



# Sinfo

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BUSINESS • CULTURE • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • SPORTS

**21<sup>st</sup> Winter Olympics  
in Vancouver**

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Veronika Stabej  
Director

“ WE CAN ACHIEVE AND FULFILL OUR GOALS ONLY IF WE KNOW WHAT WE WANT AND WHERE WE ARE GOING ... ”

## WINNING PHILOSOPHY

**S**LOVENIANS LIKE TO EXPERIENCE LIFE AS A sporting nation. The whole world knows us as enthusiastic, outstanding and committed, both in recreational and top-class sports. It almost always happens that at the Olympic Games or European and world championships we are among the major winners in terms of number of medals per inhabitant.

That's why we are already counting the days...

You've guessed it. We are counting the days to the upcoming Winter Olympics in Vancouver, something that features in this issue's In Focus. The success to date – and especially the recent results – of Slovenia's competitors has awakened in all of us not just the desire to participate, but also the desire to win. There were times when we were somehow overly bashful about expressing such desires. We should not fear any challenges or obstacles. Our sports men and women are capable of showing this very clearly on the snow-white fields, slopes, jumps and many places besides. Ultimately it is they who are among the main promoters of the country they represent.

So if you find yourself in Vancouver, don't whatever you do forget to visit Slovenia House in the centre of Whistler Village at the Westin Hotel, where there will be an exhibition of Slovenian specialities and natural beauties, and of course there will be no shortage of Slovenian culinary treats and outstanding wines, and plenty of opportunity to chat with fascinating guests.

Neither is there any lack of winning philosophy in tackling the economic and financial crisis. The Slovenian economy is largely export-oriented, so in breaking into foreign markets the assistance of economic diplomacy will be especially welcome, and in this issue we write about this key strategic orientation of our country. It will be exceptionally important for Slovenia to expand to new markets, and we simply need to pursue this properly.

We realise that we can achieve and fulfil our goals only if we know what we want and where we are going. So let us not be eternally satisfied simply with the average. Let us hope and dare for more.



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Cover photo: Darinka Mladenović

### Sinfo - Slovenian information

**Editorial** Government Communication Office  
Gregorčičeva 25, 1000 Ljubljana  
**Director** Veronika Stabej  
Tel. +386 1 478 2630, Fax +386 1 251 2312, [www.ukom.gov.si](http://www.ukom.gov.si)  
**Editor-in-Chief** Vesna Žarkovič, [vesna.zarkovic@gov.si](mailto:vesna.zarkovic@gov.si)  
**Editorial Board** Albert Kos, Mateja Malnar Štembal, Valerija Mencej, Jože Osterman, Polona Prešeren, Andreja Šonc Simčič, Andrej Savelli, Branko Vidrih  
**Photo Editor** Veronica Ditrih  
**Production** Videotop Color Media d.o.o.  
**Graphic design** Boštjan Krajnc **Printed by** Mobinet

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**Government Communication Office** [www.ukom.gov.si](http://www.ukom.gov.si)  
**Government of the Republic of Slovenia** [www.vlada.si](http://www.vlada.si)  
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**State Portal of the Republic of Slovenia** [e-uprava.gov.si](http://e-uprava.gov.si)



Slovenian and Croatian Prime Ministers, Borut Pahor and Jadranka Kosor, meeting for talks in Kranjska Gora.

## OPEN QUESTIONS INCREASINGLY RESOLVED WITH CROATIA

Mateja Malnar Štembal  
Photo  
STA, Bobo

**‘The prime ministers agreed amongst other things on the forming of a mixed commission on the government level to review open questions between the two countries and to propose solutions.’**

**I**N THE MIDDLE OF JANUARY, SLOVENIAN Prime Minister Borut Pahor met once again with his Croatian counterpart Jadranka Kosor in Kranjska Gora for a working and friendly meeting. The meeting represented a continuation of the determination of both governments, following the settlement of the major issue of the border, to devote themselves to resolving other open questions between the two countries, and through bilateral meetings the two governments are seeking to enhance friendship on all fronts. The two prime ministers are therefore determined to resolve all open questions to their mutual benefit, and in this way to open a new chapter as neighbours, that is, as two neighbouring EU Member States.

The prime ministers agreed amongst other things on the forming of a mixed commission on the government level to review open questions between the two countries and to propose solutions. The two governments will also try to resolve by the next Croatian accession conference those issues causing Slovenia to have reservations regarding three Croatian negotiating chapters. Owing to Croatia’s non-

fulfilment of obligations as the co-owner of the Krško Nuclear Power Plant and owing to fisheries issues, Slovenia has reservations regarding the chapters on the environment, fisheries and foreign, security and defence policy.

The prime ministers agreed to form a mixed committee for the economy, which is especially important for enhancing economic cooperation during the period of the global economic crisis.

The two countries will also pursue a joint initiative for holding a conference on the prospects and importance of the Western Balkans for peace and security in Europe, and on their membership of the EU. The conference will turn a new page in cooperation between the two countries, as well as with the countries of South East Europe, and will reiterate that the conclusion of the arbitration agreement was a “message of hope” not just for Croatia, which wants to join the EU, but also for the whole of SE Europe. The conference will invite representatives of the EU Council and European Commission, as well as representatives of governments and states of the Western Balkans that wish to join the EU.

Croatian President Stipe Mesić Paying Farewell Visit to Slovenia.



His host, Slovenian President Dr. Danilo Türk, gave his view that relations between Slovenia and Croatia are an extremely important part of Slovenia's foreign policy and our future. The Slovenian President reiterated that Slovenia supports Croatia on its path to the European Union, and the European future is what we must devote ourselves to most in future, while in doing so we should jointly consider various steps that will help in resolving all the issues in the region of South East Europe.

Croatian President Stipe Mesić assessed the meeting as very good, open and beneficial for both sides, while it has also been shown lately that you can always talk openly with friends, no matter how different your opinions are.

During his visit, Mesić also met with the first Slovenian President, Milan Kučan, with the President of the National Assembly, Pavel Gantar, and Prime Minister Borut Pahor.

## Farewell visit by Croatian President Mesić

Confirmation of the good relations between the two countries also came to the fore during the farewell visit by Croatian President Stipe Mesić to Slovenia.

Slovenia was the last country in the region to be visited by him before his second five-year term ends, and in his opinion this was supposedly more than symbolic.

## Strengthening economic relations with Kuwait and Qatar

A great deal of optimism regarding the further strengthening of economic ties was expressed during the multi-day official visit by Slovenian President Dr. Danilo Türk to Qatar and Kuwait. The selection of the two countries was made quite deliberately, since they are both small countries but with exceptional potential for a wide range of cooperation.

Following talks between Slovenian President Dr. Danilo Türk and his official delegation and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and other high representatives of the Gulf country, Slovenia and Qatar signed an economic cooperation agreement and an agreement on avoiding double taxation and preventing income tax evasion.

The Qataris showed an excellent understanding of the conditions in Slovenia and its geostrategic position as a possible entry point into the EU, while for Slovenia this is currently a time of opportunity, as Qatar is considering new



partners in Europe, while in Slovenia we are at the same time seeking new partners outside the EU and beyond the traditional foreign trade partners.

In Kuwait, President Danilo Türk was received by the Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The two countries are linked by long years of friendship, and in the words of the Slovenian president they are just about to renew and intensify as much as possible these good relations. On the conclusion of the visit, Slovenia and Kuwait signed an agreement on economic cooperation and on avoiding double taxation and preventing tax evasion.

Business conferences were held in both Qatar and Kuwait, at which business people forged new ties.

## National investigation office established

The beginning of 2010 saw the start-up of the National Investigation Office, whose job is to investigate the most serious crimes. Upon the adoption of the revised Police Act the office will be entirely autonomous, and will employ 70 to 80 experts from various fields. The office will investigate the most challenging, extensive and complex cases, which will demand specialised knowledge and skills.

# TEAM SLOVENIA TO BOOST SLOVENIAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS

At the beginning of the month, economic advisers from Slovenian diplomatic and consular missions, and the heads of Slovenian business representations, gathered at Brdo pri Kranju and Ljubljana for a consultation aimed at steering the operations of economic advisers this year and raising the effectiveness of their work, and consequently of Slovenia's economic diplomacy as a whole.

Vesna Žarkovič Photo STA, Videotop Archive

**P**ARTICIPANTS OF THE CONSULTATION, to which representatives of Slovenian companies were also invited, and which was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, were addressed by Foreign Minister Samuel Žbogar, Development Minister Mitja Gaspari, the Director-General of the Chamber Samo Hribar Milič, the Director-General of the Energy Directorate at the Ministry of the Economy, Janez Kopač and State Secretary at the Ministry of the Economy Darja Radič. Appearing in his new position at the consultation was Vladimir Gasparič, who on 24 December was appointed director-general of the newly established Directorate for Economic Diplomacy and Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This year's consultation was especially important, since the establishing of the Directorate for Economic Diplomacy and Development Cooperation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 1 October served to set up a new system of managing economic diplomacy, and for the first time since 2005 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs got back full competence for this area.

This in turn should ensure a uniform and more effective system of support for the Slovenian economy for its presence in foreign markets, and should enhance the recognisability of the Slovenian market abroad, something designed to attract new foreign investment. This latest consultation enabled direct contact between economic advisers and representatives of Slovenian companies, who could in this way directly exchange opinions and experiences.





Minister of Foreign Affairs

## Samuel Žbogar

**'I am pleased that this year's economic advisers consultation has been organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.'**

“ AS WE CONCLUDE THE SUCCESSFUL integration into Euro-Atlantic integrations and membership of all the major international organisations, Slovenian diplomacy is entering a new period. If we have been concerned thus far with promoting our country abroad and establishing primarily the legal basis for our companies to get a foothold abroad, we must henceforth secure business by actively helping specific companies and by seeking concrete business opportunities for the Slovenian economy and Slovenian development. To date the operations of companies abroad have also been influenced greatly by the numerous commercial delegations that have accompanied the highest representatives of Slovenia abroad. I am pleased that this year's economic adviser consultation has been organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, now that the Government has transferred competence for economic diplomacy from the Ministry of the Economy to the Foreign Ministry. The Government opted for this primarily in order to increase our effectiveness in this area. In line with the planned reorganisation, at the Foreign Ministry we designed a new model of economic diplomacy, which envisages

a strengthened network of economic advisers at diplomatic and consular representative offices.

In the future we are planning to strengthen cooperation with foreign international institutions and organisations, and also with Slovenian companies abroad, while at the same time we are seeking to reinforce the position of diplomatic and consular offices as basic cells of the Slovenian economy. Something extremely important will be expansion to new markets, where particular attention will be paid to the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China), as well as to the countries of North Africa and Latin America.

Meanwhile Žbogar is certain that the new Directorate for Economic Diplomacy and Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Vladimir Gasparič, will be the contact point for diplomatic and consular offices and Slovenian companies. At the same time he explained that collaboration between the heads of representations and economic advisers is vital, and one of the main priorities for the future will be establishing a system of measuring the effectiveness of the network of advisers and heads of representative offices. ”



Minister for Development and European Affairs

## Mitja Gaspari

“SLOVENIA'S EXIT STRATEGY, WHICH is now being formulated, will focus on consolidating public finances, drawing on European funds, implementing the concept of secure flexibility and steering financial policy towards development, while we will also face the issue of rehabilitating bad investments at banks,

and it will be essential to reform the pension and healthcare system.

Mr Gaspari's presentation received an exceptionally positive response, as economic advisers, informed of the package of specific measures being prepared by the government, were in attendance.

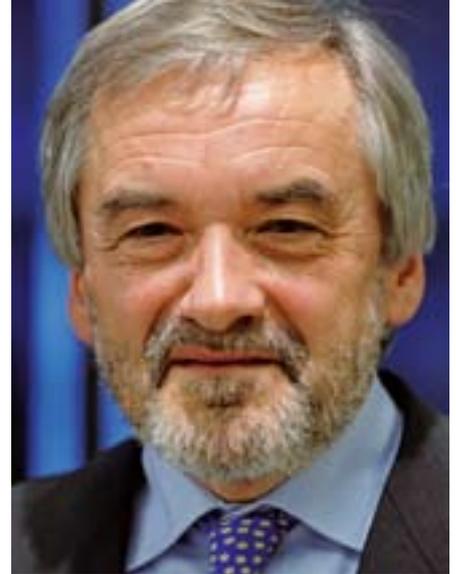
At the Chamber of Commerce premises in Ljubljana there was a presentation of Slovenian exports and key markets for the Slovenian economy in 2009, individual export sectors and a successful Slovenian company and foreign investor. The presentation enjoyed the participation of representatives from the Centre for Competitiveness at the Chamber, associations for the IT and telecommunications sector, the wood and furniture industry and for engineering, the car manufacturing cluster ACS and the companies Špica International and Bisol.” >>

“ THE TWO-DAY CONSULTATION between economic advisers from diplomatic and consular representative offices and heads of the representations of the Slovenian economy, aimed at finding an exit from the crisis, was a success. The consultation, where experiences were exchanged between economic advisers and companies, was attended by around 130 companies. The main benefit of the consultation is that they got to hear what the business sector expects from them. The diplomatic corps must help the economy. Concern for the economy will become the absolute priority for increasing exports, and the performance of individual diplomatic missions will be measured based on what they have done to promote exports and to lure foreign investment. This is the main measure of success. The business sector expects economic advisers to be proactive initiative-takers. The make-up of an economic adviser is such that he uses his own ‘tools’ to determine what small and medium-sized enterprises expect and where they have opportunities in the market, and he steers and helps them in this. The consultation also yielded clear and concrete ideas from the business sector. In Slovenia there are more than 8,500 exporters, and 90 percent of them are medium, small and

very small companies, contributing 37 percent to Slovenia’s exports. We will be devoting exceptional attention to these companies. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs now has all the tools for very tangible cooperation, and we will respond immediately by sending out additional orientations and tasks to the entire network of diplomatic and consular representative offices, and where there are none, to the embassies, that cover the area on a non-residential basis.

And what is the main job of the directorate? Managing, coordinating and harmonising all the activities of economic diplomacy. In this way the Foreign Ministry will in future be much more market-oriented, offering their products, in other words providing a service to small, medium and large companies. I should point out that large companies require a different kind of service from small and medium-sized enterprises.

Currently the network has 20 economic advisers and seven representative offices, which we took over from the Public Agency for Enterprise and Foreign Investment (JAPTI). Given that we are seeking to help the economy, we will expand this network in the future. So this year we are already planning to increase the number of advisers to between 30 and 35. ”



Director - General of the Directorate for Economic Diplomacy and Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## Vladimir Gasparič

**‘Concern for the economy will become the absolute priority for increasing exports, and the performance of individual diplomatic missions will be measured based on what they have done to promote exports and to lure foreign investment.’**

State Secretary at the Ministry of the Economy

## Darja Radič

FROM THE MINISTRY OF THE ECONOMY led a roundtable discussion on the topics of internationalisation and foreign direct investments. She presented preparatory work on the document, Government Programme for the Promotion of Corporate Internationalisation for the period 2010-2014. Emphasis is on the drafting of a document that will facilitate the coordinated implementation of the programme, which will include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Economy, the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Entrepreneurship and Foreign

Investments, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia and SID bank.

Director-General of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce

## Samo Hribar Milič

“SLOVENIA IS A HIGHLY EXPORT-oriented country, but many opportunities are still not being exploited. In the cooperation between economic diplomacy, the Chamber and other institutions I see an opportunity for even small and micro companies as well as the service sector to become more export-oriented.”



# 21<sup>ST</sup> WINTER OLYMPICS IN VANCOUVER

The 21st Olympic Games in the Canadian city of Vancouver will be the biggest winter sports event of the year. For 16 days, sports men and women from 97 countries will compete for a total of 86 sets of medals in 15 disciplines on the Pacific coast right in the southwest of the second biggest country in the world. The Olympics in Vancouver will once again be games of superlatives, with an anticipated participation of 5500 competitors and accompanying persons.

Andrej Stare, Vesna Žarkovič, Polona Prešeren  
Photo © VANOC/COVAN, [www.vancouver2010.com](http://www.vancouver2010.com), STA



**I**N THE LIFE OF ANY SPORTS PERSON, THE Olympics are the pinnacle of their career. Few are the people who are given the responsibility and honour of representing Slovenia at the greatest sporting event in the world, but the Slovenian team has never before had so many outstanding sports men and women at the winter Olympics as this year. Slovenian sports enthusiasts and sports persons themselves will do everything they can in Canada to win new distinctions and perhaps even stand up on the highest step of the Olympic podium.

The Vancouver Olympics will run from 12 to 28 February. The Paralympic Games will be held shortly after from 12 to 21 March.

The Olympic Games are always a special challenge, since the competition areas are laid out in different places, necessitating adequate infrastructure including road links, Olympic villages for competitors and plentiful hotel capacities for the press and others following the games.

The competitions in cross-country skiing, biathlon, Nordic combination, jumping, Alpine skiing, acrobatic skiing and boarding will take place in the area of Whistler, about 130 kilometres north of Vancouver. Vancouver, meanwhile, will host the competitions in ice hockey, figure skating, curling, speed skating and short track. The bobsleigh, luge and skeleton competitions will take place at the Olympic Spiral at Fitzsimmons Creek. Vancouver and its organising committee have had less than six and a half years to prepare for the games, which will benefit from outstanding organisation using the latest technology.

The organisers expect attendance from more than a million foreign tourists, who will pack the spaces around the competition areas.

Slovenia will be appearing in Canada for the first time as an independent member of the International Olympic Committee at the Olympic Games. In 1976 in Montreal (the summer games) and 1988 in Calgary, Slovenian competitors took part as part of the former Yugoslav team. In fact those games in Calgary produced some exceptional successes for Slovenian competitors. Mateja Svet in the slalom and the jumping team (Zupan, Tepeš, Ulaga, Debelak) won silver, while Matjaž Debelak added a bronze to this on the large hill. Slovenian competitors have never yet stood on the highest step of the podium at the Olympic Games, and Vancouver is another great opportunity to make history. To date Slovenian

**‘The aces in Slovenia’s pack are Petra Majdič in cross-country skiing and Tina Maze and Andrej Jerman in Alpine skiing.’**



## Pierre Guimond

Canadian Ambassador to Slovenia

### Vancouver is well prepared for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games

Canada will be the first host country to fly the Olympic and Paralympic flags side by side and organizers are committed to providing unprecedented exposure to the Paralympic Winter Games. Vancouver is well prepared for the Winter Olympic Games. We believe that we can look forward to a very successful Games. The venues and other facilities are all in excellent condition and we are making every effort to prepare an outstanding event. The venues in Vancouver and in Whistler, where the alpine skiing and ski jumping will take place, are fully ready. Events can be a real nation-builder. All Canadians feel these Games are theirs. This is not about a few of us but about all of us. As Canada prepares to welcome the world to the 2010 Winter Games, 20 boxes filled with donated sporting goods were winging their way across the Far North to be opened and used by children in some of Canada’s most remote communities as part of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Truce Northern Outreach Project. The Olympic Spirit Boxes, decorated with the cheerful blue and green palette of the Games, are chock-full of hockey, soccer, lacrosse, baseball and basketball equipment, as well as jerseys – enough to fully equip two teams for each of the five sports in 20 Aboriginal communities located in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The project is the latest initiative of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Truce Program and will enhance existing sport programs in the communities. We’ve designed our entire Olympic Truce Program to be about applying the values of sport and the Olympic Games as instruments of peace and inspiration in everyday lives.





sports men and women have won three silver and five bronze medals at the winter Olympics.

The aces in Slovenia's pack are Petra Majdič in cross-country skiing and Tina Maze and Andrej Jerman in Alpine skiing. Could they be joined by anyone else? Perhaps by the outstanding ski jumper Robert Kranjec, the snowboarder Rok Flander or by Teja Gregorin in the biathlon. The Slovenian team should be able to field competitors in seven disciplines. It is a shame that Slovenia's hockey team did not manage to reach the games through the filtering process of qualification, after losing unluckily to Austria (in extra time), to Japan (in a penalty shoot out) and 1:2 to the tournament's incumbents, Germany. Indeed the ice hockey tournament will be the biggest treat of the games. Canada is the home of this sport, and because of the Olympics they will suspend their league, the NHL, so the twelve selected teams can take part with their strongest squads. In total more than half the players appearing in the North American hockey league will play in the games. This means, however, that the Vancouver games (matches will be in the General Motors Place and UBC Winter Sports Centre halls) will sadly be without the most popular Slovenian winter sports person in North America, Anže Kopitar, who has been one of the best NHL players this year in the kit of the Los Angeles Kings.

## Slovenia House

Slovenia will be presenting itself at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver with the Slovenia House, which will be a meeting place for competitors, fans, the press, other guests and of course the Slovenian community living in Canada. During the Olympic Games, Slovenia House will be at the Whistler Village centre in the Westin Hotel. It is in fact at Whistler that the



largest number of Slovenian sports people will be competing. And Slovenia House will be the central venue for the Slovenian Olympic delegation's social events.

Slovenia House, which will open its door on 11 February, will also host an exhibition showcasing Slovenia's special features »



Slovenia's athletes taking part in the 2010 Olympic Games. Slovenia will also participate in the Paralympic Winter Games.

and natural beauty. An indispensable part of what is on offer there is the Slovenian cuisine, which will be accompanied by excellent Slovenian wine. Every day of the Games, selected traditional Slovenian dishes will be prepared by a team of experienced cooks, who will come over from Slovenia especially for the occasion. Top Slovenian wines will provide an ideal accompaniment to the food. Every day at 5 pm Slovenia House will offer a Happy Hour for representatives of the media, who will be able to chat and socialise with the Slovenian competitors and other notable guests. Or they can simply try some Slovenian specialities and wine. The main host of Slovenia House is the Olympic Committee of Slovenia and its partners, which include the Slovenian Government Communication Office. For first-hand reports on the goings-on at Slovenia House, see our next issue.



### Slovenian Olympic City

During the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics a Slovenian Olympic City will be installed in Prešeren Square in Ljubljana and in Maribor. For 20 days this will be the centre of Olympic action in Slovenia and the official contact point for the Slovenian Olympic team. The Olympic City will be an Olympic supporters' centre in central Ljubljana where it will be possible to follow events in Vancouver and join with others in cheering on Slovenia's athletes and offering them united support. The Slovenian Olympic City will thus be an essential part of Slovenia's Olympic story. Throughout the Games the centre of Ljubljana will live the Olympic spirit. A stage will be erected with a large LCD screen, where every day from 6.00 pm onwards events from Vancouver will be broadcast live. Owing to the time difference, the emphasis will be on evening action. Another attractive feature will be a cross-country skiing course with natural or artificial snow. Various mini-competitions are planned, as well



Meanwhile Slovenia's top cross-country skier, Petra Majdič, is openly flirting with a medal in the classic sprint. She has been pretty much unbeatable in this method over the past four seasons. After a silver medal at the World Championship in Japan in 2007, Petra is anticipating her first Olympic medal. Her best performance from the games at Salt Lake City in 2002 and Turin in 2006 was 6th place in the classic-technique 10 km cross country event.

The other big ace in the team's pack is the Alpine skier Tina Maze. Previously she was a top giant slalom skier, while now she excels in all five disciplines (ski, superG, giant slalom, slalom and combined). Tina ranked 12th at both the last two Olympic Games, both times in the giant slalom. Another hopeful among the Alpine skiers is the outstanding skier Andrej Jerman. In his appearances to date at the Olympics, he secured his best ranking in the combined event in 2006, coming in 19th. So far Slovenia's Alpine skiers have contributed five medals to the country's hoard of winter games medals.

And we certainly should not disregard the biathlon competitors. World number two Teja Gregorin is extremely adept at preparing for major competitions, and her potential success would not be such a big surprise. Her appearance in Canada will be the third Olympic Games for Teja, who competed as a cross-country skier eight years ago in Salt Lake City, while in Turin 2006 she came in 16th in the 7.5 km sprint, and was also in the 4 x 6 km relay team that finished an excellent 6th.

Slovenia's snowboarder Rok Flander is one of the best competitors in the parallel giant slalom. At the last Olympics he only missed the medal chase by a few fractions of a second. He ended up in 7th place. So perhaps the piste at Whistler will be an opportunity for him to reach the podium.

The ski jumpers have thus far brought back three medals from the Olympic Games, the last time in 2002, when the team comprising Peterka, Fras, Žonta and Kranjec came in an excellent third. At the same time this was the last medal for Slovenia at the winter Olympics. More than anyone, the 28-year-old jumper from Kranj, Robert Kranjec, will be fighting for a place on the podium. At the end of last season on the ski flying jump at Planica, where he won third place, he said: "Tomorrow I'll have a day off, then the day after I'm starting to train for the Olympic Games in Vancouver." And his team-mate Jernej Damjan also has high hopes. Since he started training with personal trainer Ari Pekka Nikkola of Finland, he has been jumping like never before. Jernej has already tried out the Olympic jump at Whistler, coming in 25th last year. The best individual positions of Kranjec and Damjan at the Olympic Games were 11th place for Robi in 2002 on the large hill and 28th place for Jernej in 2006, also on the large hill.



as a cross-country skiing school, equipment testing and prizes for complete beginners who can complete the course without falling into the snow. There will also be a reduced-scale curling rink made with artificial ice, where various curling-related activities will take place and we will attempt to put together a Slovenian curling team for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Visitors will have the opportunity to buy official Olympics merchandise and thus become part of the Olympic family. The organisers plan to decorate the centre of Ljubljana and the streets leading to the Prešeren statue with flags. Each day Ljubljana will connect with events at the Slovenia House, which will be the Slovenian centre in Vancouver and is sure to be full of interesting guests. Technology will enable live link-ups and ensure that Slovenia fans are even better connected with the Slovenian Olympic team.

## The Olympic Games are the games of all of us

The Olympic Games are the world's biggest sporting event, bringing together athletes from all over the globe. A large number of disciplines all in one place and sporting contests at the very highest level make the Games a spectacular occasion and place the Olympics at the very pinnacle of the world's most popular sports events. During the Winter Olympic Games the Slovenian Olympic Committee will be promoting the Olympic movement and attempting, through various interconnected activities, to conjure up the Olympic spirit in Slovenia. The two main projects will be the Slovenian Olympic City in Ljubljana and the Slovenian House, Vancouver 2010 in Canada. ●

I am even more firmly convinced that there are no natural obstacles

# KATARINA KRESAL

Slovenian Woman of the Year 2009 and Minister of the Interior, Katarina Kresal, is ready to risk a great deal for her ideals and principles. She has committed herself decisively to the issues of the 'erased' and the new Family Code. Under her leadership, even the police have become a softer proposition. She faces obstacles, but these do not present problems she feels cannot be overcome. She is strongly convinced that there are only a very few obstacles that cannot be overcome.

Vesna Žarkovič Photo Tina Ramujkić, Bobo

**On behalf of the Government Communication Office, let me offer you the warmest congratulations on being chosen as Slovenian Woman of the Year by the readers of Jana magazine. Minister, were you surprised to receive this award?**

Thank you for your congratulations. You know, it's hard to describe how you feel when you realise that you've won. It was all a fairly well-guarded secret. After the initial surprise, I needed a few seconds before I was able to thank all those who had voted for me. The surprise was very great. I did not expect that, being the minister of the interior, I could be chosen to receive this award. It's not a typical choice for events such as these. Not in over 20 years has a politician been selected by *Jana*, so I was really amazed by the award.

**To what do you attribute your Slovenian Woman of the Year award?**

I believe I was chosen because I have confronted a problem that has sadly remained unresolved by politics for quite some time – that is, the problem of the 'erased'. This issue might, to some, appear trivial or nothing special to deal with. It is far from that. If it had been a trivial issue, this sorry tale would not have gone on for 18 years. It would have come to an end a long time ago. It was not easy to fulfil this task. It required high principles and robust points of

departure. This project was undoubtedly decisive in gaining me a nomination as Slovenian Woman of the Year. A good deal of stubbornness and decisiveness has also been required to provide support for the Family Code, which will finally regulate the status of same-sex partnerships, and for all the other difficult topics we have begun to address. It could well be that I was chosen for other reasons; nevertheless, I do think that, this year, people were able to see that politics as practised by a woman is

“ A SOCIAL STATE GOVERNED BY THE RULE OF LAW SHOULD BE OUR BASIS AND SHOULD FOSTER THE DESIRE TO ACHIEVE MORE. THIS, FOR ME, IS A JUST AND FAIR STATE. ”

able to resolve issues that 'male politics' has up to now been unable to resolve.

**Women – come forward, don't be afraid, nothing can stop you. We often hear you saying these words. Your words suggest a certain concern for women. Does it seem to you that Slovenian women do not know how to look after their own interests well enough?**

In Slovenia, most women work, are independent, respected, have come very far and occupy prominent positions

– which does not mean that there are not areas in which they are not well represented or are explicitly hindered. Politics, for example, is one such profession in which I have felt this very keenly. The system does not allow women to start from the same position as men. I am talking here about the eternal problem of coordinating family and professional life. Women are faced daily with concrete everyday problems, like closing times for nurseries and working hours, which have a significant impact on how they organise their lives. One task of politics is to take responsibility for measures that make life more pleasant for women so that they can attend to their own personal development, rather than simply their survival.

**What is it like being a female politician? In politics, is it an advantage or disadvantage to be a woman?**

**Do you think you would be taken more seriously if you were a man?**

My conclusions are based on my experiences over the last few years. At the beginning, not everyone was positive about my political career – colleagues or the media. This was despite the fact that I had entered politics with experience of business and law. I entered politics with a great deal of support from the party, which made me a leader. I was completely free of the old political burdens. I was



very positive and had a strong conviction that politics could change things for the better. However, I was soon brought down to earth. All those things that I thought were an advantage were turned against me. My career has definitely been more difficult because I am a woman, but this is not an insurmountable obstacle. I have had to invest a lot more effort and be part of more success stories in order finally to get recognition from others – in short, so that they began to believe in me, and believe that I had entered politics with a serious purpose in mind. Yes, I would definitely say that my starting position as a woman was different and quite a good deal more difficult.

### **What message do you have as Slovenian Woman of the Year?**

Once again, I cannot fail to address women specifically here. The award ceremony is an event that aims to draw attention to the important role women play in this country. At the ceremony itself I said that women should not put themselves in a subordinate position and thus hand power to others. Life does direct a number of enduring prejudices their way, but women must get rid of this idea that they cannot make a go of it, or that there's no point in trying and that they won't be successful in this or that endeavour. I am even more firmly convinced that there are no natural obstacles. Prejudices have to be removed, but if you are persistent enough, they will fall away. There is nothing sweeter than being able to prove that the prejudices of others were wrong.

### **Is the position of interior minister a popular one?**

Ministerial functions cannot be looked at in that way. It's a cliché to say that this is a man's ministry and that there is no way you can be popular if you work there. When I arrived, I set myself the task of changing a few things for the better. I was quickly able to see how many problems had been left to gather dust. When I began

actively to change things, the first positive changes made were within the ministry itself. There is a great deal of contact between the work our ministry does and the lives of people. The very fact that it is responsible for order, security and human dignity means that it presents an ideal opportunity to show that the state can be approachable – that it respects the balance between security and the freedom of the individual. We let people know that the state is their friend – that it works for them, for their own benefit. This approach to leadership can put my function in a completely different light. It would make me happy if, in the future, people saw the ministry as an institution in which they wished to work rather than one they wished to avoid. You are only as good as your team; that is why it is important that you have excellent colleagues around you if you yourself want to do good work. We have set ourselves really high goals in the first year and it was overwhelming

“ I HAVE NEVER SOLD MY PRINCIPLES TO ACHIEVE A GOAL. THIS MEANS THAT I CAN LIVE AT PEACE WITH MYSELF AND DO MY WORK WITH THE SAME CALM APPROACH, BECAUSE I KNOW I AM WORKING TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY. ”



to experience that we actually achieved them all. We began with a thorough rationalisation and reorganisation of the ministry and the police, strengthened focus on road safety, began to tackle

violence against women with a number of preventive campaigns and greater police awareness, and established the National Bureau of Investigation to increase the effectiveness of prosecution of the most serious forms of crime, mainly financial crime and corruption.

### **You are part of a new generation of politicians – unburdened by the past, interested chiefly in the future. What is your ideal Slovenia?**

A just society capable of ensuring the basic conditions for normal life. We need to make it possible for people, if they want to of course, to achieve success and get results. It's not about everyone being equal, because we're not; it's about having equal opportunities, that we live with dignity. The state must be managed well enough that everyone is able to live a worthwhile life. In addition to the basic requirements for life, society must make it possible to access knowledge and health services. As far as the standards that must apply are concerned, we should not be asking how much it costs but what is right, what is good, best, for us. A social state governed by the rule of law should be our basis and should foster the desire to achieve more. This, for me, is a just and fair state. This is the Slovenia I would like to see, and things are not progressing badly in this regard. Precisely at this time of crisis it is obvious that these mechanisms are still not working as well as they should. In my opinion, this is the main challenge that lies ahead. Ideally, society should be one in which everyone starts with equal opportunities, but it will likely be impossible to achieve this to the fullest extent.

### **What is your biggest achievement so far, and is it a personal achievement or a ministerial one?**

Personally, it is that I have remained true to the principles I set for myself very early on in life. The values of my life are very

clear. I want to do things professionally, giving respect to the people I come in contact with. I try to be principled. I try not to be swayed by every passing breeze. I appreciate honest work and the weighing-up of different arguments. I have never sold my principles to achieve a goal. This means that I can live at peace with myself and do my work with the same calm approach, because I know I am working to the best of my ability. This is the first thing that comes to mind whenever anyone asks me about my 'private' achievements. As far as my work as minister goes, I am proud to have completed my first year of ministerial work successfully. Others as well obviously believe that we have tackled some issues that others did their best to avoid. We have done a great deal and done it well. At the ministry we have also

“ THERE IS NOTHING SWEETER THAN BEING ABLE TO PROVE THAT THE PREJUDICES OF OTHERS WERE WRONG. ”

opened the door to the public, become sensitive to social issues and introduced a new way of working. We are aware that we are at the service of the people, not the other way round.

**Is there a big difference between the world of politics and the world of law from which you come?**

Yes, there is a big difference. Politics functions according to different rules, which are completely its own. They are not always logical or pretty. When you come from the well-ordered world of business, where words have their own weight, where promises last a long time, where professionalism and knowledge count and where positions and beliefs do not come wrapped in shiny paper, it can sometimes be confusing. Nevertheless, I set myself a very clear rule: I would never let my own standards drop in order to adapt to the existing situation – I would rather try to improve standards. I am delighted to have remained true to my principles during my time at the ministry and to have proved that it is possible to work according to a different politics.

**At the beginning of the year, under your leadership, the National Bureau of Investigation began operating. What is its greatest task?**

To investigate the most serious and complex forms of crime with special focus on financial crime and corruption. Although it is part of the police system, the Bureau occupies separate premises from the police. Between 70 and 80 specialists will work at the Bureau. Around one third are being expected to come from existing ranks of criminal detectives qualified for this type of work, with the other two thirds being made up of other public officials working in this area and new recruits. The goals of the Bureau are to uncover 20% more criminal offences, increase the number of unchanged indictments by 80% within two years, and to increase seizures of unlawfully acquired pecuniary benefits by 30%. These are high objectives, but Slovenia must fulfil them if it wishes to be successful in prosecuting economic crime and corruption. ●



# ALL NEW HOUSES WILL HAVE PHOTOVOLTAIC CELLS ON THEIR FACADES OR ROOFS

On the subject of public funds that Slovenia invests in research and development, in the last 20 years Slovenia has remained at the same level, Gregor Golobič, Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, pointed out at a round table on technological and economic development organised by the regional Chamber of Commerce for northern Primorska. He stated that too few Slovenian companies are involved in innovation, and by this token we are below the European Union average, so value added per employee last year in Slovenia averaged only a little over EUR 35,000.

Vesna Bertonec Popit Photo STA

**A** MAJOR REASON FOR SUCH A LOW VALUE ADDED PER employee is that many companies, especially labour intensive operations, are limited to a great extent in their activities to merely finishing work, for which labour is the primary input, and little or no knowledge is added, meaning lower company earnings for such work and also lower pay for employees.

According to research by Mediana, the media and market research institute, the majority of the population have such low incomes that they cannot afford to save. Mediana has found that half of the population are not saving, and of those that have something put by, if they lose their job they could not live on it for half a year. The research also showed that men save more than women and that Primorska people save more than those in Ljubljana.

While Finance Minister Franc Križanič is persisting with the Ministry's goal of securing a minimum wage in Slovenia of EUR 1,000 a month, the situation in practice is currently very different, since the EUR 600 minimum wage demanded by the unions should only be established gradually, and many companies cannot even afford now to pay certain higher wages. Alongside this, a debate has also arisen over how in fact we should not even be able to have companies or jobs that cannot pay EUR 600 in a minimum wage, and managers should be ashamed at not being able to pay workers above the poverty threshold.

By the end of last year, the number of unemployed came right up to the figure of 100,000, and for this year there are predictions that the number of registered unemployed may well increase to 120,000, and thereby come very close to the highest number of unemployed since the collapse of the former Yugoslav market and Slovenia's independence.

The Government is formulating an exit strategy for the economic crisis, and is also once again opening up a debate on the number of regions in Slovenia. The previous government proposed that there should be 14 regions, but the prevailing view was that this was too many. Now that there has been a



Gregor Golobič, Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology

proposal of six regions, it seems that this will be too few, in other words there should probably be between eight and ten.

After the energy debate ended up prioritising the new generating block at Šoštanj Thermal Power Station, and while the Government on the other hand has not yet decided whether it will also support investment in the Trbovlje Thermal Power Station, the issue is still open, given the danger of excessive emissions. The President of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, also called for a serious debate on this.

The management of the Krško Nuclear Power Plant submitted an application to the nuclear safety authority for extending the operation of the plant for 20 years, in other words up until 2043. The application will be decided on this year, once it has been supplemented with an independent expert opinion. While the planned new block at the Šoštanj Power Station is expected to be fuelled by coal from the Velenje mine, the Trbovlje - Hrastnik

**'The Government is formulating an exit strategy for the economic crisis, and is also once again opening up a debate on the number of regions in Slovenia.'**



mine at Trbovlje, which for some years has been in the process of closing down while still being exploited, is expected to continue extracting coal up until November 2011.

With a delay, owing partly to a lack of funds, the Krško Hydroelectric Station should start trial operation in May 2012. This will be one of five power stations on the lower Sava. Meanwhile at the end of last year, the biggest rooftop solar electricity generating installation in Slovenia, with a capacity of 570 kilowatts, enough to power 160 households, was officially started up on the roof of the Celje fair building. They envisage using two fifths of the electricity for their own needs, and putting the rest on the market. In the opinion of the Minister for the Economy, Matej Lahovnik, additional incentives for building solar generating capacity this year should cause a real expansion of solar plants, and in the next 20 years, Lahovnik predicts, all new houses will have photovoltaic cells on their facades or roofs.

The economic crisis and liquidity problems in companies were also evident in the payment of the Christmas bonus or 13th wage payment, received in one form or another last November by 19.9 percent of employees, and in December by 6.5 percent of employees.

For the fourth year in succession, users of the web portal Tax – Fin – Lex selected the most distinguished tax, legal and financial experts. These prestigious awards were received by the former director of the tax administration, Ivan Simič, the legal expert Šime Ivanjko, and the most distinguished financial expert award went to Mitja Gaspari, serving in the current Government as Minister for Development and European Affairs.

At the end of last year and the beginning of this year, Slovenian commercial interests were represented in several state delegations accompanying President Danilo Türk and Prime Minister Borut Pahor abroad, and there have also been some visits to Slovenia by foreign business delegations. These included a Slovenian-Iranian business conference at the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, at which the Iranian side expressed the expectation that Slovenia, which is only now negotiating over the protection of foreign investment, while the two countries will set up a joint business council, will become a kind of springboard for Iran to

**‘Additional incentives for building solar generating capacity this year should cause a real expansion of solar plants, and in the next 20 years, Lahovnik predicts, all new houses will have photovoltaic cells on their facades or roofs.’**

penetrate the markets of other EU Member States. Slovenia also sees considerable scope for economic cooperation in Kosovo, where Slovenia is a major capital investor, especially on the part of Telekom and Intereuropa. Kosovo, meanwhile, wishes to follow Slovenia into the European Union. A large business delegation also accompanied the President on his visit to Qatar and Kuwait.

In this way the state should help to open some doors for commercial interests. Indeed in the current economic and financial crisis, it has turned out that in its exports the Slovenian economy is too narrowly focused, with the great majority of its foreign trade being conducted within European Union countries. Slovenian companies ship three quarters of their exports to within a radius of just over a thousand kilometres, and more than half of the country’s exports are generated by around 100 companies. As much as a fifth of total exports and 6% of GDP is generated by the car industry, or rather the manufacture of components for this industry, which faces major environmental hurdles in the future.

Last year Slovenian exports fell by around a quarter, and to some extent the regional breakdown of exports is changing, while in the next ten years it should change even more. Last year, for instance, there were marked increases in exports to Turkey, Kosovo, Albania, India and Lithuania.

In the first half of this year, the Portorož maritime company Splošna plovba will take delivery of two ocean-going vessels being built for them in China, with one due to be finished in March. These will be Splošna plovba’s biggest two vessels, for which the company will pay a total of USD 73 million. ●



# JOS DOUMA

## Not diplomats, but individual people should be the driving force in bilateral relations

**J**UST A FEW WEEKS AGO I MET A SLOVENIAN COLLEAGUE who dreamed to be ambassador to her own country. This was one of the most original expressions of love to both our job and to Slovenia I had heard since my arrival, end of August.

I visited Slovenia for the first time in 1998, when I was responsible for the Matra Programme, an Aid Programme for Social Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe. Since then I had the opportunity to visit Slovenia regularly, from 2000 in a new capacity, having been made responsible for the Dutch policy to Central Europe and for the EU-enlargement. It was a great pleasure to witness Slovenia's accession to the European Union and NATO. Between 2005 and 2009 I was deputy Head of Mission in Moscow, witnessing Slovenia's chairmanship of the OSCE and later the successful Slovenian EU Presidency.

Over the past months I have been able to deepen my knowledge of Slovenian society, economy and culture and also to get a better insight in the bilateral relations. Statistically economic relations between the two countries are limited. But Slovenian investors find their way to the Netherlands, for instance Gorenje taking over its Dutch counterpart ATAG last year. The Netherlands are a major source of investment in Slovenia. Many larger and smaller Dutch companies have discovered Slovenia as investors. Vegetables, fruits, flowers and dairy products are supplied to Slovenian supermarkets and groceries on a daily basis. Comparing these figures to for instance Austria, however, I have to agree: distance matters. There is still ample room for improvement and I hope together with my Slovenian colleague in The Hague, Leon Marc, to be able to convince more businessmen to trade goods and services between the two countries.

We can be inspired by some fine examples of entrepreneurship, people taking initiative, liaising across borders and natural barriers, both in and between Slovenia and the Netherlands. We can be assured of favourable natural conditions, perfect geographical positions and healthy government policies – we'll overcome those Alps!

Not diplomats, but individual people should be the driving force in bilateral relations. It is impressively promising how many Dutch tourists find their way to Ljubljana, the coast and the countryside. In summer they cherish the quality of life at holiday farms and camping sites all over the country, enjoying the beautiful nature. In winter they enjoy the sunny, snowy side of the Alps, the hotels and spas. I register a growing number of Dutch students attending classes in Slovenia, but even more so vice versa. The number of Dutch people living in Slovenia has risen sharply.

Through the years Dutch artists in whatever category of art have found interested audiences in Ljubljana and other cities. In 2001 the first Dutch Ambassador, Jan Henneman, started an annual festival of Dutch culture, the Bilateral Fokus. Every autumn artists, writers, speakers on whatever subject were received warmly in Ljubljana, Piran, Maribor, Novo Mesto and other cities. My predecessor John Groffen continued these activities. In 2010 we hope to celebrate the 10th edition of the Bilateral Fokus, participating in the festivities in Ljubljana, as the UNESCO World Book Capital. In 2012 the Netherlands hopes to participate in activities in Maribor, as it celebrates being European Cultural Capital of that year.

That draws me to the conclusion that the Embassy should continue to be a catalyst - no more and no less - in promoting exchange. I hope to promote policy coordination between ministries and governmental agencies on European issues, be it climate change, financing the future or innovation. I will continue to support cultural exchange, civil society initiatives and small projects with marginal groups. But I also hope to be instrumental to people exchanging know how, building joint ventures of whatever kind. My staff and I hope to be available to all people seeking opportunities to be innovative – in the best Dutch and Slovenian tradition.

Please get in touch!

“ IN 2001 THE FIRST DUTCH AMBASSADOR, JAN HENNEMAN, STARTED AN ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF DUTCH CULTURE, THE BILATERAL FOKUS. EVERY AUTUMN ARTISTS, WRITERS, SPEAKERS ON WHATEVER SUBJECT WERE RECEIVED WARMLY IN LJUBLJANA, PIRAN, MARIBOR, NOVO MESTO AND OTHER CITIES. ”

**Jos Douma** Ambassador of the Netherlands to Slovenia



# LEON MARC

## The Land of Bold Cyclists

**T**HE NETHERLANDS IS A COLOURFUL AND DIVERSE LAND, although it does not fit into the perennial stereotypes. It is true, however, that it is dealing with issues not yet encountered by Slovenia, so it is an interesting “laboratory” for us. The bicycles are even different here: they are not just built stronger, their centre of gravity is shifted quite far back from the wide handlebars, which enables an upright posture, and the bikes often come without any hand brakes, the reason perhaps why cyclists are bolder than drivers.

In terms of multiculturalism, the Netherlands also has its share of difficulties. Here, too, there are fresh daily clashes over the issue of the boundaries between tolerance and political correctness, different cultures, orthodox religious practices and so on. At the same time, politicians speak of walls falling down between religious, social and political groups. There is talk of the need for new social cohesion. In her most recent Christmas address, Her Majesty Queen Beatrix warned of the dangers of exaggerated individualism and stressed the need for a new sense of community and a knowledge of language as the foundation of social trust.

While Slovenian eyes and hearts here would pine for hills and valleys, they would still have to admire the exceptional sense of orderliness and use of the space; even the cherry tomatoes ripened in greenhouses have a surprisingly full flavour. Behind all of this are the proverbial enterprise and an economical and pragmatic approach. If I had to condense into a single sentence what I admire most about the Netherlands, it is that serious, responsible approach to everything. Perhaps the Dutch do actually take more time over each thing than the Slovenians, but they are very thorough.

I have set myself as the main challenge of my four-year posting – here before me were Dr Boris Frlec and Dr Tea Petrin, and the last Yugoslav ambassador in The Hague, Dr Borut Bohte, was also a Slovenian – the job of getting one step further in strengthening the recognisability of Slovenia in the Netherlands. In this, the embassy and its limited resources – alongside my colleague Nataša Šebenik our team has an embassy secretary, the Dutch-Slovenian Breda Sikkens-Turšič – of course cannot do very much on its own. We are helped greatly by the honorary consul Karin van Rooyen-Winkelman, and we enjoy excellent cooperation with Rok Klančnik of the STO representative office in Brussels, with certain companies (such as Tomos-Hydria and Gorenje-ATAG) and with the society of Dutch business people in Slovenia. At every step it is essential to point out that between Vienna and Venice there is a modern, open country that in less than 20 years has made its way into the eurozone and in terms of GDP per capita is very close to the upper half of the EU countries. These are the facts that make an impression in the Netherlands and are of vital importance, if we want to extricate Slovenia from the anonymous greyness of so-called “Eastern Europe” – an

image that is sadly still prevalent among average Dutch people.

It is also in our mutual interest that the Netherlands remains open for business with Slovenia! The Dutch are experts not just in greenhouses, but are a world force in the fields of food processing, transport and energy. Perhaps we could think of the Netherlands as a development partner precisely for these areas? On the other hand, Slovenia offers a familiarity with South Eastern Europe and a consumer market with the highest purchasing power in Central and Eastern Europe. Last year Slovenia was visited by more than 60,000 tourists from the Netherlands, but there could be many more, judging from the numbers we were used to before 1990. It is interesting that the Dutch stand out strongly in Europe as adherents of camping (it is no coincidence that among the most popular Slovenian export items here are the holiday caravan and campervan made by Adria Mobil), and we must take much greater advantage of this fact in Slovenia. Perhaps Dutch buyers of mobile homes could be rewarded with free camping in Slovenia? On the streets you can still see Tomos mopeds, and here you can now buy Slovenian wine (the Sauvignon blanc from Verus was ranked among the best wines of 2009 by a well known Dutch wine magazine), and the Vipava Majerija has already been presented in The Hague. Meanwhile, I can also see a business opportunity for Slovenian cuisine in the Netherlands.

The Slovenian Embassy – one of the very smallest in The Hague – is also one of Slovenia’s multilateral missions, since the Netherlands is the seat of a number of international organisations. It is home to the *International Criminal Court*, *Special Criminal Tribunals for Former Yugoslavia and Lebanon*, the *International Court of Justice* and the *Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons*. Near The Hague is the *European Space and Research Technology Centre*, which is the technical centre of the *European Space Agency*. This centre employs the Slovenian Dr Marko Bavdaž; and at the end of January at the centre’s headquarters the Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, Gregor Golobič, signed a *European Cooperating State Agreement* with the ESA, which opens up new opportunities for Slovenian science. The city also hosts Europol and Eurojust – where our national representative is the prosecutor Malči Gabrijelčič, while close to The Hague is the European Patent Office. There are around two dozen Slovenians working at all these institutions. Around 150 Slovenian students are here, too, along with several hundred Slovenians, mainly young, educated people, who are working here. Musicians in particular stand out: Kristina Bitenc, Anja German, Uroš Petrač, Matevž Kajdiš and Vida Matičič are already forging successful careers in the Dutch music scene. There is also an exceptionally active society of friends of Slovenia, *Lipa*, which is headed by Mojca Guštin Nodelijk. ●

**Leon Marc** Slovenian Ambassador to the Netherlands



# PROMOTIONAL PRESENTATION OF SLOVENIA IN EGYPT

During the official visit to Egypt by the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, a promotional presentation of Slovenia took place in Cairo. The event was organised by the Slovenian Government Communication Office.

Valerija Mencej Photo Matjaž Kačičnik

**A**S PART OF THE SLOVENIAN-Egyptian business conference, Slovenia was presented in a photographic exhibition, entitled “Laščak’s Heritage Today”, by Matjaž Kačičnik, a Slovenian photographer who has lived and worked in Egypt for the last few years. The exhibition featured 30 photographs of works designed in Egypt by the Slovenian architect Anton Laščak (1856–1946). In the 90 years of his life, Laščak created around 40 major works. In Cairo, he designed several palatial houses for wealthy citizens, the Misr National Bank, the Abdin Royal Palace, a neoclassical church in Abasia and

a number of urban planning designs.

The exhibition by Matjaž Kačičnik was supplemented by a number of displayboards from the Gorica Museum presenting the life and work of the Alexandrines, Slovenian emigrant women working in Egypt as nurses, governesses and maids, from the second half of the 19th century to the end of the Second World War. The opening of the exhibition was attended by Magda Ibrahim, the daughter of an Alexandrine woman living in Alexandria, Egypt.

The opening of the exhibition also featured a short show from the renowned Slovenian musician Zoran Predin,

who recently celebrated 30 years in the music business. Invitees also had the opportunity to sample Potica – a traditional Slovenian cake – accompanied by Slovenian wines and juices.

Zoran Predin and his band performed twice in Cairo: on 15 December in the Qubbet Al Ghouri Theatre, and on 16 December in the El Gomhouria Theatre (the Cairo Opera). They were performing in Egypt on the invitation of the Egyptian Minister of Culture as part of the programme of international cultural exchange between Slovenia and Egypt. This was the first official performance of a Slovenian musician in Egypt. ●

# THE *DELO* PERSON OF THE YEAR IS THE SURGEON ERIK BRECELJ

Erik Brecelj, a surgeon at the Oncological Institute in Ljubljana

Vesna Žarkovič Photo STA

**I**N THE OPINION OF THE EDITORIAL committee of *Delo*, the year has also been marked by the other nominees for the *Delo* Person of the Year award – Tatjana and Matjaž Nekrep, Ivo Boscarol, Tatjana Fink, Robert Walzl, Goran Vojnovič, Robert Koren, Tina Maze, Marinka Kurilić and Marko Mikuž.

Breclj also talked about his agreement with the health minister Borut Miklavčič. He explains that he promised the minister 'that I would not bother him so much if he established a department in which those who are involved with surgery requiring more teamwork and who need peace can work.' Unfortunately, Breclj, continued, nothing has come of it.

In his view the pace of change is so slow that 'I will be retired before this happens. It is difficult for the patients, not only for us,' he added. He has been to see ministers so many times already that this now seems like 'a waste of time.'

The award winner also received the congratulation of Prime Minister Borut Pahor, who attended the award ceremony. In the Prime Minister's opinion, people like to use their vote to draw attention to problems in the system, in this case the health system, and at the same time expect them to be addressed.

He added that he has already had talks with Breclj and the directors of the Oncological Institute in order to rectify these shortcomings. He will continue to hold discussions with Breclj and attempt to find solutions that are good for both patients and doctors.

The editor-in-chief of *Delo* Darjan Košir explained that in choosing the person of the year they begin by eliminating those who have spent the whole year in the spotlight, particularly politicians, and give an opportunity to people from civil society.

According to Košir, nominees are



people who through their actions and personal qualities have, in their own sphere, continued to move boundaries that previously seemed immovable – sometimes by going at them headfirst. That this year's winner comes from the field of healthcare does not surprise him, he says. According to Košir, nominees who draw attention to problems in healthcare always score highly.

*Delo* has been choosing its Person of the Year since 1990, which makes this year's award the eleventh edition. At the beginning, the Person of the Year was

chosen by the readers alone, then by the editorial committee. Today the editorial committee proposes ten nominees after which the Person of the Year is chosen by readers.

Last year the award went to Olympic hammer champion Primož Kozmus. In 2007 there were four winners: Zofija Mazej Kukovič, Boris A. Novak, Zoran Jankovič and Petra Majdič. Previous winners of the *Delo* Person of the Year award include Borut Geršak, Igor Akrapovič, Gorazd Kocijančič, Tine Hribar, Janez Potočnik and Marko Rupnik. ●



# MINITEATER LJUBLJANA IN A NEW VENUE

Ljubljana's Miniteater (Minitheatre), the now ten-year-old theatre founded by Robert Waltl, who is currently its director, and the Croatian stage director Ivica Buljan, and whose shows were staged for the most part at Ljubljana Castle, moved house in October 2009 to a hall in a building provided to the theatre rent-free for 30 years by the owner, and with the help of the Ljubljana municipal authorities the group has arranged a new theatre in the space.

Jože Osterman Photo STA

**T**HE BUILDING OPPOSITE THE Križanke complex, which is home to Ljubljana Festival and almost abuts the City Museum building, is a fine enhancement of the growth of this part of the city into one of Ljubljana's cultural cores.

When we say renovation, that is not the whole story. The renovation itself of the building would not enable theatre activity, so the building was demolished and only the exterior shell, protected as a monument, was preserved. The interior was entirely rebuilt and additional auxiliary spaces have been leased in neighbouring buildings. More than 700 square metres have been allocated for the theatre in Križevniška Street. The new hall has acquired its name from the French dramatist Bernard-Marie Koltès, whose work has to date featured most



frequently in the Miniteater repertoire.

The new work space has given the theatre group a new impetus. Immediately after the New Year, they arranged a premiere performance entitled *Ma and Al*, inspired and with inserted text by the writers J.D. Salinger and Koltès, staged in a co-production with the Zagreb theatre Kazalište Hotel Bulić and directed by Ivica Buljan, Senka Bulić and Marko Mandić. The production is a play on dramatic situations of the modern

world: the collapse of the family, death of a child, the impact of the Vietnam War, the collapse of democracy, all of which radically undermine the human world.

Right after the New Year, Miniteater also organised a major international puppet festival on the topic of carol-singing and carol-singing customs, which was supported by Norwegian and European sponsors, and alongside the Miniteater group it involved the participation of five foreign groups, from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania and Hungary. The festival was also accompanied by a symposium on the topic of puppets and carol-singing, which was conducted by the famous Polish stage theorist Henrik Jurowsky, and audiences were also able to see two outstanding concerts of folk songs by the group Katalena and singer Ljoba Jenče.



# PICTURE SLOVENIA PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

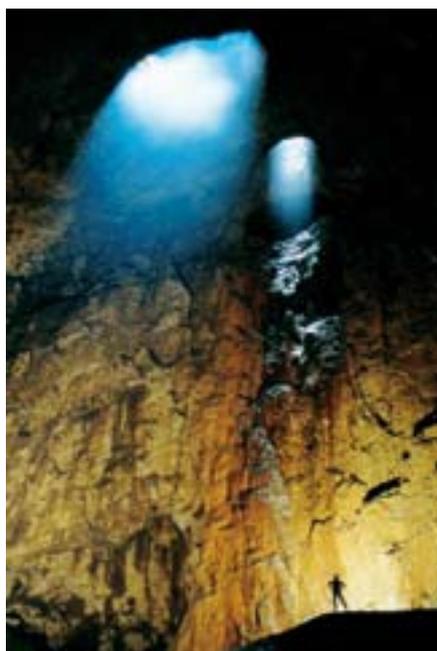
Slovenia's presence on the internet is now one page richer: [www.pictureslovenia.com](http://www.pictureslovenia.com).

Polona Prešeren Photo [www.pictureslovenia.com](http://www.pictureslovenia.com)

**T**HIS PRESENTATION OF THE country is extraordinary in offering a gallery of photographic motifs of Slovenia. At the end of last year there was also a web competition Picture Slovenia [Poslikajmo Slovenijo], in which more than 8,500 photographs were contributed from a total of 1,060 photographers. The response surprised all the expectations of the organisers, with photographs being entered by both professional and amateur photographers.

Photography enthusiasts could upload to the portal photographs in several categories, these being heritage, natural beauty, town and country, active holidays, food and cuisine, events and lifestyle. Out of all the published photographs, the expert jury, comprising acclaimed Slovenian photographers (Arne Hodalič, Tomo Jeseničnik and Borut Peterlin) and a representative of Nikon Slovenija, Rok Gašparič, selected the best quality and most representative photos. These have of course been published on the Picture Slovenia portal. Visitors could also cast a vote for their favourite photograph.

The jury and visitors to the portal were most impressed by the photograph entitled *Kačna jama*. Photographer Peter Gedei shot the chamber in the 190-metre entrance chasm of Kačna jama cave in 2004. Peter Gedei is heavily involved in cave photography, and for the most part photographs just Slovenian caves, which encapsulate all the beauty of the



subterranean Karst that makes up a good photograph. Second place in the Picture Slovenia competition was awarded to the photo taken by Matej Vranič entitled *Homestead above Logarska Dolina*, followed by a photograph entitled *In the mountains above the Triglav Lakes valley* by Dan Briški, and one entitled *Beekeeper from Golo Brdo*, taken by Uroš Krička.

The partners in the Picture Slovenia prize competition are Nikon Slovenija, the Slovenian Commercial Fairground, Slovenian Tourist Board, Diners Club International and the owner of the Picture Slovenia portal, the Zavod Tovarna institute. ●





# THE CONNECTION OF THE TWO SKI AREAS IS THE REALISATION OF A TEN-YEAR DREAM

Vesna Žarkovič Photo STO

**W**ITH THE SKI LIFTS HAVING opened before the Christmas holidays, thus marking the start of the skiing season, the cross-border connection between the Slovenian and Italian sides of Kanin officially became operational at the beginning of January. The official opening of the combined ski area was attended by more than 200 invited guests and a number of ordinary skiers.

The assembled guests were welcomed by the President of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Renzo Tondo, the Vice-President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, Vasja Klavora, the mayors of Bovec, Resia and Chiusaforte, and the director of Promotur, Luca Vidoni. The event was also attended by world-famous former skiing champions Jure Košir, Gustav Thöni and Christian Mayer and cross-country skiing champion Manuela Di Centa. Following a blessing of the ski slopes and the cutting of the ribbon, the new ski centre was then toasted at Prevala.

Like the other speakers, Vasja Klavora underlined the fact that the opening of the cross-border connection of the Kanin ski area represents the realisation of a long-held wish of the inhabitants of

Bovec in particular, and something for which they have waited several decades. To themselves and the world they have demonstrated the importance of cooperation between two neighbouring nations, which now takes on a new importance and can also serve as an example to others.

The highest-lying ski area in the region extends from the valley of Sella Nevea (1,100 metres) up to a height of 2,300 metres above sea level on the Slovenian side. The combined area has over 30 kilometres of ski runs in an area covering 70 hectares. For many the most interesting run will be the five-kilometre

descent from Sedlo to Sella Nevea, with a height difference of 1,200 metres. As well as Slovenian and Italian skiers, a large number of Austrians have been observed at Kanin in the first days of operation of the new combined ski area.

The Kanin ski area is equipped with 12 lifts including the longest gondola lift in Slovenia, which carries skiers from 436 metres above sea level in the Bovec valley to the central part of the ski area, at a height of 2,200 metres. A modern linking aerial lift can carry 100 skiers from the Gilberti mountain lodge to Prevala in just seven minutes. The renovated lifts have a capacity of up to 15,000 skiers an hour. •





# THE FLYING WARTHOG FROM LILLIPUT

The A-10 Thunderbolt is an impressive aircraft, and unusual with its two powerful turbofans mounted up in front of the tail wings.

Tadej Golob

Photo Rafael Marn

IT IS NOT AS ELEGANT AS MANY OF ITS BROTHERS IN arms, and most likely for this reason it is dubbed the “warthog”. Given their job, of course, peace-keepers cannot love it too much. This is a combat aircraft, an assault interceptor that provides close air support, with the motto: “go ugly early”. And whether you like the aircraft or not, the story of the A-10 Thunderbolt has a Slovenian chapter.

This chapter dates back eight years. It was then that Bogo Štampilhar and his colleagues at Mibo, a company involved in making aircraft models, started seriously scratching their heads about where the future lay. Cooperation with Graupner, the German model-making giant, had dried up, although there had been a long period of successful symbiosis. Then came the Chinese, and all related business was moved to East Asia. Mass production in Europe was simply no longer worth it. “Even we looked for some subcontractors over there,” explains Bogo, whose appearance, relaxed demeanour and earring somehow fit the head of such an off-the-wall company as Mibo. “Back home there was just a big scrum for the smallest circle of demanding users. Competition models, some types of gliders and more demanding models, and mock-ups of jet planes. Here we were still half a step ahead of the Chinese,” he says, pausing for a moment before adding: “But just half a step.”

Bogo is one of those fortunate people who have made a career out of the hobby from their youth, or even from their early childhood. He made his first model, under the guidance of his father, who was a miller by trade, and himself an enthusiastic modeller, when he was four years old. “Catapult- >>>

## Our Excellence

powered,” he says, thinking of the little model that was made airborne by wound-up elastic. Then he started entering his products for competitions, and when he went off to do his military service in 1984, he served in the unit providing moving targets for anti-aircraft defence. When he was discharged, he continued with competitions, first in the Yugoslav team, and then after independence in the Slovenian team, with which he won the first title of world champion for independent Slovenia, in Florida in 1992. It was in that year, too, that he and his colleague Miha Grom (who is the co-founder of Mibo and, in addition to his skills, he contributed the first syllable to the company name) took their models to a fair in Switzerland and sold them there under the counter. They bought spare parts from Graupner, but the Germans asked them why they needed so many. “We’re making models,” we said. “What kind?” “We left them something drawn on a piece of toilet paper, then a fortnight later the order came and since then we’ve been cooperating,” says Bogo.

And there would be more, if globalisation and people working for a euro a day were not forcing them to scratch around in model-making circles. It was this that led them to a man in Germany who was selling tools and moulds for the Thunderbolt.

“Kind of so-so...” Bogo shakes his head. “From these we could make the fuselage and some other parts, but only so far.” The wings were still made of polystyrene, with a veneer, and the fuselage was made of laminate, but nothing like a replica aircraft or a complete copy of its big brother. But since they were then still more focused on series production, those semi-finished products then lay around the warehouse in Logatec for a while. If nothing else they made it harder for the market to manufacture this attractive plane. Nevertheless, in their free time they made a small series of some nine or ten aircraft and sold them, mostly in the USA.

The majority of them even flew, although they were heavy, too heavy for any serious sales or for competitions. In Europe a model aircraft is lighter than 25 kilograms, but to compete in the world championship it has to be lighter than 20 kg. (“Without

juice,” adds Bogo, meaning of course fuel.) So after selling the ten planes, they bought one back, and used its wings to make the tools and moulds for plastic wings and tails. They made the third generation of Thunderbolt, with hardly any part out of wood now, and sold fifty units. For this kind of aircraft, which sells around various American forums for 22,000-25,000 dollars, it was quite a result. “This was actually a flying model,” explains Bogo, “but it was still not an exact replica. Then we decided with

**“IF YOU CAN'T OR WON'T MAKE SOMETHING CHEAPER THAN OTHERS, YOU JUST HAVE TO MAKE IT BETTER.”**





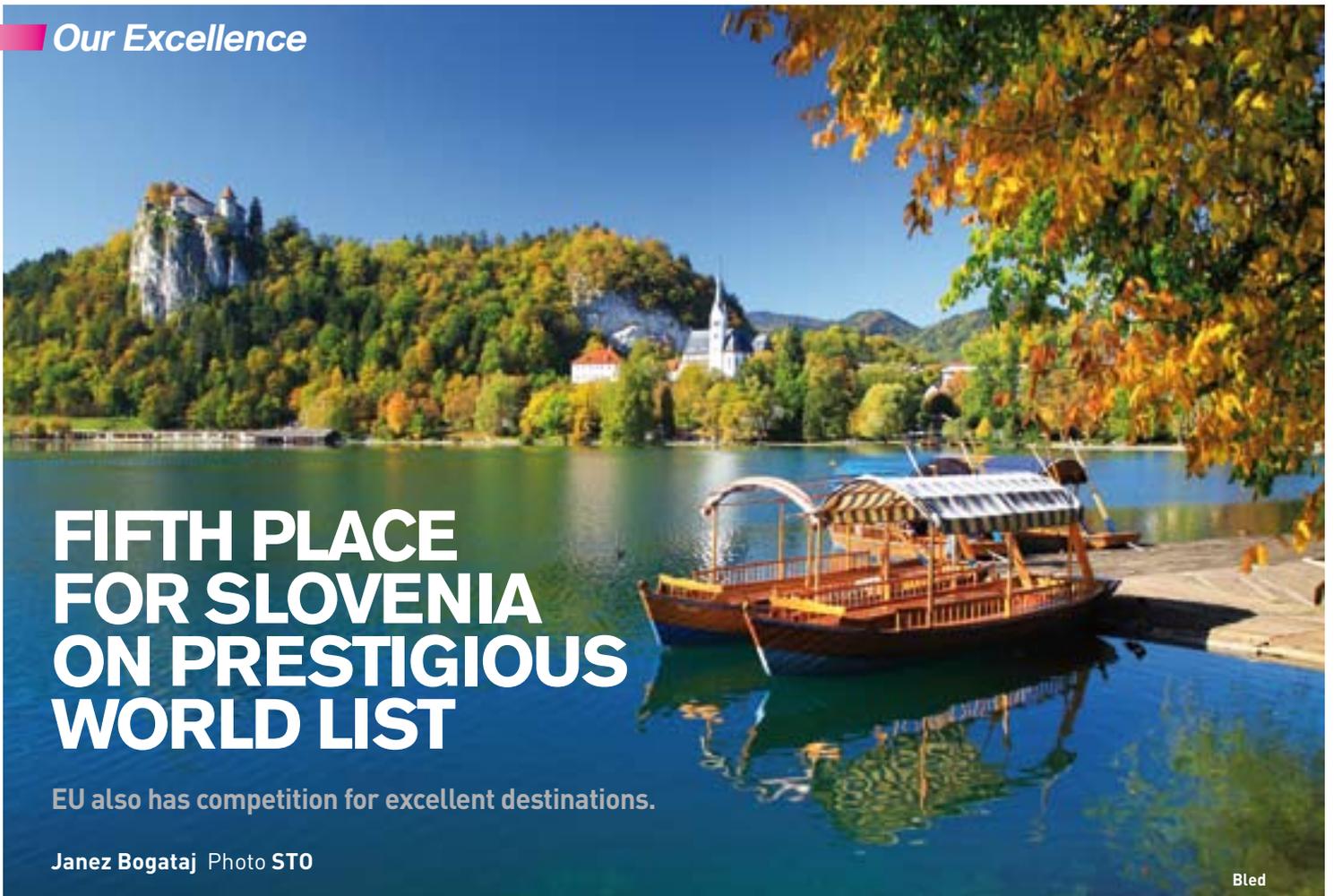
a colleague from Austria, who had a first generation model, to make a Thunderbolt to the world championship standards. If we are already working on it, we said, then we'll modify a few more things and make a model that will be a true replica."

So then they started from scratch again to shed those few kilograms and gain better flight capabilities. The fourth generation Thunderbolt is made from carbon, carbon fibre, laminates and Herex, and some parts even from prepreg. This is specially prepared glass or carbon fibre poured into moulds in autoclaves under great pressure and high temperature. This is in fact Formula 1 technology. The capabilities of this kind of model are better than a real aircraft. Since it is smaller, it is more robust, and even if the real aircraft could handle it, a real pilot could not cope with what they do to a model Thunderbolt at the various competitions. "I would even dare to say of our Thunderbolt that it is the most complex series model in the entire market," says Bogó confidently, and to prove he is not talking off the top of his head, he shows the first place won at the major American competition for such aircraft, the Top Gun. For Americans this competition is the most important one of the world championship, and only the best get to compete there. Three flights by the model are rated, following a "static" evaluation – an evaluation of the appearance and similarity to the real aircraft. The Mibo Thunderbolt received what was up to that time the highest static evaluation of all, at 99.9.

Mibo is a small, pocket-sized company with a workshop on

the ground floor and sales room on the first floor of a building along the main road somewhere in the middle of the stretched-out town of Logatec. Alongside Bogó in the workshop there are Miha and Bojan, and above them is Bogó's wife, who sees to the paying of accounts and other details. And speaking of Mibo, we have to mention their most important outside collaborator, who sees to the planning and construction of Mibo aircraft, not far away, just some hundred metres down the road. Tomaž Meze, who has also been a modeller since his earliest days, is meanwhile (or mainly) employed as a helicopter pilot for the Slovenian police. "A 25-kilogram aircraft such as our Thunderbolt," he explains, "is actually a proper aircraft. You have to make the same calculations for it as for aircraft with a human crew. You have to calculate the distribution of thrust, manoeuvres, define maximum mass and based on the loading factor that these determine, you have to make an integrity calculation... This thing is being sold, and we, the ones who make it, are responsible for it flying."

Meanwhile, Mibo is not stopping at the Thunderbolt. They have received an order from the USA to develop and manufacture models of another military plane, the B-58 or Hustler, the first supersonic bomber in use. They have already tried out the first generation aircraft at competitions, where there have been some "hard" landings. But no worries, Mibo's Hustler will fly, fly like a bird. If you can't or won't make something cheaper than others, you just have to make it better. ●



# FIFTH PLACE FOR SLOVENIA ON PRESTIGIOUS WORLD LIST

EU also has competition for excellent destinations.

Janez Bogataj Photo STO

Bled

**A**S THE YEAR 2009 DREW TO A CLOSE, NATIONAL Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations and the magazine National Geographic Traveler compiled its sixth successive prestigious Destinations Rated list of the most beautiful locations and destinations in the world. Assessments were made under very strict and broad criteria, which take into account the positions of local governments, the opinions of local people (for instance the degree of concern over the environmental threat to the location and landscape), air pollution, cultural features and qualities, the degree of authenticity and genuineness of local cultures and the natural environment, the situation in the area of tourism management, success in overcoming natural disasters and also success in overcoming the economic crisis. The list for evaluation

involved 133 world destinations, which were evaluated by 437 different experts from across the world. Slovenia was ranked a fantastic fifth place, which is shared with Vermont in the USA, Kakadu National Park in Australia and the medieval Alhambra in the Spanish city of Granada. All four destinations in 6th place received 78 points. First place was awarded this year to the Norwegian fjords, with 85 points. Coming in second were the national parks of Kootenay and Yoho in Canada (81 points), third was the Gaspé peninsula in Quebec (80 points) and fourth place was shared by New Zealand's South Island and ancient Kyoto in Japan (79 points). In the reasoning for the points given to Slovenia, which was represented pictorially by Bled, it was pointed out that Slovenia deserves praise for being "savvy about balancing tourism with preservation of cultural and natural heritage." The capital city of Ljubljana merits special praise for being "colourful, vibrant, and culturally appealing." Meanwhile the general view of Slovenia is that "Slovenia's Alps and wine country remain among the most sustainable and authentic places to visit in Europe."

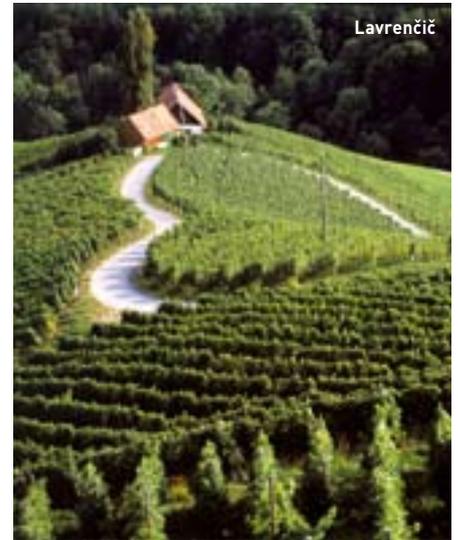
The results of the rating also show the five worst-rated locations and destinations. These are the Costa del Sol in Spain, the West Bank in Israel or rather Palestine, Grand Bahama in the Bahamas, Cabo San Lucas in Mexico and St. Maarten in the Caribbean. It is interesting to note here that the worst-rated places were those where tourism development had been out of proportion to eco-friendly and sustainable development, and tourism had become an aggressive industry. Slovenia's rating is



Storks in Pomurje



Vineyard from Štajerska Region



Lavrenčič



Downhill of trail skiing, Krvavec

therefore a great endorsement, and at the same time places the country under a major obligation in its further development of tourism.

While noting this prestigious competition, I should also point out the efforts of the European Union in the area of admirable tourism development of individual destinations, especially those that are not developed for tourism and are often anonymous. They are represented by the EDEN movement (European Destinations of Excellence), which holds a competition each year in a special thematic area, and then on the individual country level the best destination is selected

under very strict and extensive criteria. In 2008 the theme was Tourism and local intangible cultural heritage, in 2009 the theme was related to tourism in protected natural areas, while in 2010 it is devoted to Aquatic tourism. In past competitions Slovenia had two winners, the Soča River valley and the Path of Peace in 2008 and Solčavsko in 2009. The movement makes a major contribution to formulating an identification of the diversity and variety of Europe's regional cultures, and each year it introduces to the European cultural map new local values, which until now were completely unknown, undeveloped or even disadvantaged. ●

# SNOW QUEEN

Andrej Stare Photo STA

ON 30 NOVEMBER 2008 THE FINNISH NEWSPAPER Koillissanomat, published in Kuusamo, wrote: “Petra Majdič lumikuningatar” – snow queen. This was on her third successive victory at the prestigious competition in the village of Ruka near Kuusamo, right on the Arctic Circle. Petra Majdič’s slope has been called the hardest part of what is the hardest cross-country sprint trail in the world. Petra has once again been applauded by the entire cross-country world, and by those who know what it means to win in the hardest sprint test in the world. The gallons of sweat poured out once again paid off. Each year on her now traditional victories at Ruka, Petra is congratulated by the famous Joulupukki – Jack Frost – who according to legend lives close to Kuusamo on the mountain of Korvatunturi. And Joulupukki himself is a different man each year, indeed he is the annually elected mayor of the town of Savukoski at the foot of Jack Frost’s dwelling place.

Petra Majdič is truly a queen, not just of cross-country skiing but also of the hearts of all Slovenians. Through her attractiveness, her resolve, fighting spirit and attitude to her fellow humans she has become the first name in Slovenian sports women. Eleven years performing amongst the world elite have brought her extraordinary success, and that in a discipline that was never “Slovenian”. Way back in 1999, when she first competed among the best in the world in the Czech Republic, and came in 69th, there were few who anticipated her ascending to the world cross-country throne. But her results improved bit by bit, and today fans of the sport are quite put out if Petra does not win in her showcase discipline, the sprint. To date she has won 19 World Cup and Ski Tour competitions, the most won in this prestigious contest by any Slovenian winter sports person. Three years ago she also started collecting medals at the biggest tournaments such as the World Championship and the Olympic Games. Sapporo, far off in Japan, was the starting point for further challenges. Now the Olympic Games in Vancouver, Canada, are the next major objective for Petra Majdič. At Salt Lake City and Turin she was out of luck, and with five finishes in the top ten she merely gave a foretaste of the no-holds-barred struggle coming up in Vancouver. Yesterday a specialist in the classic cross-country technique, she is now also a winner in the freestyle (skate) technique. Majdič has become a consummate cross-country skier and an idol for young people, and precisely because of her extraordinary success, many young cross-country skiers have



opted for this exceptionally energy-sapping but wonderful sport, which can be pursued well into old age.

“Every time I win, I am as happy as if it was the first or last time,” she said on her 19th win in Oberhof. Her smile is genuine and warm, and comes from Petra’s emotions and intense experiences. And since sport is an activity involving alternate victories and defeats, there have been some of the latter. This year at “her own” Rogla she suffered one of the hardest blows in her career to date. As she headed for victory on a trail where she had put in thousands of hours of training, a Finnish competitor crossed her path and sent her sprawling in the snow. Her dreams of victory in front of the home audience were dashed. For the first time she appeared before the TV cameras in tears, but she made her statement: “Tomorrow I’ll be even stronger and I will respond to the unsporting challenge of my competitors with victories...” And in just a few days she stood once again on the highest step of world cross-country skiing.

Petra Majdič is a sports woman without comparison, a role model and a great promoter of professional-level sports in Slovenia.



## Petra Majdič

Born 22 December 1979

Lives in the village of Brinje pri Dolu

- **First appearance in the World Cup:** 9 January 1999 Nove Mesto (Czech Republic)
- **First points in the World Cup:** 26 February 2000, Falun – 30.
- **First podium spot in the World Cup:** 1 February 2001, Asiago – 3rd.
- **First victory in the World Cup:** 9 March 2006, Drammen (Norway)
- **Number of wins:** 19
- **Number of second places:** 9
- **Number of third places:** 9
- **Medals at World Championships:** 2nd Sapporo 2007 (sprint)
- **Best ranking in Olympic Games:** 6th, Turin 2006 (10 km)



# ZAVEC'S POKER

Andrej Stare Photo [www.agencija-sem.si](http://www.agencija-sem.si)

**A**N IDYLIC MEDIEVAL CITY ON THE DRAVA RIVER, Ptuj has always been famed for its relationship with the ancient past and old customs, but it is also a cradle of sport. The people of Ptuj were never exceptional gymnasts, basketball players or swimmers, but instead they were noted far and wide as great handball and football players and go-cart racers. And at the beginning of the eighties, the town suddenly became a centre of boxing – the noble art. Although it is almost 100 km from Ptuj to Vače in the Zasavje region, the roots of the boxing tradition lie there. On the celebrated situla of Vače, the most magnificent object of Slovenia's ancient past, an unknown artist 5,000 years ago depicted two soldiers engaged in a form of single combat similar to boxing. Given this exceptional gem of Slovenian history, we may count boxing as one of the first, if not the oldest sport in this land.

Dejan Zavec is now continuing the exceptional tradition of great boxers from Ptuj. After winning the title of amateur champion of Slovenia nine times, no one imagined he would return to his native Ptuj on 13 December 2009 as the professional welterweight world champion. Slovenia had gained a new super champion in a sport that is entirely different from the other Olympic pursuits. Professional boxing is relentless and the competition is staggering. In Zavec's category, up to 66.678 kg, there are around 1,400 competitors from all over the world on the ladder of the best professional boxers.

Mister Simpatikus is Dejan Zavec's nickname, something he acquired for his direct relationship with his opponents, trainers, managers and spectators. Now, when the loudspeakers in the arena play "I Gotta Feeling", the entire boxing world knows that Dejan Zavec is entering the ring. That magical day of 11 December

2009 in Johannesburg, South Africa, was the same. Not since the bouts fought by the legendary Cassius Clay, aka Mohamed Ali, in the seventies, had there been such interest in Slovenia in boxing as for Zavec's fight with the South African Isaac Hlatshwayo. Together with his manager the world champion selected Dejan Zavec as a challenger, in the firm belief that he would beat him at his home ring and retain the title of professional world champion. But ... from thousands of Slovenian homes and bars where boxing enthusiasts were watching the match, a little before ten o'clock counting could be heard: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, TEN." Hlatshwayo was on the floor, and a wish that had seemed unrealistic an hour earlier had been fulfilled: Dejan Zavec was the new professional world champion in the welterweight category. He was the first Slovenian to adorn himself with this title, and the Slovenian sports scene will need quite some time to grasp the greatness and dimensions of this extraordinary success.

Zavec is now training to defend his title of IBF world champion (world professional boxing has four international associations: the WBA, WBC, WBO and IBF). So there are currently four world champions in the welterweight category, and each has an official list of challengers in his own association. For the moment the hottest fight coming up is between Floyd Mayweather (USA) and Manny Pacquiao (Philippines), and this should bring together the title of world champion in both the WBA and WBO. So who will challenge Zavec, and when? There is a profusion of candidates, while Dejan would like to face the Pole Rafael Jackiewicz, the only professional boxer to date who has beaten him, and that was in Poland in a split decision on points.

## List of possible opponents for Dejan Zavec in the welterweight category (up to 66.7 kg)

Name, surname	Country	Association	No. bouts/No. wins	No. of KOs	Status
Vyacheslav SENCHENKO	Ukraine	WBA	29/29	20	World Champion
Andre BERTO	Haiti	WBC	26/26	19	World Champion
Manny PACQUIAO	Philippines	WBO	55/50	38	World Champion
Floyd MAYWEATHER	USA	WBA,WBC	40/40	25	No. 1 challenger
Shane MOSLEY	USA	WBA	52/46	39	Super Champion



# THE POHORJE GOLDEN FOX

Polona Prešeren Photo Darinka Mladenovič, STA



**T**HE GOLDEN FOX COMPETITION WAS FOLLOWED enthusiastically by the local public. How could it not be, when in the slalom event Tina Maze skied her way to the podium for the first time in her career. Second place with an excellent second run bodes well for the forthcoming Olympic Games.

Over two days of competition, 133 Alpine skiers from 28 countries competed in the snow stadium below the Mariborsko Pohorje for World Cup points in the 46th edition of the Golden Fox Trophy. Nine women defended Slovenia's colours: Tina Maze, Ana Drev, Maruša Ferik, Sara Globočnik, Katja Jazbec, Ilka Štuhec, Katarina Lavtar, Ula Hafner and Ana Bucik.

This year's giant slalom course was slightly shorter than in previous years, since the organisers, in conjunction with the International Ski Federation (FIS), settled on a more suitable start line over the summer. Our champion Tina Maze was disappointed with her 13th place in the giant slalom, her star discipline. She knows the Pohorje slopes very well, and the

local public demonstrated their high expectations with loud encouragement. It was not to be, however, and so her success on the Sunday, when she took second place in the slalom and proved herself to be in top form, was all the greater.

'I believe that things will now go better in the fast disciplines too', said Tina Maze after the slalom, promising good things for the Olympic Games. 'I am fit and that is the most important thing. I will also be braver, which is essential for the downhill and the super giant slalom'.

The giant slalom was won by Kathrin Zettel of Austria, followed by Maria Riesch of Germany and Anja Pärson of Sweden. Zettel also won the slalom, ahead of Tina Maze of Slovenia and Maria Riesch of Germany.

Events at the foot of Pohorje were accompanied by a rich supporting programme in Maribor's Freedom Square. Spectators and other visitors to the Pohorje skiing event of the year were entertained by the groups Soulfingers and Kingston. The competitions themselves attracted over 20,000 spectators. ●



# TREATS FROM BOVEC AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Polona Prešeren Photo Tomo Jeseničnik



Tolmin cheese  
(tolminc)



pursued there. For that reason the best-known culinary treats are linked to it. Various cheeses and other dairy products are an indispensable part of the food. These include for instance Tolmin cheese (*tolminc*), which bears a geographical indication of origin label. As the ethnologist Dr Janez Bogataj writes in his book *Taste Slovenia*, the first records of cheese-making in the Tolmin area date back to the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Tolmin cheese is made exclusively in the area of the upper Soča valley. One such cheese-making operation is in the village of Čadrg, above Tolmin, where the life and work of the inhabitants is tied to organic farming, which is one of the conditions for the quality of Tolmin cheese and cottage cheese. Meanwhile Bovec cheese (*bovški sir*) is also protected with a geographical indication. Its making is associated with the high-mountain pasturing in this area. Nowadays Bovec cheese is only made on Mangartska Planina, in Loška Koritnica and Krnica, in other words the smaller locations of the Bovec region. Originally it was made from goat's milk, mixed with cow's and sheep's milk. Now it is for the most part pure sheep's cheese, characterised by an aromatic, full and even slightly tangy taste and smell.

The cuisine in the upper reaches of the Soča also bears the influences of the »



Bovec cheese  
(bovški sir)

**S**LOVENIANS ASSOCIATE BOVEC and its surrounding area very closely with the Soča River, whose shade of emerald is simply mystical, as is its beauty. Its romance has evoked artistic impressions and has inspired a number of wonderful works of art. Its wildness is also a challenge to sports people, nature lovers and all the inhabitants of the region. And with the Soča (or Isonzo) Front in the First World War, it has experienced its share of tragedy. Yet this too is a part of the region, part of the history, and part of the character that stamps it. Nor does it detract from the fact that the region around Bovec and along the upper reaches of the Soča is exciting and has quite a bit to offer in terms of outstanding culinary delights.

When a link was established at the beginning of January between the ski slopes of Kanin on the Slovenian side and the Italian Sella Nevea, Bovec and its surroundings became an even more attractive destination. The link made

the ski resort one of the only cross-border ski centres in the wider region. And while in these winter months, Bovec and the wider region around it are attractive for their winter sports, there is much more to discover there.

Lovers of nature will be enchanted by the numerous hiking trails strung out through the hills that surround Bovec. Hiking takes on a new dimension here. The area attracts tours that are ideal for beginners and recreational hikers, as well as more serious mountain exploits. Bovec is also an adrenaline paradise in what it offers for rafting along the Soča, canyoning, hydrospeed and other adrenaline-pumping pursuits.

And after such activities, some real local speciality is just the thing. Above Bovec and in the surrounding areas there are numerous sheep pastures, and dairy herding is still

## Slovenian Delights

neighbouring Friuli and Veneto regions on the Italian side of the border. The typical dishes are simple but tasty. The ingredients frequently include naturally occurring plants such as nettles, sorrel, primrose leaves and dandelion. Dining tables in the Bovec area commonly offer (maize) polenta and potatoes (*čompe*) with the addition of dairy products (cottage cheese and cheese). At one time polenta was even prepared three times a day, and served with milk or greased with bacon if there was some hard work ahead. Another typical dish is pickled turnip with smoked pork ribs and *budlji*. Many dishes are based on cheese and cottage cheese.

Another true delight is the Soča trout, which is, however, ranked among the endangered fish species and is protected. Catching them is strictly apportioned. Those that are caught and eaten are rolled in buckwheat or maize flour and fried. It is also very tasty with *pršut* cured ham.



Those with a sweet tooth will drool at the dessert dumplings, which have earned a distinguished place among desserts, and like elsewhere in Slovenia, several types are prepared, both from filo and leavened dough. Then there is *fancelj* – an everyday dish of eggs, flour, milk and sugar. And of course the local *potica* cake, a must for major holidays. And pancakes with cottage cheese, jam, strawberries and raspberries, jam pastries, fried pastries including with leavened dough, doughnuts and meat-stuffed *ocvirkovca* bread, while the *potica* cakes feature lovage and tarragon stuffing.

So Bovec and its surroundings are attractive for the unspoiled and wild nature, the mountains and the emerald Soča, the gentle, unique interweaving of the Alpine and Mediterranean climate, centuries of maintained tradition, genuine people, their outstanding hospitality and of course their excellent food. ●



### Ingredients

- 1 kg of small potatoes, salt
- 20 dg of salted cottage cheese

### Preparation

Wash the unpeeled potatoes well and cut them a little to spread the salt. If they are bigger, they can also be halved. Then cook them in their skins in salted water. When cooked, rinse them. Serve in a dish, and alongside offer the salted cottage cheese. Enjoy immediately, while hot.

## ČOMPE S SKUTO – POTATOES WITH COTTAGE CHEESE

Čompe is the local word for potatoes in the Soča River valley. Served with cottage cheese, this was once a very widespread dish in the Soča

valley, especially around Bovec starting in the 19th century. Today it is still the most recognisable dish of the region. This dish is very filling,

which was of course highly appropriate in view of the hard living conditions in this part of Slovenia, where primarily potatoes, cottage cheese and

cheese were produced in the mountain valley. Čompe is a stand-alone dish most commonly served for supper.

## POŠTOKLJA

This is a very popular dish in the Kobarid area, and is known by several dialect names (such as poštokja, štoklja, štakanje). It is a vegetable and potato puree-type dish with dripping. The original name comes from the method of preparation, with the cooked vegetables being thoroughly mashed and squeezed.



**Ingredients** (quantities are not given, since the preparation of this dish depends on your own creativity and the ingredients that are available)

- Potato
- Kale or turnip leaf, cabbage, chicory, dandelion, string beans, squash or barley and vegetables

### For the dripping

- Fat or instead fritters, lard or sour cream
- Onion
- Garlic
- To taste add pepper, a little vinegar, milk and grated cheese

### Preparation

Peel, wash and boil the potato in salted water. Cook the selected vegetables separately. Once cooked, mix both together and mash or blend thoroughly into a puree. Mix in grated cheese or milk to taste. Add the selected

dripping (the most commonly used is pork lard), in which the diced onion and garlic is fried. You can also add pepper and a few drops of vinegar to Poštoklja. This dish can be served on its own. It can also be offered with sour cream, fritters or used as a side dish for meat.

## FRIKA

Frika is grated cheese fried in fat, with various combinations of potato, eggs, bacon, salami, cottage cheese or sausage. It actually originates in Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy, but is very popular in this part of the Soča valley.

### Ingredients

- 5 eggs
- 60 dg grated Tolmin cheese
- 40 dg peeled and thinly sliced potato
- 5 dg fat, lard, bacon or oil
- Pinch of salt

### Preparation

Salt the potato lightly and fry in the fat in a frying pan. Whisk the eggs, add the grated cheese, pour over the potato and mix well. Grill on one side, turn over and then grill on the other side. Serve.



### Dough

- 50 dg white flour
- Hot water

### Filling

- 50 dg dried pears
- Puree from 50 dg of apples
- 10 dg raisins
- 10 dg sugar
- 10 dg ground walnuts
- 5 dg breadcrumbs
- Butter
- Cinnamon
- Ground cloves
- Grated lemon zest and vanilla sugar

### Preparation

Wash the dried pears, removing the pips and stalks. Cook until soft (approx. 10 minutes)

and leave to cool. Prepare the apple puree separately. Sauté the butter and sugar to make a golden brown caramel mixture, add the grated apple and cook until soft. Take off the heat and cool. Mix in the cooked pear and apple puree. Sauté the breadcrumbs in the butter and add the cinnamon, ground cloves, lemon zest and vanilla sugar. Add the ground walnuts, washed raisins and sugar to taste. Mix in the cooked pear and apple puree. Mix all together well. Next prepare the filo dough. When the well kneaded soft dough cools, shape it into a thin roll and cut into short pieces. Stretch each piece into a circle 10 cm in diameter. Put a teaspoon of filling in each dough circle. Fold the filled circle and press the semi-circular edge together with fingers to get a little pocket shape. Cook the krafi in boiling water for as long as it takes

for them to rise to the surface. Remove from the water, serve on a plate or dish, grease with butter and shake in a mixture of sugar and cinnamon. are bigger, they can also be halved. Then cook them in their skins in salted water. When cooked, rinse them. Serve in a dish, and alongside offer the salted cottage cheese. Enjoy immediately, while hot.



## BOVŠKI KRAFI PIES

This is an original local Bovec speciality. This is a type of dough dessert typically eaten on Christmas Eve before going to midnight mass.

The photographs were produced as part of the 'Preserving Gastronomic Heritage' project".

# DUŠAN JOVANOVIĆ: Under the sign of freedom

Jože Osterman Photo Barbara Jakše Jeršič

## The world is a drama

The first association that anyone with at least a nodding acquaintance with the social reality of Slovenia will make on hearing the name Dušan Jovanović is the theatre. As a director and playwright, Dušan Jovanović is an artist who left an indelible mark on Slovenian theatre in the very period in which it was rising most intensively towards the pinnacle of European culture. It would be no exaggeration to claim that the theatre was successful in this thanks also, or even above all, to Jovanović. And since the world is a drama, as the title of Jovanović's recent book of essays claims, Slovenians of a certain age would undoubtedly also agree with the statement that in the radical liberalisation of Slovenian society from the 1960s onwards, the theatre and Jovanović were no mere bystanders but were in fact two of the most active creators of this process.

The process of reflection that is slowly clarifying the image of the pro-European development of Slovenia from a predominantly rural, deeply conservative society (a tradition that explains why it became, for a time, the prisoner of totalitarian 'social engineering') into a modern, liberal, post-industrial environment, recognises





the enormous contribution made by the cultural sphere, in particular literature and theatre, to this development. The cultural practices which even in the early 1960s were rapidly dissolving the model of enlightened, directly politically engaged

**‘I learnt Slovenian, talked to my classmates and made a bit of an effort. Two years later I got my first five [the highest mark] in Slovenian language. I fell in love with the language. But for a long time I continued to talk it with a Serbian accent. Even today it still happens sometimes.’**

socialist-realist culture and introducing in its place the contemporary European liberal cultural practices of play, improvisation, humour and free mental associations were the starting point. Jovanović was quick to get involved, becoming in just few years the most important protagonist of these changes. To a large extent it was through him that liberalisation entered the area of the former Yugoslavia, where it found an indescribably grateful and fertile field. Theatre and film in particular became, in the late 1960s and the decade that followed, a creative laboratory unique in the world which contributed to the world’s cultural treasury a number of outstanding artistic achievements that, in this region at least, remain unsurpassed. Theatre companies with breakthrough theatrical productions, which in the case of the former Yugoslavia mainly came from the Belgrade theatre festival BITEF, and the school of cinema known as the black wave of film were merely the two biggest peaks, now already solidly recorded in the art history of this world.

With his own personal destiny, Dušan Jovanović is a kind of incarnation of the world of south-eastern Europe, which

in the late 1960s rose up to become the creative core of the European continent, before destroying itself, right at the end of the century, in its own internal contradictions. Jovanović was born in Belgrade seventy years ago. His family tree is astonishing and typical of this part of the world. His father Ljubomir, the son of a Greek mother and a Kosovo Serb, was a telegraph operator at the state press agency Tanjug. He was married to Emilija, a girl of Croatian-Serbian origin, who seventy years ago presented him with a son, Dušan, whom he took with him to Ljubljana in 1951 following his separation from Emilija. There Dušan got used to Slovenian conditions and, in a unique way, adapted to them. ‘Yes, well, what could I do?’ says Dušan today, laconically. ‘I learnt Slovenian, talked to my classmates and made a bit of an effort. Two years later I got my first five [the highest mark] in Slovenian language. I fell in love with the language. But for a long time I continued to talk it with a Serbian accent. Even today it still happens sometimes.’ Yes, in our part of the world an ear for language is an important matter, for



## **‘Ljubljana became a new creative centre which also radiated its energy outwards, to the West.’**

language, considerably more humorous but no less reflective. From the very beginning it won over both public and critics. This really was a big change! He was readily accepted by the Slovenians, because his style of writing and acting represented a novelty which in many ways opened new views of the fascination of life, its pleasant and entertaining elements, and of human individuality, which was quickly becoming a social value once again.

Jovanović admits that the new elements that he brought to the world of the theatre were the result of the brilliant collective analyses that he was able to carry out with his most important teacher, Dominik Smole, an outstanding figure in the Slovenian theatre of the early 1960s, and his young colleagues and collaborators, among whom there were many writers. The presentations of the Pupilija Ferkeverk group, the play *Monument G*, the origins of the Glej Theatre, his innovation at the then Youth Theatre, *Fashion Victims Boom Boom*, were events that radically altered the image of the Slovenian theatre of the day. With them, Slovenian theatre very definitely entered the creatively extremely powerful theatrical ‘zones’ of the then federal state, of which Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian theatre were three examples; Ljubljana became a new creative centre which also radiated its energy outwards, to the West. Even now, a good two decades later, the legacy of this theatre from the former Yugoslavia still exercises a powerful effect on the theatres of the countries of south-eastern Europe.

Dušan Jovanović is very probably the most prolific Slovenian dramatic author. His oeuvre includes 24 dramas, or rather plays, since not everything written for the theatre can be called a ‘drama’.

Among these two dozen works there are practically no unfortunate texts that have not been performed or that have been forgotten, a fate that often befalls prolific writers. At the same time he is one of the most ‘in demand’ theatrical directors and the number of plays he has directed is growing steadily. He is currently preparing a premiere at the Ljubljana City Theatre, while in the autumn he will be working in Slovenia’s youngest theatre in Novo Mesto. A man whom theatres really want!

### **The play is freedom**

A constant insistence on the ‘openness of the world’, which is not exactly abundant in Slovenia today, seems to Jovanović to be a fundamental artistic and existential obligation. Shattering not merely formal boundaries but other boundaries too, and in particular the stereotypes with which central Europe is teeming, friendships with the widest possible circle of people, passionate expositions of the dilemmas and doubts that gnaw at the modern Slovenian world: all of these elements are a spontaneous part of Jovanović’s every action. The Slovenian world is actually too small for him: he admits that of his five favourite plays as director, at least two were in foreign theatres, for example Calderón de la Barca’s *Life is a Dream* in Dubrovnik and Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* in Subotica. He also rates his productions of Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*, Molière’s *Tartuffe*, and Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, while passing surprisingly quickly over some productions that have enjoyed a favourable critical reception.

Jovanović has occupied a unique place in Slovenian theatre, and one that has allowed him perhaps the greatest freedom of anyone working in this environment. Unlike the poet Tomaž Šalamun, who in his day ‘...grew tired of the image of my tribe / and moved out,’ Jovanović entered or immigrated to his world from outside, learnt its basic rules, fell in love with it, and with the experience of his youth and the other worlds that he carried inside him, significantly widened its frontiers. In short: after Jovanović everything is different! ●

without it many doors are closed to you! Jovanović passed this test with flying colours – and a degree in English and French from Ljubljana’s Faculty of Arts – but all of this was to serve his greatest goal: the theatre. With shining eyes he remembers how the theatre first enchanted him: ‘In 1944, when I was five years old, they took me to see the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* in Skopje. The city was then at war, tormented by lack of food, and everywhere there was misery and unhappiness. The opera was like another planet and that atmosphere took me over completely.’ This archetypal image of theatrical splendour as a completely different world was something that would never leave Jovanović.

### **The man is the artist**

Jovanović’s starting point for his entry into the world of Slovenian theatre was probably significantly different from those of his colleagues. The experiences of his life, based on the radical multiculturalism which he had to live even as a child, introduced to Slovenian theatre utterly new elements of a looser type of theatre, one less subject to national sentiment and

# SLOVENIAN IMPRINT ON THE HIMALAYAS

Juš Turk Photo ST0, Videotop archive

Alpinism is a long story of immeasurable courage, comradeship, outstanding success and the capabilities of a small nation that needed a big burst of speed to catch up with the others.

Triglav - the highest Slovenian mountain



**N**ORTH-WESTERN SLOVENIA IS DECKED WITH MAGNIFICENT mountains, ruled over by the 2864-metre-high peak of Triglav, which is also the country's national symbol. So it comes as no surprise that Alpinism developed in this land, along with some major world names in climbing. But it did not happen all that quickly. The first documented ascent of Triglav does indeed date back to 1778, but concerted Alpinism only started in Slovenia during the period of national awakening at the end of the 19th century, and to begin with only in the local mountains. Particularly after the Second World War, Slovenian climbers started looking further afield, and began climbing the mountains of the Central Alps, the Caucasus, Pamir, Atlas, the East African peaks and those of Lofoten, Spitzbergen, Greenland, Alaska, New Zealand, the Andes, Hindu Kush and Patagonia.

## The bold, then wonderfully fulfilled idea of Aleš Kunaver

Meanwhile, the top climber Aleš Kunaver wanted to raise Slovenian Alpinism to rank with the best in the world. And for this he set his sights on the Himalayas. When Slovenian climbers first got there, they were of



Aleš  
Kunaver

course mere novices in mountains where for instance the British and French already had 80 years of experience. But this did not discourage them: they took on the Himalayas, and in a very short time their efforts were noticed by Alpinists from other countries, who recognised that the Slovenians were doing something extraordinary. Aleš Kunaver also made climbing equipment as well as equipment for the mountain rescue service, and he improved upon this equipment after each Himalayan expedition. He was the leader of the first expedition to the Hindu Kush, which conquered five peaks, an expedition that reached the top of Anapurna and two expeditions to Makalu, as well as an expedition to Lhotse and Manaslu. He took part in a total of eight expeditions, and also drew up plans for the first Slovenian expedition to Mt. Everest.

But this did not happen for a while. On 29 May 1953, when Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing Norgay first reached the peak of Mt. Everest, talk of Slovenians conquering the Himalayan peaks had only just begun. The first Slovenian expedition in fact left for the Himalayas in 1960, towards the peak of Trisul. They did not actually reach the highest peak, but conquered the slightly lower Trisul II and Trisul III. Soon after that there were expeditions to Kangbachen, Anapurna II, Makalu and again to Kangbachen. However, it was precisely this that provided the basis from which they overtook the entire world elite in the next 15 years, and they did so by climbing up new and harder routes. Under the leadership of Aleš Kunaver, in 1975 Slovenians climbed one of the biggest Himalayan challenges of that time, the 8481 metre high south face of Makalu, the fifth highest mountain in the world, whose south face had yet to be tested. This, finally, marked their full entry into the pinnacle of world Alpinism.

### First married couple on the roof of the world

In 1979 Slovenian Alpinists first reached the summit of Everest from the dangerous west ridge. Their next ascent of the world's highest mountain in 1989 was also



Andrej Štremfelj



Davo Karničar

eight-thousanders in the world).

### Major risks and quite a few accidents

Then under the leadership of the great strategist of Slovenian Himalayan climbs, Tone Škarja, in an ascent of Mt. Everest via the hardest, western Slovenian route, for 45 days Slovenian climbers battled cold, winds, storms and a lack of oxygen. The final camp, which was already at an altitude of 8120 metres, was set up by Viki Grošelj and Marjan Manfreda, but they had to turn back owing to frostbite. Another two, Dušan Podbevšek and Roman Robas, also had to return, but two members of the expedition, Andrej Štremfelj and Nejc Zaplotnik, finally succeeded in summiting, and they were followed by Stane Belak, the Croatian Stipe Božič and Sherpa Ang Phu, but on the descent Ang Phu fell to his death.

### The Slovenian who was first to ski down from Everest

The year 2000 brought quite a historic achievement for Slovenians: after Franc Oderlap and Davo Karničar reached the summit of Everest, Karničar was the

## 'In 1979 Slovenian Alpinists first reached the summit of Everest from the dangerous west ridge.'

successful. Then in 1990 Slovenians were once again on the summit, when it was reached by Marija and Andrej Štremfelj and Janez Jeglič. This also meant that Marija became the first Slovenian woman and the thirteenth woman in the world to achieve this. She and husband Andrej were the first married couple to reach the highest peak in the world. In 1997 the summit of Everest was reached from the northern side by Aco Pepevnik, who was part of an international expedition, and following him the peak was climbed by Pavle Kozjek, the first Slovenian to summit without using additional oxygen (the first person to do this was the greatest name among Alpinists in the world, the Tyrolean Reinhold Messner, who was also the first to climb all the

first person in the world to ski down the mountain, from summit to base camp, and he performed this incredibly daring exploit in just over four hours. Three other Slovenian Alpinists climbed Everest at that time, too. They were followed five years later by two more, Viki Mlinar and Marko Lihteneker. Viki returned from the mountain, but Marko sadly became the first Slovenian victim of Everest. Sadly, too, many others remained in the Himalayas as dead witnesses to the human efforts to struggle with the highest mountains in the world. Another point worth noting perhaps is that the Slovenian Alpinists in the Himalayas were so good that they even established a school for Sherpas in Nepal. >>>



**‘Ultimately in climbing the most important thing is what the person can do, not technology.’**



### Lhotse the monster

Perhaps even more noteworthy is that a Slovenian expedition led by Aleš Kunaver in 1981 reached the upper edge of the truly infamous south face of the 8516 metre high peak of Lhotse, known among Alpinists as the “mightiest stage of world Alpinism”, and even called by the best of them a “monster”. The actual summit of Lhotse was only reached on 24 April 1990, in a dramatic 45-hour solo assault up the southern route by Tomo Česen. He named this route the Slovenian Route, and he dedicated it specifically to the memory of Aleš Kunaver.

### Mountain of Kunaver’s life

“Lhotse was the mountain of Aleš’s life,” his widow Dušica recounted to me a few years ago. “For twenty years he studied photographs of this most infamous mass in the Himalayas, that proving ground for the world Alpinism elite, that mighty mountain, which is horribly exposed, since it stands right in the face of everything coming from the Indian Ocean – all the precipitation is first released there, since it is the first rock face, the first obstacle it hits. The Slovenian expedition of 1981 did not get to the summit, because the weather conditions got too bad, but of course good and judicious Alpinists know when

to give up their objective and come down. All the same, it was that ascent that meant most to Aleš. When he returned in May 1984 from his eighth Himalayan expedition, after a few months his friend Mr. Huebeler and his wife came to see him. They wanted to write a book about the Slovenian Alps, and with this in mind Aleš asked the authorities for a helicopter. He got one, then he and his friends got into it next to the pilot. But soon after take off it crashed. They all died.”

Last year the south face of Langtang Lirung took from this life one of the best solo Alpinists in the world, the mountain rescuer Tomaž Humar, who managed more than 1500 ascents in his life, of which 70 were new climbs, yet he never climbed for glory or prizes. He was found dead on 14 November 2009 by Swiss Alpinists, after he had sent the message a few days earlier that he had a broken back and leg, that he was in a very critical state and that he would no longer send any communication. Why not will remain his secret for ever.

### Vlasta gives Trisul a proper ‘working over’

The glory of the Alpinist family of Kunaver was carried on in a different way by Aleš’s oldest daughter Vlasta, known primarily for her women’s world record in high mountain parachuting, when

she parachuted down from Trisul in 1987, something reported not just in Slovenia but around the world in big headlines. The second and third peaks of Trisul were actually climbed by Slovenians, as mentioned earlier, back in 1960, but not the first, highest peak. But then Vlasta herself climbed up it. And not just that: together with her husband, top parachutist Sandi Marinčič, she jumped off Trisul and sailed down into the Himalayan valleys. Marinčič’s other exploits include parachuting onto the summit of Triglav, jumping from one aircraft to another and performing various acrobatic feats.

### But are the Himalayas still what they were?

A mighty challenge to the boldest climbers? The Alpinist Viki Grošelj recently wrote that over the last few years, the highest mountains of our planet, and especially Mt. Everest, have seen the flourishing of “commercial” climbing, as the local people and the equipment they have installed started helping “weekend” climbers from all parts of the world in whatever way to climb the peaks. And Viki Grošelj, one of the great world Alpinists, takes the view that this is not such a good thing: “Ultimately in climbing the most important thing is what the person can do, not technology”.

# THE CITY WITH THE OLDEST VINE IN THE WORLD

Jože Prešeren Photo STO, Shutterstock



## Maribor and Pohorje

**M**ARIBOR, THE SECOND LARGEST city in Slovenia and the capital of Štajerska, as we like to call it, is a city which in many ways surpasses Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. The sparks of competition are constantly flying between the two cities, although it should be admitted that this has a positive influence on the development of both of them; the majority of these tensions between the two cities are more a battle of words: which of the two, for example, has the better football team, the better skiers, the better theatre, better festivals; which hosts the more important international events, and so on. It is not uncommon to hear discussions about which of the

two cities offers its inhabitants better living conditions, or which offers a better quality of life in terms of the environment available. It must be said that Maribor often has the advantage, particularly because of its close proximity to the Pohorje massif, a beautifully preserved natural environment that is suitable both for professional sport and for recreation, while on the other hand the city of Maribor itself is surrounded by hill vineyards famous for their excellent wine.

Maribor, which has a population of around 110,000, is also Slovenia's second university town and the economic and cultural centre, transport hub and main focus of tourism for north-eastern Slovenia.



### A brief look into history

It is almost the rule with Slovenia's larger towns that consideration of their origins has to look back to prehistoric times, or at least to antiquity, something demonstrated by archaeological excavations. Maribor is no exception. We can begin to talk about 'modern' Maribor, on the other hand, from 1164 onwards. This was the year that a fortification was built on Piramida Hill, below which a settlement later grew up. This settlement was called Markburg. The Slovenicised >>>



Oldest vine

version of the name, Maribor, appeared in 1836. The settlement obtained market rights in 1209 and is first mentioned as a town in historical sources dating from 1254. Shortly after this, the townspeople began building the town walls. These were two kilometres long and delimited the old town centre. The walls were further fortified with towers, parts of which are still standing. They are known as the Judgment Tower, the Tscheligi Tower, the Jews' Tower and the Water Tower. These towers played an important role in the town's defence against Turkish raids and historians are still discovering many legends about them today.

Medieval Maribor was mainly built of stone and wood. Fires were frequent and diseases were rife, particularly the plague. It is no coincidence, then, that one of the most beautiful monuments in the city is the seventeenth-century Plague Column (also known as the Marian Column). In economic terms the town's development was relatively good, and it became known as a centre of trade (the wine trade was particularly strong) and crafts. A major developmental incentive came in the 19th century with the construction of the *Südbahn* or Southern Railway between Vienna and Trieste, which linked Maribor to the world in 1846. From that moment the city developed more quickly and in more directions, since many traditional crafts and trades began to develop into industry. The food industry was



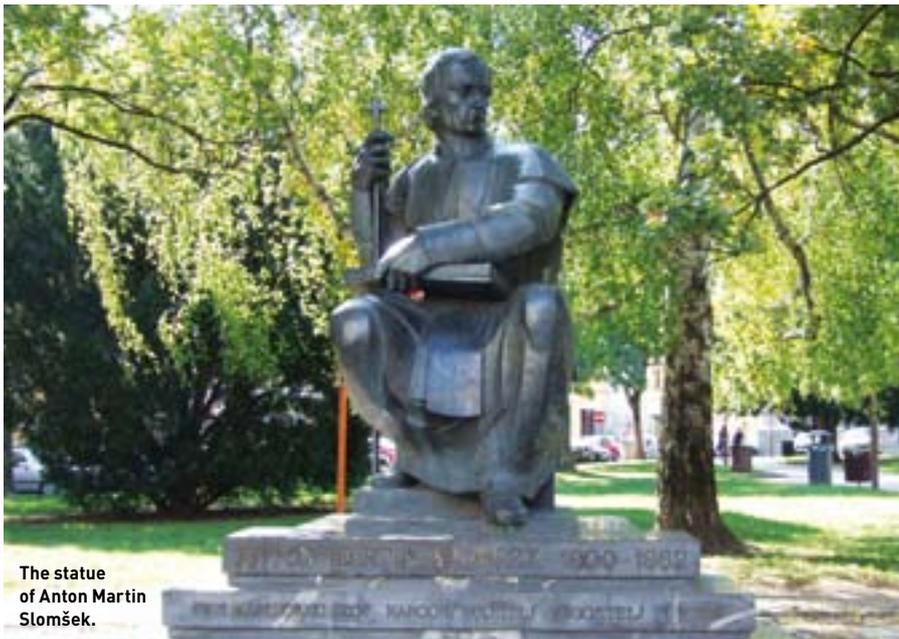
Kurenti in the finish line of Golden Fox Competition

particularly strong, but textile factories and metalworking workshops soon began to appear too. The timber industry also developed. The growth of the city was particularly noticeable in the period between the wars. Immediately before the Second World War the city had a little over 30,000 inhabitants. Maribor experienced its biggest leap forwards after the Second World War, since it was one of the most developed industrial cities in Yugoslavia. The break-up of the federal state hit the city hard but its inhabitants soon gathered sufficient strength to start moving forward again. With fewer jobs available in industry, opportunities for development appeared in tourism and in other service activities, while even industry is enjoying a new upswing – the car parts industry is particularly strong, although it has been affected by the recent economic crisis.

### Maribor national heroes

The city of Maribor boasts many eminent figures who were born here or who were active in the city. They include numerous artists and scientists, experts in various fields, who are also significant at the national level. This is not the place, however, for a list of names. Instead, we shall take a closer look at just two

outstanding figures who occupy an indelible place in the national history of the Slovenian people. The first is Blessed Anton Martin Slomšek, beatified by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Maribor a few years ago and whom we shortly expect to be canonised as a saint of the Catholic Church. Who was this great man and what does Maribor owe to him? Anton Martin Slomšek (1800-1862) was a bishop, theologian, writer, poet and teacher whose work, besides his religious activities, was directed towards a national rebirth and encouraging the use of his native tongue; many of his poems have today become national songs. Simultaneously with the religious revival, Slomšek also influenced the national rebirth, encouraging literary and publishing activities. In 1846 Slomšek was appointed Bishop of Lavant. The seat of the bishopric was at Sankt Andrä in what is today Austrian Carinthia. It was largely thanks to Slomšek that the Lavantine diocese became a predominantly Slovenian diocese in Lower Styria (today's Štajerska). In 1859, after many years of effort, Slomšek succeeded in transferring the seat of the diocese from Sankt Andrä to Maribor, thus applying a strong check to the forcible Germanisation of the



The statue of Anton Martin Slomšek.

## ‘Maribor experienced its biggest leap forwards after the Second World War, since it was one of the most developed industrial cities in Yugoslavia.’

Slovenian population of Styria.

The second great figure of whom the people of Maribor are particularly proud today is General Rudolf Maister (1874–1934), who was also a fine poet. The greatest achievement of his life, the details of which have only been fully known and appreciated in recent decades, in particular since the proclamation of Slovenian independence, was the definitive shaping of Slovenia’s northern border. In 1918, at the end of the First World War, Rudolf Maister, who had already enjoyed an interesting and varied military career, assumed military command of the Maribor district and the whole of Lower Styria. His military authority was subject to the National Council for Styria, which promoted him to the rank of general. This was the period in which it was being decided whether the city of Maribor was to belong to Austria or to the emerging state of Yugoslavia; Maribor’s city council had already voted in favour of annexation to Austria. General Maister responded by announcing a mobilisation in the military district under his command. He gathered around 4,000 soldiers. On 23 November 1918, members of his units disarmed the German military guard, a unit of the German-controlled city council, and dissolved it. Thus the

new Slovenian army became the only military force in the city. Maister and his men occupied the Slovenian border area and set up the northern Slovenian border, which remained in force even after the signing of the peace treaty with Austria. He also had the opportunity to undertake the liberation of Carinthia with his men, but the new Slovenian government in Ljubljana was hesitant and refused to give him permission. Several monuments to General Maister have been erected in Maribor.

### Sights of Maribor

Maribor’s Old Town places it among those European cities that are recognisable for their uniqueness and tradition and the excellence of their location – Maribor lies on the river Drava, between the green Pohorje massif and vineyard-covered hills.

Maribor’s Old Town offers picturesque strolls along the banks of the Drava and through lively streets and squares where tradition and modernity meet. Visitors are always charmed by Lent, the oldest part of the city, with the remains of the old town walls and towers, and the house with the oldest vine in the world growing on its front. This vine, which has its own permanent custodian and still produces grapes, is

the subject of special care from the city authorities, and the solemn picking of its grapes is an important annual ceremony. Nearby is the castle square with the castle and the museum, the main square with the famous Plague Pillar and the Town Hall, Slomšek’s cathedral with its prominent tower, the synagogue, the art gallery and the theatre. We should also mention that Maribor’s Old Town is also the main venue for the extremely successful annual Lent Festival, which attracts performers from many different countries. Besides this festival the city hosts numerous other local and international events – the Old Vine Festival, Musical September, the Borštnik Theatre Festival and, last but not least, the Golden Fox Trophy, a women’s Alpine skiing World Cup competition. It is no coincidence then, that Maribor has been chosen as the European Capital of Culture in 2012, or that it is hosting the 26th Winter Universiade in 2013.

Walking along the city streets you come to one of the most beautiful urban parks in Slovenia, below the hills of Piramida and Kalvarija and the vineyard-covered hills around the city. Also worth a visit is the city wine cellar, which extends under a considerable part of the city centre and is one of the oldest and largest wine cellars in Europe.

Our description of Maribor has not left us much room for Pohorje, the green lungs of the city and the main recreation centre for the citizens of Maribor and large numbers of tourists. Pohorje attracts countless hikers, cyclists, extreme sports enthusiasts, skiers and above all lovers of unspoilt nature and peace. Pohorje is also a treasury of natural heritage, with many intact natural sights ranging from a peat marsh with mountain lakes, the tallest spruce in Slovenia and the remains of the ancient forest of Šumik to deposits of igneous rock (tonalite, gabbro and marble) like few in the world. The Pohorje cable car, the oldest of its kind in Slovenia, has been completely overhauled in time for this year’s skiing season. The cable car carries visitors and other visitors to Pohorje from the edge of the city directly to the heart of one of the most beautiful recreation centres in Slovenia and this part of Europe. ●

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



**Lipizzaners in the snow**  
Photo Darinka Mladenovič