detect the influence of various groups of social importance, such as owners of capital and other centres of power, which don't originate directly from the sphere of politics but in relation to it are far from uninterested. Such influences are more difficult to detect, although they are not necessarily less direct, and they can be even more effective than political pressure. It is therefore difficult to clearly detect a direct connection between such influence and the manner of reporting within a certain medium.

WHATMAKESTHENEWS



A Historic Opening Meeting: the European Commission and the **Slovenian government** **discuss key challenges**

The common thread of the meeting of the European Commission and the Slovenian Government representatives on 8 January was mainly to discuss the priority tasks of the Slovenian EU Presidency and to define key challenges the European Union has to face in the first half of this year.

Slovenian Prime Minister and current President of the European Council Janez Janša and vice-president of the European Commission Margot Wallström outlined the Treaty of Lisbon, the energy and climate package, the Lisbon strategy and the Western Balkans as well as intercultural dialogue as crucial tasks of this period.

"A very good co-operation between the Slovenian Government and the European Commission was established during today's discussions," said Janša, and added that on such a basis Slovenia would be able to face the challenges of the next six months. Margot Wallström emphasized that based on the preparations made so far and close co-operation with Slovenia she had every reason to believe that Slovenian Presidency would be successful. "The enlarged European Union is starting the year 2008 stronger and more united," said European Union vice-president, bringing forward the recent enlargement of the Schengen area in which Slovenia was also involved, the enlargement of the euro area and Slovenia's assumption of the EU Council Presidency. She also affirmed that the Commission fully supports the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency.

PRIMARY POLITICAL INTEREST OF THE EU IS TO RATIFY THE TREATY OF LISBON

Prime Minister Janša emphasized that the primary political interest of the EU is to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon and thus pass the resit exam. "During our Presidency we will do everything in our power to assure that all other events and processes are managed with a view to clearing the way for ratification to proceed smoothly," he promised. According to his words, preparations for the successful implementation of the Treaty are also important; it is the Union's goal that the Treaty enters into force and effect on





1 January 2009.

Margot Wallström believes that the European Commission has to follow its plans in spite of the ratification procedure and Janša was of the opinion that the question of when to make a certain move is of crucial importance so as not to jeopardize the ratification in any of the member states. "It does not mean that Europe would wait for the ratification of the Treaty," explained the current President of the EU Council.

THE SECOND TASK TO BE UNDERTAKEN: A PACKAGE OF ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE REFORMS

The second task to be undertaken during the Slovenian Presidency will be a package of energy and climate change reforms that will be presented by the Commission on 23 January and will be, according to Janša, probably the most difficult part also in terms of contents. In the Prime Minister's opinion, close co-operation between the European Commission, the Presiding Country and the European Parliament is of utmost importance for progress in this field.

The importance of energy and climate change reforms aimed at reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and increasing the renewable energy sources was also emphasized by Margot Wallström. Such measures will be a notable contribution to fighting climate changes while, at the same time, they will be deciding also in terms of the European economy competitiveness.

The Commission is consulting on this issue with the member states with the aim to build a fair and balanced system for the distribution of burdens, and to simultaneously maintain the competitiveness of industry. Margot Wallström is confident that a progress concerning the adoption of this package can be made already during the Slovenian Presidency.

BOOSTING INNOVATIVENESS AND PROVIDING INCENTIVES TO SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES WILL BE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE

A lot of attention will also be given to the Lisbon Strategy for enhancing the EU competitiveness, as well as to the new cycle of the Strategy for the period from 2008 to 2010, where according to Prime Minister Janša, boosting innovativeness and providing incentives to small and medium-sized companies will be of great importance.

A special attention has been devoted to the Western Balkans. According to the Premier's words, a uniform position has been adopted that in solving open questions, a uniform approach and solutions shall be sought that will stabilize the region in a

long term. Margot Wallström underlined that enlargements that have taken place thus far have strengthened the Union. She also declared that Brussels, also owing to the Slovenian commitment to the enlargement of the integration, will issue a document on the European future of the Western Balkans in March, in which further steps for the region will be proposed.

THE FIRST EVENT OF THE PRESIDENCY IN BRDO AN ORGANISATIONAL SUCCESS



Director of the Government Communication Office, Anže Logar:

Visit of the European Commissioners to Slovenia is the first demanding, official event organised by Slovenia during the EU Council Presidency, which makes it a test of the organisation and logistics of the big events taking place up to the end of June. So far, everything has gone like clockwork,

although there were some delays; however, all the discussions were substantive and consequently the participants are satisfied; over 230 journalists were accredited. Therefore, we can already say that it is for real and that this is a model of how the big events (like today's) under the Slovenian Presidency will take place. The Vice-President of the European Commission, Margot Wallström, strongly commended the discussion and the organisation of the event. The Congress Centre is functioning very well, too, since the rooms are useful, as they were planned to be. However, we did hear questions from journalists as to whether the rooms will suffice for the biggest meetings, such as the EU–USA. In such cases, we will take care to extend facilities for journalist and thus provide them with everything they need for their work.



Andrea Bonanni, La Repubblica:

For the time being I like everything in Slovenia. People are nice, the nature is beautiful, everything is going fine. I do not have any remarks.



Tony Barber, Financial Times:

First I used to come to Slovenia in early 1990s, when independence has started to become a reality and also in the first three to four years after. Coming now I can compare. What I see is more prosperous, it seems more Western and there are more international influences (designer shops, cars etc). You can see that economy is closely connected with the West.

I get the feeling that Ljubljana is organised differently. And people speak English better than they used to.

European Year of Intercultural Dialogue as an Opportunity FOR EUROPE AND THE WORLD

The solemnity in Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana on 8 January, attended by the highest Slovenian state representatives, members of the European Commission and the President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering, officially launched the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The speakers were unified in the position that intercultural dialogue is an opportunity for Europe and the world.

The President of the Republic of Slovenia Danilo Türk said in his speech that "Europe today is possible only as part of a global world" and that also intercultural dialogue could evolve in a global context. "Therefore let's be Europeans and proud citizens of our countries but also Europeans and citizens of the world," he added and expressed his conviction that intercultural dialogue could actually contribute to improving Europe and the whole world.

The Slovenian Prime Minister, currently presiding the EU, Janez Janša, emphasized that the year of intercultural dialogue was "a twofold opportunity for Europe to strengthen the belief in itself and to intensify dialogue with other cultures". "The path of intercultural dialogue is a path of strengthening the most solid foundations for peace and prosperity on our planet," said Janša.

The Premier also pointed out that on the territory of Slovenia numerous cultural flows intersected and "this is where we see our opportunity to contribute to strengthening intercultural understanding in Europe and beyond its frontiers". The Mediterranean, according to Janša, is a contact point of cultural identi-

ties and the territory of intense dialogue between the Christian, Islamic and Jewish world. The Slovenian initiative to establish a Euro-Mediterranean university already this year, is based on this very notion, namely, that such a university "has every chance of becoming a contact point of young people from all over the Mediterranean".

Janša also said in his speech that it was time for an in depth discussion on the significance of culture within the EU framework. For a total success of the European project, according to Janša, "it is not enough to have a large market and an impressive economic growth but also continual strengthening of the cultural and spiritual aspects of Europe".

The European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth Jan Figel speaking on behalf of the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso (who was indisposed due to illness and could not attend the festive evening), expressed content that the Year of Intercultural Dialogue coincided with the Slovenian Presidency.

The presidency of the first newcomer to the EU is, according to his words, a proof that Europe has surpassed divisions from the past.

Figel also outlined that in the past half century a positive history of Europe had been written even though Europe had never been uniform since "diversity is a part of our genetic makeup". Regarding the promotion, acceptance and respect of "our rich cultural diversity" Figel emphasized mainly the importance of education. This year, as the Union focuses on human security, dignity and rights, presents a chance for raising consciousness on the importance of intercultural dialogue mainly among young people. But such a process should not end on 31 December.

The President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering said that the essence of intercultural dialogue shall be tolerance which means respect and understanding of other people's positions even if different than ours. He also pointed out that dialogue between cultures should not be confined only to this year but it should be a lasting process. However, in Ljubljana "today we wish to give it its spirit". He also declared active involvement of the European Parliament in the Year of Intercultural Dialogue, giving it impetus with a series of events.

Pöttering underlined that the dialogue between cultures should evolve within the EU members as well as with areas outside of the Union. He especially emphasized the importance of dialogue with the Middle East where, according to Pöttering, the EU contribution to peace would be desired. He pointed out South-eastern Europe as a very important area for stability.





Janez Janša: Presidency Wants to Increase Satisfaction of EU

Prime Minister Janez Janša has told the European Parliament that the Slovenian EU presidency intends to tackle the main EU issues with the aim of increasing satisfaction of the bloc's citizens.

»Our biggest wish is that, with the help of our contribution, the number of satisfied Europeans increases each month,« he told the European Parliament during a presentation of Slovenia's EU presidency on 16 January. He said the goal for the next six months was for Europe to make progress in as many areas as possible and for Slovenia to continue the work started by Germany and Portugal as part of the trio of successive presiding countries. According to the Slovenian prime minister, the main political priority will be the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. He hopes that many countries will have ratified the document by the end of the six-month presidency, which would make the job of the next EU president, France, that much easier. Janša also pointed to the launch of the second cycle of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs. A key issue in this area will be the timely adoption of guidelines, which is in the hands of EU institutions, said Janša.

He promised that the Slovenian presidency would be working closely with the French presidency in efforts to agree on the energy-climate package of laws, including on burden-sharing in cutting greenhouse emissions. He stressed that promoting an open-door policy for the EU would be a key issue of the Slovenian presidency. »A glance at the European map confirms the impression that enlargement is still a work-in-progress.« »It is essential that this process continues in line with the adopted commitments and fundamental principles, foremost the fulfillment of membership conditions. These are the foundations on which the Slovenian presidency will pursue membership talks with Croatia and Turkey.« He said the Western Balkans, which must be given a future in Europe, would be a special chapter for Slovenia. Slovenia by no means advocates the lowering of membership standards for these countries, but would instead like the EU to be more active in engaging the region and assisting it in its reform efforts, he said and added that the European Neighbourhood policy should give equal importance to both its eastern and Mediterranean dimensions. »We would like to

see the consolidation of institutions and processes such as the Barcelona Process and EuroMed.« »At the same time we don't need duplication or competition to EU institutions...The EU is a unit and only as such can be effective in bringing about peace, stability and progress in its neighbourhood,« he said.

I would like to thank all the Members of the European Parliament who have supported the enlargement of the Union and the Schengen region. Thank you on behalf of thousands, ten of thousands, millions, and more than hundreds of millions of Europeans from Central and Eastern Europe who were on the other side of the Iron Curtain, in prisons, deprived of political and human rights only 20 years ago and who are now together a part of United Europe with realistic chances for a good life and possibilities which our forebears have never had, he emphasized.

Janša said that the EU had to assume a strengthened role in the world and all the responsibilities associated with that. »Our presidency will likely not be as grand as the French nor as high-profile as the German and our public servants probably do not have the experience and tradition of the British. We will probably make a mistake somewhere, say things too directly at times, perhaps even too naively,« Janša said. He promised however that the Slovenia presidency would tackle the challenges before it with the utmost of responsibility and make it its priority to be a concept-based presidency. »We do not intend to compete for a share of the limelight,« he added. Janša added that Slovenia was the first newcomer and former Communist country to hold the presidency. As a demonstration of Slovenia's progress since the fall of the Iron Curtain, he said that 20 years after being arrested by the former Communist authorities he now had the opportunity to address the European Parliament, to which he could travel without being stopped at borders and which he could address in his mother tongue. In response to the address, President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso said they expected Slovenia to be a successful EU presidency. You are a symbol of the fight for freedom, Barroso commended Janša.

It's up to Croatia to respect its international commitments

In December 2006 the Croatian parliament (sabor) voted to implement a protected ecological-fisheries zone ('PEFZ') vis-à-vis Member States of the European Union, effective as of 1 January 2008. Croatia's action runs counter to the agreement made in June 2004 in which it was determined that Croatia would not introduce a PEFZ for Member States until a joint agreement in the European spirit is reached, which would take into account the interests of neighbouring countries. This agreement was signed by Slovenia, Italy and Croatia, and a representative of the European Commission.

The declaration of the PEFZ by the Republic of Croatia was already made on 3 October 2003, when Croatian parliament unilaterally adopted a Decision on the expansion of the jurisdiction of the Republic of Croatia on the Adriatic. But the sabor also specified that the actual implementation of the regime would not start until 12 months later. After very from responses Slovenia and Italy to the PEFZ, and after the European Union became involved in settling this question, the sabor on 3 June 2004 postponed implementation of the zone for Member States of the EU until adoption of a Fisheries Partnership Agreement between Croatia and the European Union. But already in December 2006 Croatia withdrew from that, and with the adoption of a new Decision specified that the zone would also apply to Member States of the EU from 1 January 2008.

By implementing the PEFZ, Croatia claimed in the territory of the zone sovereign rights regarding research and sustainable use, preserving and managing live natural richness of the sea, and jurisdiction over scientific research in the sea and the preservation and protection of marine environment. In that regard, it defined the obligations of Croatian bodies to implement all measures that are necessary to protect these rights. The measures anticipated for that purpose include the examination, inspection and seizure of foreign vessels within the zone, and legal measures to punish offenders as prescribed by Croatia for this territory.

In compliance with Croatian legislation, the PEFZ regime would be in force in the marine territory in the northern Adriatic sea stretching all the way to point T5, which is the point of territorial exit of Slovenia to the open sea. Thus Croatia would try to

block Slovenia's territorial exit to the open sea and deny it its continental shelf and the right to an exclusive ecological zone, which Slovenia has in accordance with international legislation. This could mean prejudice in regard to the border between the countries.

But in addition to an attempt to prejudge the border, the PEFZ would be damaging for Slovenian fishermen because in practice it could be manifested as a different level of prohibition on fishing. A total ban on fishing for the Slovenian fisheries sector would mean the loss of an important part of the total Slovenian catch, as a big share of that catch is taken in the open sea.

The question of the PEFZ is a problem between Croatia and the European Union. Enforcement and implementation of the PEFZ for the Member States of the EU would be a violation of the agreement made in June 2004 which is included in all important documents of the EU in regard to Croatia which were adopted after that date. It is mentioned in the decisions of the European Council of June 2004 and in the Negotiating Framework for Croatia. The Council of the EU for General Affairs and External Relations on 10 December 2007 asked Croatia to "respect the agreement of 4 June 2004, which is mentioned in the conclusions of the European Council of June 2004 and in the Negotiating Framework, in its entirety, and not to implement any aspect of the zone for the Member States of the EU, until a common agreement in the spirit of EU is reached." The European Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, also cautioned Croatia in December 2007 and January 2008 to find, in accordance with adopted international commitments, a solution as soon as a new government is formed, as only that would avoid negative consequences for accession negotiations.

For Slovenia, the agreement of June 2004 is valid. Therefore the situation in Adriatic did not change on 1 January 2008 in a legal sense. Now it is Croatia's turn. From the new Croatian government is expected the adoption of immediate measures to resolve the question of the PEFZ. If the expected action does not occur, the unresolved question of the disputable zone will undoubtedly have a negative effect on Croatia's accession negotiations with the EU.

Janša with his Maltese colleague on experiences with the euro

On 12 January 2008, Malta solemnly marked its adoption of the euro. On 1 January Malta joined the eurozone together with Cyprus making it the club of fifteen. Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša was one of the main speakers at the event alongside President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Central Bank Jean-Claude Trichet and Luxembourg Prime Minister and Eurogroup President Jean-Claude Juncker. The ceremony was also attended by Slovenian Minister of Finance Andrej Bajuk who is chairing the EU Economic and Financial Affairs Council in the first half of 2008.

Janša pointed out that the euro adoption on 1 January was a great accomplishment for Malta. This will be one of the things many tourists will notice first when visiting this Mediterranean island country.

On the question about the relationship between inflation and euro adoption, the Slovenian Prime Minister said that the adoption of euro had contributed only a small share to last year's strong price increases in Slovenia, and that the biggest share is ascribable to price increases in food and oil.

At the same time, he advised his Maltese colleague to preserve dual pricing as long as possible in order to enable consumers to compare prices. Janša explained that dual pricing in Slovenia had been obligatory six months after the introduction of the euro and added that it would have been better if this period had lasted at least one year.

"The adoption of the euro in Malta started very well, just like in Slovenia," said the Minister of Finance Andrej Bajuk, adding that Malta was learning from the experiences of Slovenia just like Slovenia had learned from others.

"They have the same doubts and problems and wonder what will

happen with food price inflation, which has occurred everywhere. We expect that the situation in Malta will not be the same as in Slovenia, where everything has gone twice as fast as elsewhere. We have domestic structural problems concerning competition among our food market chains," clarified the Minister.

Malta was glad to host the Slovenian delegation, especially because last year Slovenia became the first new Member State in the EU to adopt the euro and is therefore aware of how much effort is needed to meet the demanding economic criteria for entering the euro area.

"According to present data, euro adoption in Malta has encountered no serious problems," estimated Gonzi, and said that they had registered only a few individual cases of abuse.

Gonzi also mentioned different measures which Malta has taken prior to the introduction of the euro in order to prevent possible abuses. One of these measures requires special arrangements with the economic sector, which states that it is committed to not abusing euro adoption in the form of rounding up prices or setting price increases. The government as well committed itself to this cause.

Gonzi also said that due to the excellent work of Malta's national committee for the adoption of the euro they had decided to preserve the committee or organize it as an agency which will keep a close eye on price increases or rounding up of prices.

The prime ministers also talked about the priorities of Slovenia's presidency over the EU Council in which Janša singled out the Western Balkans. Apart from that, they discussed the issue of immigration, which according to Janša's words is a problem not only for Malta, Spain and some other Mediterranean countries but a burning issue for the entire European Union. Slovenia will endeavour to increase awareness of the need for solidarity in this field in the next few months, he said.



Andrej Bajuk:

I am convinced that any increase in salaries, which would in real terms exceed productivity, is destructive

The Minister of Finance evaluates unions' demands for higher pay and their threats of strike action: in the spiral of prices and salaries nobody will achieve anything, and he adds that moderation is of key importance. "I hope that social dialogue will be successful and will bear good fruit, in short, that common sense will prevail. Only with rational compromise can things move forward." Due to measures against inflation, the Government has already announced amendments to the budget. The government will thus tighten its purse strings in order to offset the loss of budget revenues after it adopted measures to help the poorest cope with inflation. Most of the savings will be made by the Defence Ministry, which will have to cut investment spending. The government does not intend to offset the loss of revenues by increasing the tax burden, so it will slash spending. Ministers were told at the cabinet session to propose spending cuts in their departments.

MR. BAJUK, HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE DEMANDS OF UNIONS FOR HIGHER PAY, AND THEIR THREATS OF STRIKE ACTION?

For relative stability, as achieved in Slovenia, a key role was played exactly by incomes policy. On the basis of a social agreement, wages were increasing by at least one per cent less than productivity. We all understand that such a formula, although effective, is unsustainable in the long term. Therefore I always stress that we need some sort of 'soft landing', as we cannot compensate overnight for everything that happened in the past. But I am also convinced that any increase in salaries which would in real terms exceed productivity is destructive. In the spiral of prices and salaries, nobody would achieve anything. Moderation is therefore of key importance. I hope that social dialogue will be successful and bear good fruit - in short, that common sense

will prevail. In the past we have shown that such expectations are not empty dreams. I believe that it is possible, but we need understanding on all sides. The government has shown its will by proposing a correction in tax policy for the most vulnerable groups of people. It has increased personal income tax relief, alongside increasing child benefits, which are partly covering the consequences of the inflation of the past six months.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN PRIORITIES OF THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE EU CONCERNING YOUR SPHERE OF WORK?

Among the most important tasks of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council in the coming months will be a review of the implementation of the Lisbon strategy. It involves a review of the achievements of the past years; documentation is being prepared with the help of which ECOFIN will prepare a report, which the presidents of governments will discuss in March. This is very demanding work, as it includes auditing achievements in all Member States. Our opinion in regard to this is that the Lisbon strategy, in its new form, has had a positive influence on the economic development of Europe. The process of reform is being implemented in all countries, but it would be necessary to strengthen them even more. The second matter, related to your question, is the stability of the financial system. That is not something that the EU started to address only recently, when certain concrete problems appeared, the so-called 'turbulence'. Discussions and the shaping of measures have been going on for several years. In an informal ECOFIN, which will be in April, a full debate will take place on how to go forward, how to implement the planned tasks and possible additional measures in a shorter time frame. It mainly involves more efficient collaboration between national monitoring institutions with regard to the cross-border activities of institutions on financial markets. Another important sphere of activity is work on the development of the capital market, especially the question of the insurance industry, as well as the activities of management funds and the role of so-called "rating agencies".

WHAT DID THE GOVERNMENT DO AFTER THE REFERENDUM DECISION ON ZAVAROVALNICA TRIGLAV INSURANCE COMPANY?

The will of the people expressed at referendums has to be respected. This means that the provisions of the Ownership Transformation of Insurance Companies Act are fully valid. Among them is also one which already in 2001 obliged the government to propose a final solution for the 34 per cent share which was intended for private individuals. At the moment we are preparing a new proposal which includes the direct sale of this 34 per cent share directly to private individuals, in the same way as we first did it for private individuals in the case of NKBM bank. Currently, discussions with representatives of various parliamentary political parties are underway. We don't have a final solution yet. But the fact is that modification of the Ownership Transformation Act was not adopted at the last referendum and therefore we have to find a different solution. What the government should have adopted already in 2002, it unfortunately did not solve then.

ANOTHER POPULAR TOPIC IS THE PRIVATISATION OF THE CORPORATE

SECTOR VIA MANAGEMENT BUYOUTS. HOW DO YOU VIEW THE BATTLE OF PRIME MINISTER JANŠA WITH TYCOON-POLITICAL CONNECTIONS?

I completely support him. In that sense we have already formed a proposal to modify the Banking Act, which makes the possibility of such acquisitions by borrowing more difficult. That is absolutely necessary; but I don't object to such acquisitions by managers using their own funds.

THE FISCAL POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA IS, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF SLOVENIA, POSITIVE. COULD YOU PLEASE STATE THE REASONS FOR THE DECREASE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC SPENDING IN GDP.

It is a comprehensive process of the different management of public financial resources that has been going on for several years. Public spending in the broadest meaning of the word, which next to the state budget includes both pension and the health care fund, municipal budgets, all public institutions, as well as the Slovenian Restitution Fund (SOD) and Pension Fund Management (KAD), decreased by more than 3% points of GDP, which is a great achievement. With tax reform we have reduced taxes – their share in GDP is also decreasing. But even faster was





the decrease of expenses as a share of GDP, and that is why we have achieved such a result. By that, the space of private sector is expanding, which is crucial for our development. We have also been reducing the total deficit: in the year 2000 it was still 3.9% of GDP; it rose to 4.1% in 2001 and then in 2002 dropped to 2.5%; in 2003 again rose to 2.8% of GDP, and in 2004 ended at 2.3% of GDP. Already in the first year of our mandate we reduced that deficit to 1.5% of GDP and to 1.2% in 2006. But for the first time in the history of independent Slovenia that deficit will be completely eliminated and we expect to show a small surplus above 0.1% of GDP in 2007. We have every right to be content with all that.

WITH REGARD TO INFLATION, IN PUBLIC YOU EXPLAIN THAT FISCAL POLICY IS NOT A REASON FOR ITS INCREASE IN SLOVENIA. WHERE CAN WE LOOK FOR

THE REAL REASONS FOR INFLATION IN SLOVENIA, AND WHAT MEASURES HAVE YOU IMPLEMENTED TO EASE THE CONSEQUENCES OF INFLATION?

We will continue to apply a restrictive policy, which means that we will try really hard also during this year, when implementing the budget, to improve the situation with regard to planned objectives. I would like to mention that in March last year, the financial ministers of the EU at our meeting in Berlin adopted a decision to pursue improvements in the public financial situation, i.e. a reduction of the deficit in the whole of the EU. We have achieved that, and I am convinced that data by the end of 2008 will also be satisfactory. Of course, there are still many unknown variables about actual economic growth, and how it will develop. But as far as the reasons for inflation are concerned, let me say that they cannot be sought in the financial sector, and also not in some exceptional increase in private consumption. The reason is an external shock in the form of an increase in food prices and the prices of oil and petroleum products. The price of food has increased all around the world, but in Slovenia it is unfortunately growing more than twice as fast as elsewhere in Europe. In my estimate, it involves an obvious lack of competition. As you know, all that is subject of many discussions. But a huge shock was caused by the increase in oil prices, which a few days ago reached 100 dollars a barrel. We should not forget that the influence of oil prices in our country is bigger than in other countries of the Euro group: the average costs of oil are around 4% for them. In Slovenia, the average is above 8%. Every price shock related to oil and petroleum products affects us much more considerably than, for example, the old Member States of the EU.

The sale of NKBM met with positive responses, especially in financial and stock-exchange circles. Have you already adopted a final decision on the process of the second phase of privatisation?

The decision has not yet been made, which cannot happen before 180 days from the sale have passed, anyway. We are still discussing it - it is normal that this time is needed, which will contribute to stabilisation on the stock exchange, but by all means we have to look for a final solution, which will bring ownership stability, and enable that NKBM finally becomes the all-Slovenian bank which will service the population on the basis of real integration with the bank of Gorica and Poštna banka.

Most of the people who bought shares in NKBM are very content, but some are complaining that the price could have been higher. Can you comment on that?

The procedure for a public bid requires rules which are specified in detail in the so-called prospectus. We clearly announced in advance, and also wrote in the prospectus that a careful comprehensive examination would be performed, which includes an evaluation of risks linked to banking transactions. That review was performed by a well-known auditing company, KPMG. The price range was not determined by us, but based on analyses by two independent institutions, known worldwide: Citigroup and Nomura. The great interest in purchasing shares in the bank raised its price in the first days of trading on the stock exchange. I would like to emphasise again that we actually did everything in accordance with the normal standards which are known around the world. Such comments are only typical of those who would like to become generals after the war!

SLOVENIA TO END 2007 WITH BUDGET SURPLUS

For the first time in history, Slovenia ended the year 2007 with a budget surplus. According to the PM, the budget surplus of nearly 30 million euros is the result of economic measures, reduced spending in some ministries, and higher economic growth. Despite the disaster clean-up operation after September's floods and the costs related to preparations for the EU Presidency, Slovenia is concluding the year, for the first time in history, with a positive fiscal balance. The pension fund also concluded the year without losses, while the health fund saw a surplus of several tens of millions of euros. In addition, municipal budgets also had recorded surplus.

The government adopted amendments to the personal income tax act which are designed to reduce the negative effects of high inflation and relieve the tax burden on those in the lowest income brackets.

Under the current personal income act, taxpayers are entitled to a general tax relief which amounted to EUR 2,800 in 2007 and increased to EUR 2,960 in line with consumer price growth.

The amendments introduce two additional tax breaks, a EUR 2,000 tax relief for those whose income is less than 6,800 a year and the other, for people who earn between EUR 6,801 and 9,000, set at EUR 1,000 a year. Taxpayers with income of less than EUR 6,800 will be entitled to a general tax relief in total amount of EUR 4,959.60, while those who earn between EUR 6,800 and 9,000 a year will be entitled to EUR 3,959.60 in general tax relief.

According to the government, the amendments will improve the lot of some 205,000 taxpayers. Those with yearly income of EUR 6,800 are to have a 6.5% higher net wage and receive EUR 320 more a year, while taxable persons with EUR 9,000 a year are to get EUR 160 more (+2.5%).

MANDELSON SEES SLOVENIA AS POTENTIAL TIGER ECONOMY

European Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson suggested in an interview published on 17 December that Slovenia could become one of the EU's tiger economies. The Lisbon Strategy brings encouraging progress, in Slovenia too, Mandelson told daily Delo. According to Mandelson, the EU did not overlook Slovenia's high economic growth, but there is still a lot to be done in terms of innovation, research, development and greater productivity.

New member states undergoing rapid economic growth are important, as they contribute to the economic situation of the whole EU, highlighted the commissioner for the weekly business supplement of daily Delo.

In addition, new member states reduce the costs of production and encourage competition in the EU. They provide the EU with more work than Asia or any other part of the world, Mandelson said.

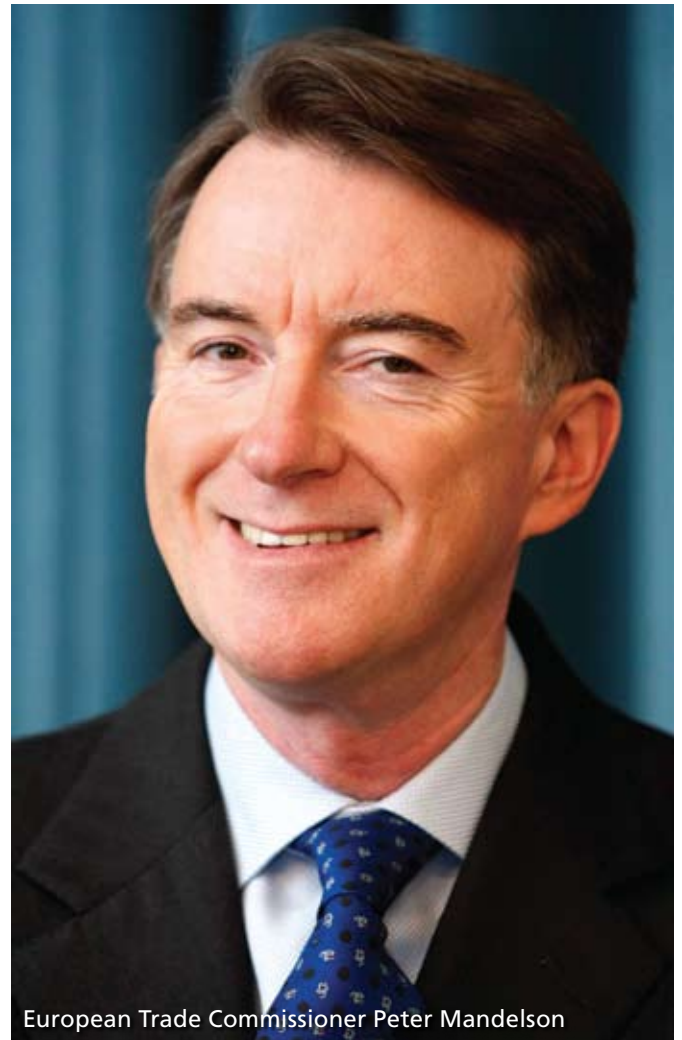
The Economic and Monetary Union is a major advantage, the commissioner pointed out, adding that the single currency prevented inflation and brought lower interest rates. He is convinced that the price hikes in some member states can be regulated by budget policy.

The EU should welcome new members and make sure that its economy remains open. In terms of trade, it should continue to obey the regulations of the WTO and support fair trade, Mandelson said.

An important objective for the EU is to develop its internal market, however, links with the rapidly growing China and partnership with the US are still crucial for fair globalisation and the

common fight against protectionism.

The commissioner also expressed support for Russia's aspirations to join the WTO, as this would contribute to better economic as well as political relations with the country.



European Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson

ISTRABENZ EXPANDS IT DIVISION WITH EUR 20M ACQUISITION

Istrabenz, the Koper-based food-to-energy conglomerate, will expand its IT portfolio with the acquisition of the company Simt, according to a binding agreement that sees the EUR 19.6m deal finalised in April 2006.

Simt will be acquired by Istrabenz's subsidiary Actual IT, while Simt director Boštjan Primc will in exchange get a 22% stake in Actual IT, Istrabenz said in a press release on 18 December.

Istrabenz says the tie-up would create one of the strongest providers of all-round IT services in Slovenia with combined revenues in 2007 of EUR 30m.

Simt specialises in the management of IT systems, e-payment systems, document management and mobile systems for critical applications.

Actual, an SAP and Microsoft partner, meanwhile provides IT solutions for oil, gas, food and logistics industries.

The entry of Simt in the Istrabenz group will facilitate fast growth and help the parent company penetrate new markets in the region, Primc added.

Words: RAMÓN MIKLUS, Photographs: STA

GOVT TO FIGHT INFLATION WITH TIGHTER FISCAL POLICY

The government will tighten its purse strings in order to offset the loss of budget revenues after it adopted measures to help the poorest cope with inflation, Prime Minister Janez Janša announced on 17 January, saying that spending would be slashed at the Defence Ministry.

The government has recently decided to raise the general income tax relief for the poorest, which will cost EUR 30m. The raise in child benefits will cause an additional EUR 30m gap, Janša said. The government does not intend to offset the loss of revenues by increasing the tax burden so it will slash spending.

Ministers were told at the cabinet session to propose spending cuts in their departments. Most of the savings will be made by the Defence Ministry, which will have to cut investment spending. According to Janša, this will further remove Slovenia from the NATO target of earmarking 2% of GDP for defence, which should have been achieved already last year. Janša said it was still unclear how high the figure would be this year.

The spending cuts will be implemented with a supplementary budget. Besides the measures which directly or indirectly influence inflation or decrease its negative effects, Janša mentioned the Employees profit-sharing act which has been sent before the National Assembly after it was brought into line with social partners. Janša expressed his appreciation for the "substantially more efficient work of certain controlling authorities", and in particular of the Competition Protection Office whose work has been "unsatisfactory". "The fact is that certain sectors in Slovenia are not exposed to competition enough, otherwise certain Slovenian food products, such as bread, could not be sold for the half price in neighbouring countries," said Janša, adding that there would have been no such "abnormalities" if competition were present in this sector.



Prime Minister Janez Janša

According to Igor Mervič, Director-General of Spar Slovenia, the reason for inflation, apart from the high price of raw materials, is ascribable to the fact that prices in Slovenia were unchanged for a few months before the introduction of the euro, when we reached the full inflation rate. "If there is no change in prices or decrease in prices, inflation is normal. Prices in the European Union have not been the same; they have increased," he explained.

SLOVENIA HAPPY WITH ACCORD ON WINE REFORM

Slovenia has expressed satisfaction with the agreement on wine reform which EU agriculture ministers hammered out after several days of tough negotiations. "Slovenia has achieved several changes which will have a positive impact on the development of wine making," Agriculture Ministry State Secretary Branka Tome told the press on 19 December.

According to her, Slovenia will receive EU budget funds to the tune of EUR 3.5m for the wine sector in 2009, with the sum rising to EUR 6.1m by 2015. In the original proposal, Slovenia would have received an average of EUR 2.7m per year, Tome explained. What is more, the final compromise determines that the smaller member states (including Slovenia) will be able to decide for themselves what share of these funds they will use for rural development measures and what amount for other purposes.

STABILITY TO DOMINATE EU FINANCE TALKS, BAJUK SAYS

Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk told a press conference in Ljubljana on 7 January that a key topic of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) during Slovenia's spell as EU president would be financial stability in the EU.

Speaking about ECOFIN's priorities during the first half of 2008, Bajuk said that the council associating finance ministers from the EU would focus on dealing with the uncertainties dogging financial markets around the world.

He added that the priorities of Slovenia's presidency in this area included the shaping of economic policies, the development of the internal market with focus on financial services and taxes, and the strengthening of public finances in the bloc.



Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk

IT SERVICES MARKET EXPANDS BY 10% IN 2007

Slovenia's information technology services market has expanded by just over 10% in 2007 to be worth over EUR 290m, a business intelligence company told the press on 30 December. The

Slovenian subsidiary of IDC predicts that Slovenia's IT market will continue to grow at about 10% in each of the next three years. Despite the maturity of Slovenia's market, IT services will continue to be focused on support, IDC analysts predict for Slovenia in their survey for 2007-2011.

According to IDC, support services for software and hardware are to account for around 28% of the total IT services market in Slovenia.

System integration, one of the most profitable sectors in the IT industry, is to account for 23% of the total market, while outsourcing of services will make up for around 12% of the total market despite fast growth in 2006.

Similarly to other countries in central and eastern Europe, the concept of outsourcing of IT infrastructure has still some way to go in catching on among Slovenian companies, general manager of the Slovenian branch of IDC Boštjan Klanjščak says.

According to him, the companies that have fully outsourced their information systems are either large corporations with subsidiaries that offer such services or companies with years of experience with their IT service provider.

The biggest IT services companies in Slovenia remain Hermes Softlab, SRC.SI and S&T Slovenija, according to the survey. IDC expects further consolidation within the industry in the coming years.

Meanwhile, IDC points out the importance of the government sector for IT services orders, as it remains the single-largest segment of the market for IT companies in Slovenia.

ANOTHER YEAR IN THE BLACK FOR ADRIA AIRWAYS

Flag carrier Adria Airways ended 2007 with revenues of almost EUR 182m and a net profit of EUR 420,000. It carried 1,136,431 passengers, which is an increase of 12% over 2006 and 8% above the target, the company said on 8 January.

"The result is an improvement on 2006 and exceeds targets, it is meanwhile in line with the long term plan and strategy of the company," Adria Airways CEO Tadej Tufek said in a press release.

The company's second straight year in the black was also marked

by a 10% increase in the number of regular flights, while the number of charter flights was up by 21% over the previous year. Also contributing to the growth was the aircraft maintenance section, which inspected 94 airplanes of mostly foreign carriers in 2007. According to Adria Airways, the revenues from this address exceeded plans by 17%.

TERME ČATEŽ UPS PROFIT BY ALMOST 15%

Spa manager Terme Čatež estimates it increased revenues by 8% in 2007 over the previous year to just under EUR 29m, while net profit was up almost 15% to EUR 4.3m. According to 7 January's press release, the figures are fully in line with plans.

Terme Čatež plans further growth in 2008, expecting operating revenues to the tune of EUR 31.2m and a net profit of EUR 4.8m.

Terme Čatež posted over 640,000 overnight stays in 2007, up 3.3% than in 2006. The biggest increase was recorded with guest from Croatia, whose number was up 13%, while Italians, Austrians, Croatians and Germans together accounted for more than 73% of overnights stays by guests from abroad.

The company expects overnights stays figures to increase by a further 4.7% in 2008.

Investment plans for 2008 meanwhile include the completion of a new indoor spa complex, a project estimated at EUR 6.4m.

FIRST PURE BIOFUEL STATION IN SLOVENIA OPENED

The first filling station with pure biofuel in Slovenia, worth EUR 1.2m, was opened on 9 January near Novo mesto, in Southern Slovenia, by the company Unes from Koper.

Unleaded fuel and diesel in Slovenia contain up to 50 milligrams of sulphur per kilogram, while the fuel sold at the new station contains only 10 milligrams and produces 3% more energy than diesel, Unes director general Sasa Bastalic told STA.

According to him, Unes will this year open several filling stations with pure biofuel, as the company wants to "cover all transport routes and regional centres in the country".



Words: ANJA LORENZETTI, Photographs: Dreamachine archive



Dreamachine, when the sky is the limit – custom made motorcycles

PEARLS FROM VIČ IN ALL THEIR SPLENDOUR

Slovenia is renowned in the world of motorcycles, not only for the unique Akrapovič exhaust system but also for the beauties from Vič hiding behind the walls of the Dreamachine company workshop. The new story on how a business developed out of enthusiasm for motorcycling was born ten years ago in a workshop near Ljubljana social club Sadjje Zelenjava, where Custom Clinic opened in 2001 and continues today in a garage a little further down Tržaška cesta under the name Dreamachine. On the premises of approximately 250 square metres, unique motorcycles are crafted and can be found adorning not only magazine covers around the world but also garages of numerous well-known personalities. It is the aggressively constructed, dazzling models with a low-slung appearance weighing about 250 kilograms sporting wide cylindrical rear tyres that made Dreamachine group famous in the last few years. Joe Rain, the owner of Bronz Model agency, boasts of his three divine specimens and explains his passion like this, "Passion for motorcycles originates in my passion for life, for creativity, for love of beauty, for need of being different, achieving or realising new goals, providing opportunities and capabilities of the human mind, eventually also for the pleasure and sensation that flashes through you when twisting the accelerator of a 1,800 cc engine. Slovenia is a jewel in the middle of Europe that you Slovenians appreciate far too little or maybe you are not aware of it. These motorcycles are a part of the mosaic acknowledging that in Slovenia broadly oriented people live, who think, create and are able to open new horizons."

DREAMACHINERS WERE PRACTISING ON TOMOS MOPEDS

The story on the origins and development of Custom Clinic or Dreamachine, respectively, is tightly associated with the biography of Tomaž Capuder - Capo, a motorcycling enthusiast who reliably recounts his first project of this type, a 50 cc Tomos motorcycle that he "customised" at the age of 13, being a big motorcycling enthusiast, in the same vein as numerous other bike lovers did. As Capo explains, motorcycles have become a part of his everyday life, and he is aware that he could not live without them; in fact, he actually does not even want to think about the possibility. Motorcycles are his way of living, and everything is associated with them. Similar facts apply to Janez Mihelčič – Penzl, who has stood beside Capo since the beginnings of Dreamachine, and both, together with their co-workers, create the motorcycling success story.



Dreamachine motorcycles are undeniably a creative achievement forming part of the assortment of realised domestic concepts of the upper price range. The first impression is above all aesthetic. These beauties from Vič are not ideal for racing; this vehicle is intended for motion, not from the necessity to arrive faster but for the pleasure of motion itself. Someone who is not really an expert in motorcycles can already tell by the looks of its wide rear tyre that the bike is not suited for racing; still the experts say their attributes are immensely powerful. When you push the accelerator of a 2,100 cc motorcycle with 145 horsepower, presumably, you are catapulted and can reach speeds in excess of 200 km/h. Nevertheless, these bikes still give the sensation of being safer due to the riding position: sitting like on a chopper with feet forward, relatively upright, thus not bent over the tank as usual.

THE VIČ WORKSHOP, WHILE NOT FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF DISCOVERY CHANNEL, IS A UNIQUE BIKE COMMUNITY

Motorcycle models are manufactured for three months on average, some of them even longer. Approximately half of the parts are shop-fabricated. Items such as the wheels or engine are outsourced; serial products are so much cheaper it is not worth manufacturing them in-house. Everything else including the framework is manufactured by Dreamachine or their collaborators. "Slovenia is ideal. There is nothing we could not do here, and the distances are short. Paul Teutul, the well-known manufacturer from the Orange County, USA, who became famous through a series on Discovery Channel, has to travel two hundred kilometres to his collaborators' shops; we have everything around Ljubljana. In addition, we have high quality inputs. Finally, parts are being produced here that are later incorporated at Mercedes, Audi and other world-renowned car manufacturers," explains Capo about the local integration in the bike world and adds that the star, Teutul, whom he met in Daytona would probably roll his eyes on entering the workshop in Vič. The premises of the Vič biker branch is a bike commune in comparison with Teutul's pedantically arranged workshop. Cardboard and polyvinyl from different packaging and various parts that might come in handy some day pile up in front of it, and a place to repair other vehicles such as boats or cars is amicably offered to friends. Judging from the cardboard, pizza is quite regularly on the menu, and a calendar featuring naked "pin-up" beauties is certainly not missing from the walls- representing its association with the local "handymen" tradition.

PRICES OF THE SLOVENIAN CUSTOM BIKES VARY BETWEEN 25 AND 75 THOUSAND EUROS

Interestingly, the machinery with which the Dreamachiners produce their craft is rather reminiscent of a metallurgic workshop and is far from the "high-tech" machines for ironware and steel shaping that we see on Discovery. However, Capo is extremely satisfied with his tools. Considering that all bikes are hand-made unique specimens, the work is precise; materials are top level and expensive. Therefore, to manufacture such works of art, high-quality MTECH brand tools are used and are provided by the Slovenian company Merkur, with whom they have been cooperating excellently for years. Their buyers are usually rich Slovenians and foreigners since the prices of the beautiful bikes

vary between 25 and 75 thousand euros each. Capo says their bikes are intended for successful people who want to stand out, so they manufacture custom-made motorcycles, and the owners' requests are taken into account according to their individual qualities. Dreamachine is certainly one of Slovenia's little pearls that needs to be protected and respected. They set out in a cauldron of strong competition, as manufacturing "custom-made bikes" has become a big hit around the world. In Germany, the USA and the UK this business is extremely developed and popular where many times more motorcycles are produced per year than in Ljubljana, where not more than ten are manufactured per year for the sake of precision and perfection of execution and for several thousand euros less than Western European prices.

DREAMACHINE MODELS REACH FOR THE WORLD'S TOP SPOT

Despite its smallness, Dreamachine boasts numerous globally important prizes for its products. The first excellent trophy was won in 2000 at the Rat Hole Bike Show in Daytona, where over 600 thousand easy riders with various motorcycles from everywhere participate. They received this important prize for the McLaren B1 Bike, the framework and paintings of which were conceived after the McLaren Formula 1 bolide that former world champion Mika Hakkinen used to win races. Although the champion never drove this bike, he autographed it; today it hangs on the walls of the workshop like artwork. The Vič crew gained other important laurels for the most beautiful "radical custom bike" last year at the largest biker show in Europe, European Bike Week near the Faaker See in Austria where nearly 80 thousand bikers gather. Shortly afterwards, they were awarded first prize at the world renowned bike show in German Essen, the prize at the last year's Exponto in Padova, and numerous smaller prizes followed. Such honours certainly stimulate Capo and his team to continue to do right and well for themselves and their souls as well as for the souls of numerous passionate people who admire their products, may it be in their own or in their neighbour's garage.



Words: JOŽE OSTERMAN, Photographs: STA

New Year statistics



Scene from the film *Rooster's Breakfast*

CULTURAL STATISTICS

Statistics in the cultural field for the year 2007 show interesting things. According to the information from the National Statistical Office in reference to reports from **38 theatres or theatre groups**, 229 of all preformed theatre plays were new plays. 4,264 plays in total were performed in the theatres of origin which accounts for 962 performances or 18.4 % less than in the year 2005; 741 performances were by groups on tour. 9.3% fewer spectators than the year before watched the performances, meaning all those performances together were seen by 842,256 spectators. 70,190 spectators visited the concerts of **twenty orchestras and choirs**.

In the field of film, 23 new Slovenian movies have been aired; five of those were full-length movies. In addition to those, 5 short films, ten short documentaries and three short animated features premiered. The movie *Rooster's Breakfast* became a phenomenon by being the most viewed movie in Slovenia. 126,275 viewers saw it last year, overtaking blockbusters *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Mr. Bean's Holiday* that were also seen by more than 100,000 movie-goers last year.

According to Statistical Office information, the number of cinemas is still decreasing. Four cinemas closed last year and the number of cinemas is now 10% less compared to the year 2004. Of the 64 cinemas in the year 2004, only 57 remained last year. The number of cinema halls fell from 111 to 104. However the film distributors provided considerably more audiovisual works for TV programmes compared to the year before. 348 audiovisual works were distributed to TV. Almost 60% of those were older works, and a little less than 40% were new works- overall 41.5% more than in the year 2005.

In the field of exhibitions the statistics show that the number of museums, museum collections, art exhibitions and galleries increased by 17.2%. This network of exhibition facilities prepared 407 permanent exhibitions and 1,477 temporary exhibitions that

were viewed by 2,340,588 visitors. The number of permanent exhibitions decreased by 10.7%, while the number of visitors increased by 2.5%. The number of temporary exhibitions also increased by 9.2%.

Arts Centres organized 7,719 events in the year 2006, 13.5% less than the year before. 3,159 events were organized in self production, 11.8% more than the year before. Approximately 2 million people visited events in Arts Centres, 6.6% more than in the year 2005. 1,440 of those events were educationally informative seminars and workshops with more than 86,000 participants, 86.9% of those being children and youth.

STATISTICS FOR NEWBORNS

In a country with practically the least favourable demographic data in Europe, a small turnabout has taken place for the third year. Following a long dry period, which lasted until the year 2003, the number of newborns has now increased for three consecutive years. Statistics for the year 2006 are now confirmed to be fully accurate



President of the Republic of Slovenia Danilo Türk visited the Maternity Hospital of Ljubljana on 2 January 2008

and indicate that 18,932 babies were born: 9,762 boys and 9,170 girls. Compared to the previous year the number of births increased by 4.3%; 9.4 babies were born per 1000 citizens versus only 9.1 babies per 1000 citizens.

A number of measures have been adopted recently (in this mandate) by the Government in order to increase the number of births. According to Public Opinion Polls, the key factors among young people in the decision to have children are the employment and housing problems. Therefore, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs is focusing its attention primarily on active employment policy, flexibility in the labour market, subsidies for the employment of young people, and subsidies for the employment of replacement workers for those parents who take their parental leave. With the amendments to the Act on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment, measures for the recovery of contributions to employers who hire young and unemployed persons between 26 and 28 years of age have been adopted. Measures for the recovery of social security contributions to employers who hire a replacement worker for the period that a parent is on maternity or parental leave have also been adopted. Young people under the age of 26 are a priority target group for involvement in active employment policy programmes in Slovenia which comprise in-service training and integrated training courses. In this way, promoting an increased number of births will continue to be one of the key priorities of the Government in the future as well.

MATJAŽ KLOPČIČ DIED

In the middle of December one of the most famous Slovenian movie artists, Matjaž Klopčič, died in Ljubljana. He also worked as a screenplay writer, scenographer and movie journalist, and received Slovenia's highest awards for his movies: a Prešeren award for achievements in culture and the highest movie award, the Badjur.

Klopčič, born in 1934 in Ljubljana, was an architect by occupation who perfected his knowledge of movies in Paris, where he even assisted the famous movie director Jean Luc Godard. In addition to a great many short and documentary films, he also made more than 10 full-length movies. Most people will remember him as the director of the most popular Slovenian movie Blossoms in the Autumn. His other visible achievements include movies The Widowhood of Karolina Žašler, an early movie On Wings of Paper, Fear and Heritage that were aired at the Cannes festival and some works for television. Klopčič created characteristic film poetics that brought a new modern movie expression to Slovenian films, distinctive in its high aesthetic form and perfectionism unknown to our films before Klopčič.

CARMINA SLOVENICA IN FRANCE



Conductor Karmina Šilec

One of the best and above all unique Slovenian choirs, Carmina Slovenica from Maribor, went on tour to France for the second time in 2007. After its performance at the festival in Persan in July, they responded to the invitation of the French concert agency and choir organisation A Tre Voci and performed twice in Paris, once in the auditorium of the music conservatory in Colombes and then in the famous Parisian church Madeleine on the next day. An extra performance was given in an abbey in Nantes. They performed with a programme of minimalist music, CS Light and the programme Slovenian Sounds that includes music by Slovenian composers Jakob Jež, Pavle Merku and Uroš Krek.

STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL

In December the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana hosted the 2nd international student festival of student film and video production, Filofest 2007. Among 347 submitted movies, 115 were chosen for the festival and 34 short films, of which 22 were Slovenian, were selected for the festival's competitive review. In the specially featured part of the programme, 13 films from the partnership festival Les Inattendus from Lyon were shown. The international jury was composed of Slovenian film directors Urška Kos and Matjaž Ivanišin and the Lyon festival director Maura Mcguiness.

As part of the festival the exhibition of posters made by Slovenian designers for foreign films was opened. In cooperation with Slovenian national television (RTV), a workshop where three movie directors made a 60-second promotional movie for the festival and some lectures was organised.

SLOVENIA GETS A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

The Slovene Bishops Conference is considering founding a catholic university in Slovenia. The preparations are still in the phase of planning, however the whole conference is supposed to join in on the university's founding. The seat of the institution is supposed to be in Ljubljana, but the faculties are to be in different parts of Slovenia. For now a working team that will prepare the programmes for the humanities, education, social sciences, management and law was assembled. Since in two years time the university is expected to start with at least postgraduate studies; the personnel agreements are in the process of being arranged.

At the conference called Catholic University – the challenges of past and present that took place in Lisbon in November and where many professors, rectors and other representatives of catholic universities from all over the world have participated, the rectors from the catholic universities of Valencia, Lyon and Belfast listened to the presentation of the Slovenian project.

MIRKO BOGATAJ'S BOOK ON CHARINTIA SLOVENES

In Klagenfurt the former leader of the Slovenian programme of Austrian national radio and television (ORF) in Carinthia, Mirko Bogataj, presented his new book on Charintia Slovenes, written in German. The history of Slovenes in this area and their present community organisation, including the cultural and spiritual richness and sports background of this minority in Austria, is presented in the book's 480 pages. In Bogataj's opinion the book is actually the answer to his daughter's 20+ year old question of why he never taught her his language. This question is actually one of the key dilemmas among Slovenes



on the Austrian side of the Karavanke when discovering their roots. Bogataj finds the answer in the statement that Charintia is "the land in the middle that does not belong to anyone but to everybody". Unfortunately, the author's presentation in the Hall of Arms in Klagenfurt's provincial mansion, where the Charintia's Prince's stone was on display since 2006, was rejected. The hall is supposed to be used only for events in "the interest of Charintia". This book serenely describes the coexistence of the two nations in Charintia and interestingly reveals the complicated "reality" that, while diminishing, is still present today.

THE PIXXELPOINT FESTIVAL IN NOVA GORICA

The 8th International New Media Art Festival Pixxelpoint took place in Nova Gorica in the middle of December. The Festival has won recognition during recent years and at the same time also gained an international reputation. The Festival intends to bring information technologies closer to the wider public and at the same time inform younger generations about the various uses of computers. The festival also encourages artistic and theoretical creativity in the field of computer science, as apparently it seems that the use of computers is limited only to empirical, mostly practical-applicative uses, which is far from the truth. This is why the festival significantly strengthens the cross-border cooperation in the inventive field of the new media that in themselves know no borders and act globally. This is why the Pixxelpoint was also held on the other side of the border, at the University in Italian Gorizia which has a department for the new media as well cooperating with the Festival.

The Festival itself was thematically coloured, the basic topic entitled 'Green Desert' was conceived by this year's curators Narvika Bavcon and Aleš Vaupotič, both new media artists. The presented works were exhibited at various locations in the city of Nova Gorica, and the screening of films on the theme of space by the renowned Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky made the programme even more attractive. The films could not be seen in Slovenia at the time they were made due to distribution-related complications. Also attractive was the symposium with known experts from various fields of the new media. The 'Come See the Music' performance by the Spanish group Interactive Sonic Systems Team and the dj/vj duo Chroma Music that took place in the Friuli Culture Auditorium in the Italian part of Gorizia also attracted a lot of attention.

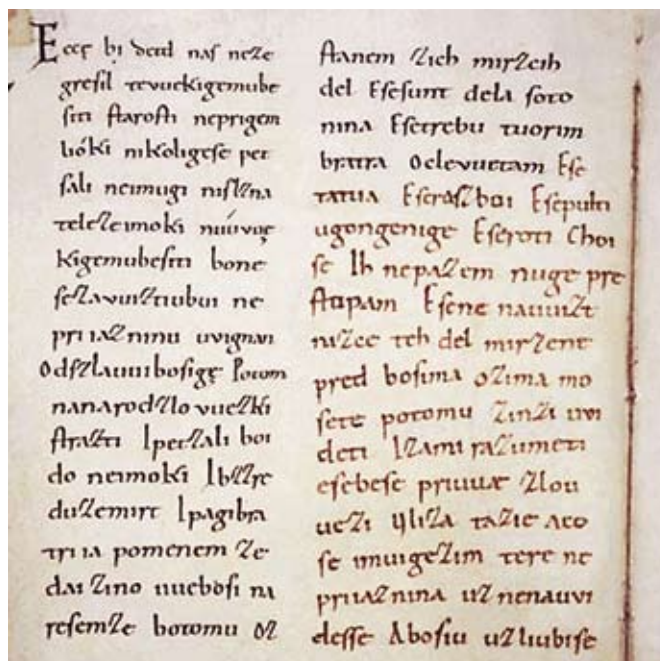
THE OLDEST SLOVENE MANUSCRIPTS INTRODUCED AT LINGUAPAX ASIA SYMPOSIUM IN TOKYO

In October 2007 the oldest Slovene manuscripts, the Brižinski spomeniki, also known as the Freising Manuscripts, were introduced to the participants of the Fourth Linguapax Asia symposium at Tokyo University, Japan. The presentation was made by Prof. Jelisava Dobovšek-Sethna, who has been teaching the Slovene language and culture to Japanese university students for the last ten years, and is a co-founder of Linguapax Asia.

The Freising manuscripts, also considered the oldest Slavonic documents written in the Roman script, consist of three texts in Old Slovene, bound into a church codex from Freising in Bavaria which was once a center of a diocese. In 1803, the codex came to the Bavarian State Library in Munich, where the Slovene texts were discovered in 1806.

The codex consists of 169 pages and contains 70 items in Latin. Of these, nine pages – three complete texts – are written in Old Slovene presumably spoken in the area during the 10th century. The First and the Third manuscripts are translations of unidentified Old High German confession formulas. The Second Manuscript is a sermon on sin and its consequences for mankind. The sermon was probably adapted from an old, 8th century Bavarian sermon, and contains Old Church Slavonic elements as well as Moravian and Pannonian words in the Slovene text. Because of its neat order and rhetorical elements, this manuscript already has the qualities of an artistic, literary text.

The audience at the Linguapax Asia 2007 symposium were able to listen to the recording of the sermon based on the audio script prepared by Prof. Tine Logar. The recording is available on line as part of the Electronic Edition of the Freising Monuments published by the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Sciences at the Scientific Research Center SASA. The edition includes translation of the texts into Latin, German, English, Italian and Polish, which can be accessed at <http://nl.ijs.si/e-zrc/bs/html/bsTR.html>.



Brižinski spomeniki

Words: MIŠA ČERMAK, Photographs: STA



An Artist Has to Work for HAPPINESS

A while ago, Anton Nanut, the world renowned Slovenian conductor, celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday in the Gallus Hall of Cankarjev Dom in the best possible way; at an exceptional concert, top-level musicians honoured the great artist and under his baton, prepared an exceptional musical evening. The conductor holds so many highly prestigious awards that they cannot be counted. Well as at home, the conductor is also known and appreciated by over two hundred famous symphonic orchestras, the world applauded him in the famous Carnegie Hall in New York, he has recorded two hundred and fifty CDs, he was a professor of conducting at the Music Academy and the chief conductor of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra and the RTV Slovenia Symphonic Orchestra. He also founded the Primorska Academy Vinko Vodopivec Choir and the Kogoj's Days.

Conductor Anton Nanut and his wife, painter Milojka Nanut who four years ago graduated from the College for Visual Arts on time and with the highest distinction, have been living in Opatija in Croatia in the last few years. Their house, with a view of the Kvarner Gulf, Rijeka and islands, is one of their homes they like to live in. There, by the sea, which offers great walks for them to keep fit, beautiful motifs for Milojka, who has painted thirty-five portraits of her husband, and upon his anniversary exhibited them in the Riko Debenjak Gallery in his birth place Kanal ob Soči, there, they enjoy their days of retirement, which is really retirement. Conductor Anton Nanut is still a regular and much sought after guest of the world's stages.

LOVE OF MUSIC AND HEART

The story of the famous Slovenian, who was born with such a great gift and life passion, his love for music, actually began early, in his childhood; during the war, he played the organ in the Kanal parish church instead of his father, who was deported to a camp. From that time until his majoring in conducting at the Music Academy in Ljubljana that he concluded in 1958 under Danilo Švara quite a few years passed, but they were marked by music. He went to school in Gorica and Šempeter, the secondary music school in Ljubljana, playing the cello and piano and so on. His wife Milojka as a young girl remembered him when she saw him and heard him playing the piano. Yes, it has been fifty years since they married and it has been even longer since they saw each other at a concert of the Primorska Student Choir which Anton Nanut founded (and was later renamed the Academy Vinko Vodopivec Choir). The time has not erased the memories: "He was good-looking; he had luxuriant hair and when he conducted they stood up in the air; and he had blue eyes." The conductor and his muse, who later became his wife, have been devoted to each other ever since. Not even long journeys and the absence of her husband separated them. For the first time he reaped some international recognition with the Academy Choir at the competition in Arezzo. But although at the time the young graduate of conducting, happily in love, was the artistic director of the Academic's Octet and accompanist and conductor of the Slovenian Philharmonic Choir, he chose a different way; he accepted the position of conductor of the Dubrovnik City Orchestra and director of the secondary music school in Dubrovnik. He stayed there for seventeen years.

ANTON NANUT, WORLD RENOWNED CONDUCTOR

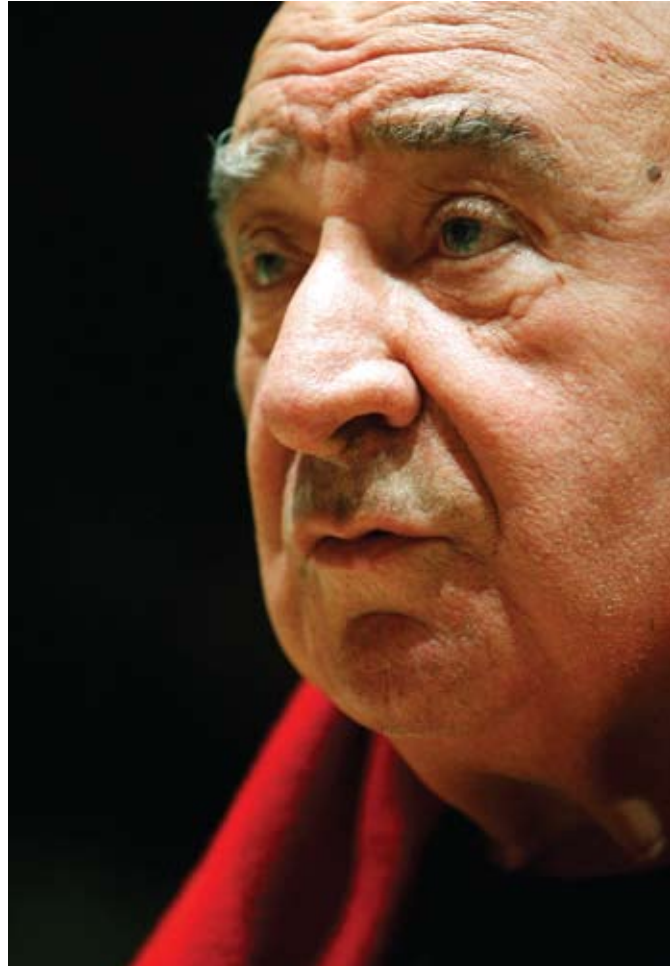
ABUNDANCE OF THE YOUNG AGE

He went there with a young family - with two new members, their sons Milan and Andrej, of course. But the young mother did not follow her husband to Dubrovnik right away, as – believe it or not – there was no suitable flat for the young family. Things settled down, and the life of the family of the conductor who was becoming ever more recognised in the wider Yugoslavian space and in Ljubljana as well, began to open into the world. Due to strange circumstances and also jealousy perhaps, the seventeen-year-long job ended. “In the morning, I had rehearsals with the orchestra, in the afternoon I was the director of the secondary music school, and every other day I had concerts in the evening. Suddenly, overnight, I was fired from the orchestra; actually, just a day before a concert, I saw our worker sticking the name of another conductor on posters on Stradun. I was sacked for ‘offending musicians and swearing at a concert’. That is what they wrote, and I only protested because I did not want to perform a composition the orchestra was too small for. I did conduct it, but had to suffer the consequences; I was fired and did not know what to do. It was hard, as it always is when a person is unfairly treated, but it was also unforgettable. A true, hard and beautiful life – beautiful because we were young,” is how he recalls the period marked by a love for the sea too. “I came back to Slovenia at the invitation of the Music Academy and the resultant work. When I think about it today, I believe I was in Dubrovnik for too long.”

UPRIGHTNESS BEARS FRUIT

The story of Anton Nanut is known from that point. He conducted the Slovenian Octet, founded and was chief conductor of the Slovenian Chamber Orchestra; he became the chief conductor of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra and travelled the world with them. As the chief conductor he drew up the programmes for the concert seasons of the RTV Slovenia Symphonic Orchestra with great inspiration and musical taste for eighteen seasons in a row. As a professor of conducting at the Music Academy he brought on many excellent students. Anton Nanut has travelled the world with music; he has conducted on stages of London, Brussels, Warsaw, Basel, Leningrad, New York, and Vienna. He led the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Dresden State Chapel, all the radio orchestras in Italy, he was a regular guest conductor to the Milan, Krakow and Warsaw philharmonics, and the way to Argentina and Brazil as wide open to him. With reason, because “A conductor is a conductor; it does not work without authority arising from knowledge. The conductor is the leader and if he lacks these abilities, he cannot be a conductor. A person can be an exceptional musician, but cannot become a conductor – of course, it is necessary to be able to stop being high-strung or frightened. However, this is not enough: it always shows in our profession if God has given you talent or not.”

Due to his great talent, knowledge and love of music, Anton Nanut was ‘forced’ into teaching as well. He has taught many great conductors, who could be his successors. He is very proud of his student Marko Letonja, who is already following in the master’s footsteps, and the renowned Nada Matoševi from Rijeka, and still he says that extensive studies are not sufficient to reach the top. “There is an inner force... Sometimes I say to the orchestra, this is not music anymore: nothing materialistic exists, and it is only the spirit that connects human beings.” If a person possesses this creative spirit, says the conductor, the music will be full of spirit.



“But the artist must not make use of it; if he is honourable, he will not only work for his career, but for himself, for his own happiness.”

Podpis: “It is crucial for a conductor to consider the work they perform the most important.”

Awards:

The Prešeren Award for students, the Župančič Award and the Prešeren Fund award, the Gold Lyre Award, the Milka Trnina Award, the France Bevk award, the Bettet Award, together with the Slovenian Octet the Golden Order of the Republic of Slovenia, the Silver Order of the Republic of Slovenia, the Order of Danica Hrvatska, the Gold Medal for Civil Merit of the City of Milan, and the medal of the Czech Ministry of Culture for conducting of Czech music.

Words: BOGI PRETNAR, Photographs: Tomo Jeseničnik



Delicacies of the Kras bora

At first sight, the Kras region is an unwelcoming countryside, but it is full of surprises, in particular of culinary surprises. Be it food or drink, you will find in it certain influences of the Kras bora: in the wines and prosciutto, and particularly in the wind-blown heads of the cooks who have dominated the local cuisine for a decade with their imagination. And although it seems that hardly anything can grow among these rocks and windy plains, it is hard to find so much culinary perfection made out of 'nothing' anywhere else in Slovenia. Let us look around the countryside to see what it has to offer to Kraševci to be put in the pot? Game. Mushrooms and truffles. Fruit from thin woodland, or from home-grown persimmon, apple and pear trees, an occasional carob tree or quince or hazel bush. Vegetables, such as chicory, fennel, turnip, all sorts of kale, and celery (or šelin in the local dialect). Numerous spices, which in the strong sun or in howling winter wind preserve the best ethereal oils. And speaking of oils: olive oil from the Slovenian subspecies belica, and storte, which is the name of the olive tree with slightly curved fruit, is also something.

And now those gifts of nature are united in a prestigious menu: Appetizer: roe deer fillet carpaccio (transparently thin slices of matured raw meat) with Treviso chicory, fennel leaves, olive oil from Slovenian belica, and balsamic apple sauce.

Main course: hare back roasted on duck fat, with coarse salt, caramelised sweet turnip and spring onion.

And for dessert, homemade carob pie in the refreshing company of panna cotta (cooked solidified cream), with fresh raspberries, and feather-light homemade chocolate cream as the finale of the sweet trio.

The kitchen where you will be surprised by such a sophisticated carnival of nature is simply called Okrepčevalnica Ruj. Its chef and owner Peter Patajac was cook of the year at the last year's traditional public culinary contest of the leading Slovenian publisher Delo, beating some serious competition! Peter, who creates his gastronomic masterpieces in the closest cooperation with his wife Vildana, was educated in Izola, which has by far one of the best culinary schools, and then gained experience in various kitchens throughout Italy and in London. Peter also excelled as a member of a youth culinary national team, which won bronze at a world championship, and he still likes to participate in competitions and accepts culinary challenges every now and then. Peter's culinary credo is simple at first sight, and it conveys the essence of delicious gastronomy (delicious, not only beautiful): "All the ingredients we prepare in our kitchen are as

Roast hare back with caramelised turnip



GOODSLOVENIANINNS

Roe deer fillet carpaccio and balsamic juice of home-grown apples



homemade as possible – you have to make your best effort even when preparing meat bought in a shop if you want to achieve the taste guests expect. Order and discipline and the right balance between simple and complex lead to satisfaction, both in the kitchen and at the table.”

And where you can find this unusual gourmet paradise called Ruj, named after a typical karst shrub which glows in autumn with the most passionate shades of red and orange? You really have to take your time to find it: the village is called Dol pri Vogljah and is at the very (now former) border with Italy, almost under a church which looks out from the hill over Repntabor. The easiest way, as Slovenian gourmets know well, is to go to Ruj by taking the motorway to Sežana, go along the main road through that main town of the Kras region and turn sharp right at the traffic lights opposite the gas station turn; and then along a winding road for about seven kilometres. Okrepčevalnica Ruj (Peter stubbornly insists on that simple name for his culinary shrine) is in the centre of the village on the right side of the road, almost on the corner, so you have to be careful no to miss it. There is a car park on the right side of the house, while there is also a green terrace which is open during the summer months.

Right now you can enjoy the food only inside, in comfortable warmth where, various spices and earth fruits are twisting and swinging in bottles of homemade spirits above the bar, chasing away illnesses and opening appetites. Peter has two right hands - his wife and his mother - and his sister also steps up occasionally. His mother is the main 'side factor', as she is a great expert at finding ways to make fantastic marmalades from any fruit available, and also helps make natural aperitifs. So do not be surprised if you are served, for example, duck pate with apple marmalade, or find sour cherries in your štruklji, peaches, or a quince served with game, or raspberries in your cream. Persimmon sauce accompanies štruklji – one of the most famous Slovenian floury dishes, differently prepared in each region – which in Ruj are filled not only with walnuts, but also with wild strawberries. Unfortunately, the season of persimmon, that little sun of the Karst, which clings to bare branches even in the harshest winters and promises better times, is now almost over. Ruj uses it to invent numerous fascinating dishes. The chestnut season is also over, and if you like to eat frozen and thawed chestnuts, you can surrender yourselves to the pleasure of their combination with pork loin. And because it is hard to imagine the Kras without polenta, order Peter's version of that cornmeal: polenta mixed with various vegetables, while the rich taste is provided by stockfish or other fish with a strong tomato sauce, or maybe calamari and

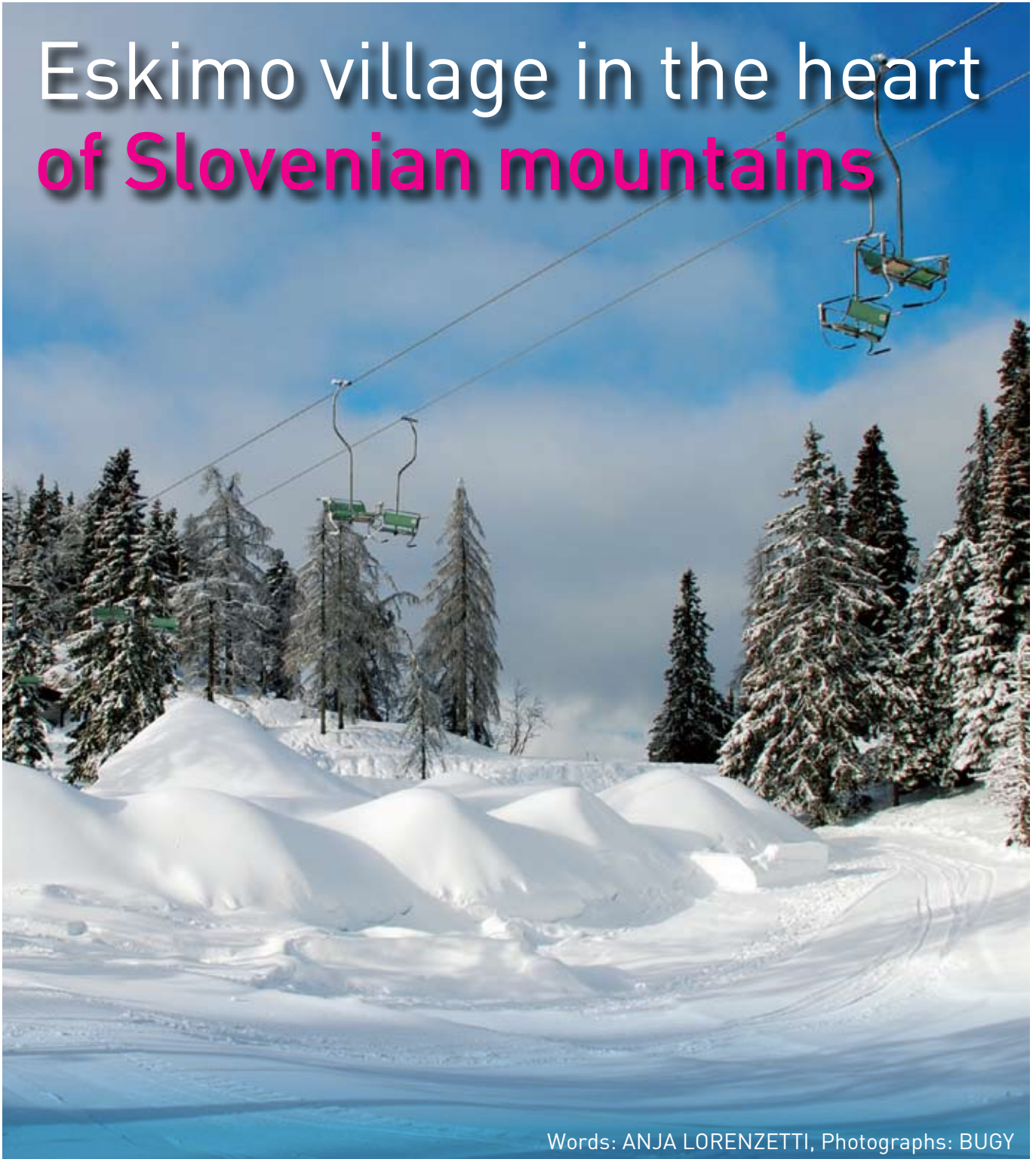
shrimps with dried tomatoes. Peter otherwise does not rely much on fish, as it is served today in every Slovenian village, even far to the north, where the wind from the sea never reaches. Peter prefers to explore the combinations of local produce, usually in the company of mushrooms, homemade gnocchi, a hare or venison. Peter serves venison medallions with boiled beets, and adds millet dumplings or hard-boiled buckwheat polenta, which Vildana dices and bakes on the open fire.

Vildana was born in Bosnia, where her diligent hands come from. They are so skilful, in particular when she makes pie dough. A masterpiece! The dough is so thin that you can see the tablecloth under it, but it still does not rip apart. She admits with a smile that girls back home often competed in making the thinnest dough possible, and that she won most times. She later adjusted her style to Peter's conducting baton, but she has also managed to sail on the seas of gastronomic imagination on her own by learning the basics of such demanding cuisine. She has 'remodelled' both burek and baklava to suit the Karst cuisine. She and Peter are also able to completely fascinate their guests with a light dessert or fruit foam served in large ice cubes. And still there is nothing icy in Ruj! The warm atmosphere spreading through the three boutique-sized rooms also attracts groups of older Italian women, who are quick to surrender themselves to Peter's care. And he always remembers what each of them ate during her last visit!



Sweet trio with carob pie

Eskimo village in the heart of Slovenian mountains



Words: ANJA LORENZETTI, Photographs: BUGY

At the end of the month of December, on snow-covered ski resort Krvavec, lying only 30 minutes away from Ljubljana, below the bottom stop of the ski lift Zvoh, a true and the first Slovenian Eskimo village came into being. Krvavec, a well-known and well-visited Slovenian ski resort, has expanded its already excellent offering of skiing delights with a diverse and colourful presentation of 'Eskimo' packages, which, in contrast to our games and sport on snow, require that for a day or more we completely surrender to the life of Eskimos and spend the night in the embrace of snow houses.

KOREN SPORTS OFFERS YOU A CONCEPTUALLY INNOVATIVE, UNFORGETTABLE WINTER EXPERIENCE

The company Koren Sports from Podljubelj which has been inspiring people from everywhere with its diverse programme of sports challenges, motivational workshops, adrenaline park and other entertaining programmes of relaxation through active sport, has invested around seventy thousand Euro to realise

NATURALANDCULTURALTRAILS



the project of an Eskimo village. Matija Koren, the manager of Koren Sports, first saw an Eskimo village in Switzerland, and the idea inspired him so much that he decided to bring it here. For the most suitable ski resort in terms of infrastructure and its height above sea level, he selected Krvavec, which is also quickly accessible from all major Slovenian and border towns. Despite the fact that there are four Eskimo villages in Switzerland, in the radius of 600 kilometres from Krvavec there are none, which is a significant advantage in favour of this beautiful ski resort. The first in Europe to start building ice hotels were Scandinavians, but in Central Europe temperatures unfortunately don't allow construction with blocks of ice, so the Swiss thought of using snow instead.



BRICK UPON BRICK – A PALACE

Considering their experience with building igloos, the Swiss friends have also shared advice in building igloos on Krvavec. Creating the entire Eskimo village took only two weeks, and they used as much as 3,500 cubic metres of artificial snow. For building igloos, they first inflate a special mould (orange balloon) with air, and by using a "blower" they cover it with snow; on Krvavec at this time they used artificial snow. When the snow becomes solid enough, the mould is emptied by letting the air out of the balloon, and a big dome-like space is left in the snow. The snow clings and solidifies in such a way that the construction of the igloos is completely self-supporting and as solid as that of concrete, so it is not possible that they would collapse. With daily maintenance, the igloos on Krvavec should endure through the end of the ski season around the end of March. The walls of the igloos are approximately forty centimetres thick and regardless of outside temperature they ensure around 5 degrees Celsius inside the igloos. Matija assures that despite the sun and with proper maintenance the igloo cannot

collapse. In the Krvavec Eskimo Village seven igloos of various sizes were built that can accommodate as many as 34 overnight guests at a time. Five igloos, each four metres high, can house four to six people, while the other two are meant for a more intimate ice romance for two. Adjacent to these sleeping igloos are the snow village's igloo restaurant, igloo bar and igloo sauna, the building which required the most time and inventiveness. The sauna was brought up from the valley in a shipping container buried beneath snow, and a new sauna igloo appeared for those who are more sensitive to the cold.

A DAY AMONG THE ESKIMOS

Although an Eskimo village has to be built every year anew, this method of building has so far proved to be excellent, as the Eskimo village has been visited by several thousand people, and at least



one hundred curious people spent a night in it. The experience in the snowbound, wild nature elicits a range of different ideas. You can decide to spend a day the Eskimo way, and among friends surrender to the good Eskimo food. The igloo restaurant hosts up to 40 people where you will be treated to a special Eskimo menu featuring a cheese fondue, traditionally served in the snowbound areas of Northern Europe. For those who want to experience something more after a full day of adrenaline, the igloo bar offers music in tune with an exclusive Eskimo drink. But the greatest experience is definitely sleeping in the igloos. The beds are crafted from a special snow block, first covered in a layer of insulation material and then with sheep skins, on which special expedition sleeping bags ideal for cold temperatures as low as minus 30 degrees Celsius are waiting for you. When the daily bustle moves from the ski slopes of Krvavec to the valley, and the first stars modestly appear in the sky, and complete silence reigns the countryside, the romance of the snow houses seduces you to enter them. Spending a night in an igloo is beyond comparison



White gold of the Sečovlje salt-pans

Words: ANJA LORENZETTI, Photographs: Archive of the Sečovlje Salina Nature Park

AT THE SEČOVLJE SALT-PANS, SALT PRODUCTION IN THE TRADITIONAL MANNER HAS BEEN PRESERVED

The traditional production of salt in the Mediterranean is practiced only in Slovenia, to be more exact in the Sečovlje salt-pans. Salt produced in the traditional manner has a unique, very natural taste with which industrially produced salt simply cannot compete. The salt makers produce salt for the Piranske soline trademark in accordance with the traditional procedures and tools which have remained unchanged for more than 700 years - the first records date back to the year 804. Active salt-making takes place in the northern part of the Sečovlje Salina Nature Park called Lera while the southern part of the Park called Fontanigge represents a rich treasure of flora and fauna. Sea salt is produced with the help of special salt-fields adorning the Sečovlje Salina Nature Park and covering 650 hectares of the area. Seawater is allowed to flow into a system of shallow basins which are differentiated into evaporation and crystallisation basins on the basis of their functions. Seawater in the evaporation basins vaporizes and thickens. It is then led by pumps from the evaporation basins to crystallisation basins where the salt is finally harvested. Besides seawater and sun, wind is another key factor in the salt's production. The Bora wind is god's gift to the salt makers since a favourable Bora doubles the evaporation. In accordance with the centuries-old tradition, the main working season on the salt fields begins on 24 April, the holiday of St. Jurij, the Piran patron saint, and ends sometime around September, depending on the weather.

SEČOVLJE SALT-PANS ARE REALLY SOMETHING UNIQUE

A special characteristic of salt-making in these salt-pans is petola. This is a few millimetre thick layer of biosediment which forms the bottom of a crystallising salt basin or a salt field. Biosediment contains minerals and microorganisms which prevent seawater and later on salt from merging with impurities such as sand and sea mud. That is the reason why Sečovlje salt is pure and white and therefore more appreciated and more expensive. Petola requires extra care and active cultivation since it needs 15 years

to restore itself and start performing its function. Petola was brought to Sečovlje by the salt makers from the Croatian island Pag. Today the Sečovlje salt-pans are the only place in the world where salt is still produced on petola.

SALT FLOWER ENRICHES THE MOST SOPHISTICATED GOURMET DELICACIES

The uniqueness of the Sečovlje salt-pans is their most precious product, salt flower, which the salt makers like to call "the cream of the salt-pans". Its soft pink colour is unique in the world of salt. In cuisine it is added to dishes in order to achieve an exquisite taste. Salt flower crystals are formed on the surface of brine only when the weather is calm because the formation of this fragile pyramid crystal can be disturbed even by the smallest wave. The thin layer of crystals has to be gathered from the surface of the salt basins with extreme caution and within a very short period of time, otherwise it is lost in a few hours. These small and fragile crystals of white to pink colour have a distinct aroma and a rich taste which persuade every gourmet with its unobtrusive saltiness. Judging by the taste, one could say that this type of salt is not salty enough or that it seems less salty, which is actually its charm. Salt flower is even used in the production of chocolate for which the Piran salt-pans are unique and renowned. The secret of the taste of salt flower is a drop of seawater trapped inside bigger grains. This secret was well known in the Venetian Republic since towns in the eastern part of the Primorska region had to sign an agreement with them on the compulsory sale of salt. The excellence of salt flower is also seen in the use of the product in the most prestigious German and Italian delicatessen. Salt flower can compete with salt produced by the greatest salt makers from the French and Mediterranean coasts as well as with Portuguese salt, which is generally regarded as the best for the needs of exquisite cuisine. Not only housewives and gourmets from Europe love Sečovlje salt; it has become popular in Japan and North and South America as well. One of the most renowned chefs today, Mr. Alain Ducasse, uses salt flower in his restaurant in New York for the preparation of his culinary masterpieces. Slovenia, too, has its own cooking team which won second place at the world championship in Basel in 2005 with the presentation of selected dishes incorporating salt and salt flower.



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**