

Sinfo

PM Janša:

The EU and the UN have many common priorities

EU offers Serbia an interim agreement

Silvester Šurla:

Janša threatened two of the most significant projects of Pivovarna Laško (the Laško Brewery) - that is the takeover of Mercator and the entire Group buyout offer by management

France Prešeren - a poet of imperishable fame

QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT



Ban Ki-moon /Secretary-General of the United Nations/: **This visit is proof of the increasing importance of Slovenia in the world**, Ljubljana, 25 January: By this I'd like to highlight its cooperation in UN peacekeeping missions, an essential contribution in helping the Western Balkans on its path to peace and prosperity, successful membership of the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council, and the good reputation of Slovenian diplomats in the international community, like the current president of Slovenia, Danilo Türk, and Slovenian Ambassador to the UN, Sanja Štiglic.



Žiga Turk /Development Minister/: **Creativity Vital for Development**, Brussels, 22 January: Creativity is a horizontal topic of four priorities of the new Lisbon Strategy cycle (2008-2011). Stimulation of research and innovation is essential for economic growth, competitiveness and job-creation. The new Lisbon Strategy cycle should focus on the implementation of reforms and reaching the goals set in the document, since other aspects functioned well. The Lisbon Strategy for the period 2008-2011 must first and foremost be a strategy by which Europe not only responds to, but also sets the trends of globalisation; by which Europe creates ideas, values and opinions. Most of all, however, this must be a strategy which will make Europe the most creative area in the world.



Marjeta Cotman /Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs/: **Women's potential is not used**, Brdo pri Kranju, 31 January: According to information from the EU, women are more educated than men and represent almost 60 per cent of university graduates. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the labour market. On the contrary, women remain in typically female branches and occupations, and occupy lower positions in the employment hierarchy than men. Therefore, their potential remains unused, because even those girls that are successful in the fields of science and technology during their primary and secondary education rarely choose such subjects later.



Giscard d'Estaing: **We look on the Slovenian Presidency in a positive way**, Ljubljana, 29 January: Elsewhere in Europe they look on the Slovenian Presidency in a positive way, and treat it as active, cautious and capable. The Slovenian Presidency is also a reflection of the way the Union has gone. Years ago, the EU was separated into new and old, and big and small members. Today, we have a union of twenty-seven equal members, who in a good and friendly atmosphere seek for ways for joint action.



Janez Podobnik /Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning/: **The focus will be on efficient energy use**, Ljubljana, 29 January: In meeting the requirements of the new package on energy and climate change which the European Commission presented last week, Slovenia will strive for the lowest costs possible, and therefore bring efficient energy use to the fore, and also support it with various mechanisms; from financial to tax and others. Among other, the mentioned package for Slovenia foresees the greenhouse gas emissions in sectors outside the European Union Emission Trading Scheme with emission allowances (ETS) – that is, households, traffic, agriculture, waste – decreasing by 4 per cent up to 2020 in comparison with 2005, and at the same time, increasing renewable energy sources to 25 per cent.



Anže Logar

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MINISTER PODOBNIK: ENERGY AND CLIMATE PACKAGE AMBITIOUS BUT REALISTIC

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SILVESTER ŠURLA (THE JOURNALIST FIRED FROM MAG, CURRENTLY EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF TOTAL TEDNA WEEKLY): JANŠA THREATENED TWO OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS OF PIVOVARNA LAŠKO (THE LAŠKO BREWERY) - THAT IS THE TAKEOVER OF MERCATOR AND THE ENTIRE GROUP BUYOUT OFFER BY MANAGEMENT.



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YOU DO NOT FORGET THE FIRST TIME

The first month is behind us. Of the Presidency, that is. After three years of preparations, the time to realise the six months of the Presidency has come. Regarding the demanding plans of the Community, it is still too early to speak of successes, although some results have already been produced – the agreement on consumer credits at the EU level and the almost simultaneous ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon in the presiding Slovenia and in Malta, followed by the ratification in Romania and France few days later.

Many people in Slovenia were surprised by the wide response that Slovenia's presidency has met globally. Even to such an extent that the media made a copy of every sarcastic comment made in this or that media on the account of the Slovenian Presidency and served them to the Slovenian readers. Since there will probably be some more foreign comments on this subject, the Slovenian media have no fear of running short of this kind of material to publish.

Troubled times await the European Union. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has visited us and exchanged views on the current situation in the region and in the world with the presiding country of the European Council. All this comes in the present issue of Sinfo, where we also publish an interview with an acknowledged Slovenian investigative journalist discussing the media situation in Slovenia.

For the ministers of the Slovenian Government, the last two weeks have been characterised by the presentation of sector priority tasks at the competence boards of the European Parliament. According to the Members of the European Parliament, the tasks were well performed, and above all, a stable foundation for cooperation of both institutions of the European Union during the Slovenian Presidency has been established. This is very important, since the ministers still have ahead of them five months of joint activities for the well-being of European citizens.

In addition, the 'e-news' of the month: Slovenia is not only the first 'new' Member State to preside. It is also the first to offer a chance to follow the activities of the Government and the Presidency by mobile phone during the Presidency. How? Read all about it in Sinfo.

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

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PARLIAMENT RATIFIES LISBON TREATY

The National Assembly ratified the Lisbon Treaty on 29 January in a 74-to-6 vote. The document is to ensure efficient operation of the enlarged European Union and strengthen its role in the world. Slovenia became the second EU country to ratify the document, after Hungary.

The endorsement has already been welcomed by Prime Minister Janez Janša, who told the MPs that all countries needed to ratify the treaty in order for it to enter into force.

One of the basic points of the new document is increasing the role of deciding by a qualified majority on the back of consensus-based decision making.

The treaty also omits a direct reference to constitutionality, which caused fear among the French and Dutch that the EU was changing into a super state. No article of the treaty also mentions EU symbols, such as its flag or national anthem.

On the other hand, the Lisbon Treaty maintains the post of the EU foreign minister (renamed high representative for foreign affairs and security policy) and minor adjustments to the number of seats in the European Parliament (750 + 1, with the speaker excluded from the quota of MPs).

It also includes a reduced number of commissioners and the option to withdraw from the bloc. It gives the EU a unified legal identity that will allow the bloc to sign international treaties and contains provisions on strengthening the role of the European Parliament.

In order for the treaty to enter into force it must be ratified by all member states. In most countries the decision is to be taken by parliaments, while Ireland, bound by its legislation, is to hold a referendum.

It is hoped in the EU27 to complete the ratification procedure by the end of the year and that the treaty enters into force at the beginning of 2009. Monitoring the ratification of the treaty is one of Slovenia's priorities as the current EU president.

PM JANŠA AND GENERAL SECRETARY OF ETUC FAVOUR AN ENLARGED AND STRENGTHENED SOCIAL EUROPE

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, and the current president of the European Council, Janez Janša, received representatives of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) on 10 January. Both the Prime Minister and the General Secretary of the ETUC, John Monks, supported the development and promotion of the European social model, and they discussed the key issues in the field of social affairs to be dealt with during Slovenia's EU Council Presidency.

Prime Minister Janša and General Secretary Monks exchanged views on certain legislative proposals in the field of social affairs, on energy and climate change issues, and on challenges in the area of migration. They agreed that the enlargement of the European Union had to go hand-in-hand with the enlargement of social Europe. General Secretary John Monks assured the President of the European Council, Janez Janša, of the support and constructive cooperation of the European Trade Union Confederation inter alia in preparations for the EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit to be held in Peru in May 2008. The next meeting between the ETUC and the President of the European Council, Janez Janša, is scheduled for March 2008.



Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel (right) and his Serbian counterpart Vuk Jeremić (left) agree that Serbia should sign a pre-accession agreement soon

MINISTER RUPEL MEETS SERBIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS JEREMIĆ

The President of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, Dr Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, received on 11 January the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr Vuk Jeremić. Their discussions focused on the main theme of bringing Serbia closer to the European Union.

Minister Rupel pointed out that the European Union had affirmed some time ago that the whole of the Western Balkans had a future in Europe, adding that, of all the countries in the region, Serbia in particular had vast intellectual, organisational and administrative potential. The Minister also emphasised that the Slovenian EU Presidency is making every effort to ensure that the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Serbia and the European Union is signed as soon as possible, while warning, however, that a coordinated position had not yet been reached on the subject within the European Union. He announced that the presidency would take steps to ensure such a position was reached at the earliest possible opportunity.

RASMUSSEN URGES EU LEADERSHIP IN CLIMATE CHANGE COMBAT

The visiting Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen urged the EU in Ljubljana on 30 January to assume leadership in the efforts to reach a global deal to fight climate change as a follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012. The UN conference to forge such an agreement is to be held in Copenhagen next year. Climate change and energy issues rank high among Slovenian priorities for its Presidency of the EU this half year, as they did in Rasmussen's talks with Prime Minister Janez Janša as part of his official visit to Ljubljana.

Addressing a joint press conference after the talks, the pair pledged their countries' commitment to the implementation of the ambitious goals to cut down carbon emissions as set down in the energy and climate package which the European Commission unveiled last week.

However, the hottest issue this time is the developments in the Western Balkans, in particular Serbia and Kosovo. The two prime ministers welcomed decision by EU foreign ministers to offer Serbia an interim political agreement.

According to Janša, they also underscored the need to resolve

Photo:Bobo



The Prime Ministers Rasmussen and Janša on Krvavec

the Kosovo status in such a way as to stabilise the region and preserve unity of the EU.

Rasmussen said the two countries shared the view that the future of South East European countries was in the EU and NATO. He called for giving Serbia a clear signal for its future membership, while he also backed Croatia's progress towards the bloc.

The pair also exchanged praise for the other country. Slovenia looks up to Denmark in particular on its labour legislation and the high level of renewables in its national energy production and consumption.

Rasmussen congratulated Slovenia on what he labelled its historic presidency of the EU. He reminded reporters that Denmark held the presidency when Slovenia and other nine candidates wrapped up accession talks with the EU in December 2002.

SLOVENIAN AND ITALIAN PRESIDENT FORWARD LOOKING



President Danilo Türk (right) received Italian counterpart Giorgio Napolitano, the first head of state to pay an official visit to the new Slovenian president

Slovenian President Danilo Türk and visiting Italian counterpart Giorgio Napolitano stressed after a meeting on 14 January that the two countries needed to find new areas of cooperation instead of only resolving old issues. "The future offers the best path for dealing with painful memories from the past," Türk said.

"Our bilateral relations are close, but they must be even closer, especially because of the minorities," Napolitano said, adding that minorities were an asset that should be seen as a basis for furthering bilateral cooperation.

"In this sense we should forget the events that divided us in the past. We have to focus more on cooperation in Europe and erase any trace of misunderstanding," Napolitano added.

Napolitano, who is the first foreign head of state to pay an official visit to Slovenia since Türk took over as president late last year, also met Prime Minister Janez Janša and Parliament Speaker France Cukjati.

Prime Minister Janša and Napolitano agreed that the two countries had reached a high level of cooperation and that intensive dialogue was underway at all levels. They also believe Slovenia's membership in the EU, the euro area and the Schengen zone has created new opportunities for cooperation.

Napolitano and Cukjati meanwhile focused on deepening inter-parliamentary cooperation and the role of national parliaments in the ratification of the bloc's new reform treaty.

FRANCE AND SLOVENIA DISCUSS DEFENCE TOPICS

At a meeting on 17 January, French Defence Minister Herve Morin and his Slovenian counterpart Karl Erjavec discussed the priorities of their successive EU presidencies in a bid to ensure the continuum of policies launched by the German EU Presidency through 2008.

"We are two pillars of the same bridge, which is firm as it is based on trust and a common, almost identical, attitude towards European defence policy," Morin told the press after the meeting in Ljubljana, adding that he and Erjavec want defence policy to get the impetus it deserves.

Talks revolved around the development of EU military capacities, as well as the European Defence Agency. Erjavec said Slovenia would try to make sure during its Presidency stint that the agency kicks into action.

"We want the European Defence Agency to eventually get a three-year budget so that it could launch new programmes related to the European technological and industrial base," Erjavec said. Talking about the relationship between the EU and NATO,



French Defence Minister Herve Morin (right) meeting Slovenian counterpart Karl Erjavec (left) in Ljubljana

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the ministers agreed that capabilities should not be duplicated, as the organisations need to play their respective roles in defence policy. The ministers further discussed international peacekeeping missions, foremost among them the mission in Chad.

MINISTER PLEDGES SLOVENIA'S ASSISTANCE IN CUTTING EU RED TAPE

Public Administration Minister Gregor Virant pledged the full support of Slovenia's EU Presidency for the elimination of red tape as he held talks on 18 January in Munich with former Bavarian premier Edmund Stoiber, the head of the EU High Level Group on Administrative Burdens.

"Europe has become too bureaucratic over the past decades; regulations are too complex and they impose excessive costs on the economy. It is good that this trend is now reversing," Virant said. According to him, Stoiber's group will play a vital role by giving the European Commission specific proposals for reducing administrative barriers.

Virant said this was also one of the priorities of Slovenia's EU Presidency, so he told Stoiber that the presidency and the high level group will maintain ongoing contact. One idea of the Slovenian Presidency is to organise a conference with the European Commission and the European Association of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, at which companies would present proposals for cutting red tape.

Virant also presented Slovenia's experience in this field, saying that Slovenia has become a role model with its policies and many other countries are following its lead. EU leaders made a commitment at the March 2007 summit that EU-level administrative burdens will be reduced by 25% by 2012.

FM DIMITRIJ RUPEL MEETS WITH PAKISTANI PRESIDENT PERVEZ MUSHARRAF

The President of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dr Dimitrij Rupel, met the Pakistani President, Mr Pervez Musharraf, in Brussels. Discussions at the 21 January meeting focused on the situation in Pakistan and preparations for the elections, as well as other important issues in the region, including the situation in Afghanistan.

Rupel informed Mr Musharraf that the European Union is aware of the problems currently facing Pakistan, which is an important partner of the EU. The tragic death of Benazir Bhutto and numerous attacks on the civil population indicate the gravity of the present situation. Slovenia's Foreign Minister, Dr Rupel, speaking to the President of Pakistan, confirmed the European Union's interest in the process of democratisation in Pakistan and underlined the importance of efforts to ensure that free and fair parliamentary elections are held on 18 February, and that they are held in conditions of the utmost security. The task of the Pakistani authorities is to ensure this. The European Union will monitor the election process through its observers, and Dr Rupel welcomed Mr Musharraf's assurance that the Pakistani authorities would guarantee cooperation with the observer mission.

SLOVENIA SIGNS ICZM PROTOCOL

Slovenia has signed, alongside 12 other countries, the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (ICZM Protocol), which establishes a common framework for managing the Mediterranean coastal zone and entails the neces-

sary measures to strengthen regional cooperation.

The protocol was signed on 22 January in Madrid by parties to the Barcelona Convention on protection of the marine environment and coastal region of the Mediterranean, including Algeria, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria and Tunisia.

The protocol is an important tool to achieve successful management of the Mediterranean coastal region and its resources, based on cooperation and consensus that exceed the political frame.

MINISTER MATE UPBEAT ABOUT SCHENGEN ZONE SECURITY



Slovenian Interior Minister Dragutin Mate dismissed fears about security in the expanded Schengen borderless zone, going into an informal meeting on 25 January with his EU counterparts confident that the new Schengen members were able to provide security for the bloc.

"The first results have given us a good picture. Slovenia has stopped more than 1,700 people on the list in the Schengen Information System, confiscated over 140 cars stolen in the EU and checked more than 5 million people from September until now," Mate told the press at the Brdo pri Kranju Congress Centre. According to him, the next few months will see serious discussions to assess whether there are any problems, but current evaluations show everyone is well prepared.

Justice and Security Commissioner Franco Frattini was similarly optimistic, saying that since the Schengen zone was expanded, law enforcement authorities have gotten a large number of tips leading to the arrest of hundreds of suspects or preventing suspects from entering in the first place. Yet Frattini attributes the problems to the lack of harmonisation between national legislation. This is why the EU needs a common asylum policy, he said.

EU MINISTERS CLARIFY RULES ON TRIAL IN ABSENTIA

EU justice ministers expressed support for a framework decision on strengthening rights in cases of trial in absentia, which sets down clarified rules in court cases in which a defendant is sentenced even if they have not attended the proceedings. According to the Slovenian EU Presidency, the rules will establish a single approach for the mutual recognition of court decisions taken in trials in absentia.

This will improve legal certainty and strengthen judicial cooperation in criminal matters, Slovenian Justice Minister Lovro Šturm

said after the informal ministerial meeting at Brdo pri Kranju on 26 January.

Once the clarified rules take effect (the final confirmation is expected in July), defendants across the EU will need to be properly notified that they are being put on trial in a different EU country. Applicable to criminal offences committed in another Member State that are also covered by the European arrest warrant, the rules specify that defendants will have to be represented by a lawyer and given the chance to request a retrial. If these standards are not complied with, the Member State where the accused is situated can refuse the demand for extradition. The proposal, however, does not provide for harmonising the procedural provisions of Member States.

European Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini expressed hope that the standards will be confirmed during Slovenia's EU Presidency. "This would be a very important message and it will improve the level of procedural rights across Europe," he said.



European Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini and Slovenian Justice Minister Lovro Šturm

SURVEY: SLOVENIA ABOVE EU AVERAGE IN MIGRANT INTEGRATION

Slovenia's Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), which measures policies to integrate migrants, is above the EU average and the highest among the EU newcomers, according to a survey presented on 10 January by the Ljubljana Faculty of Social Sciences and the British Council.

The MIPEX survey, the most comprehensive survey on the rights of legal migrants, puts Slovenia in 11th place among the EU-25 countries (the EU without Romania and Bulgaria), Norway, Switzerland and Canada.

The index compares legislation in individual countries by means of more than 140 indicators, and represents a multi-dimensional picture of migrants' opportunities to participate in European societies, comparing the existing practices with the best ones.

The index covers six policy areas: possibilities for obtaining long-term residence, labour market access, family reunion, political participation, access to citizenship and anti-discrimination. One of the authors of the survey, Thomas Huddleston of the Brussels-based Migration Policy Group, said that Slovenia had been pursuing good practices in its migration policies, which was reflected in its strong showing among the 28 countries and the EU newcomers.

SLOVENIAN POTENTIAL FOR INNOVATION

Forty of the best Slovenian innovations and ten of the most innovative Slovenian companies were presented at the 2nd Slovenian Innovation Forum. The 175 entries were entered in one of the following five categories: innovative products and services, innovative processes, innovative business models, inventions, and

innovative companies. The majority of entries, 130 to be exact, came from the field of innovative products and services. They were entered in various stages of development. The entries came from many areas of expertise: engineering (62), information and communication technologies (38), electrotechnics (27), chemistry (14), construction (10), etc. There were many interdisciplinary ideas that did not fit into any single category.

The primary aim of the Slovenian Innovation Forum, which took place on 17-18 January, was to promote and support the development of innovation, to help innovative companies grow and, of course, to create ties between science and the economy. The display area and the catalogue showed 40 innovations made during the previous year selected by a national innovations commission. Assistant Prof. Matjaž B. Jurič headed the commission, which was composed of 50 experts, foreign as well as domestic. As stated by Dr. Jurič, the commission used the following criteria to grade the entries: usefulness, innovation, relevance, practical feasibility, market appeal, socio-economic effects and suitability of approach.

So among other things, the Slovenian potential for innovation has yielded a safe electronic document storage system and various tools to simplify the functioning of websites run by companies and media outlets. There have been innovations in the recycling of light-weight concrete and polyurethane building refuse, as well as a gene meant to speed up primary metabolism. Also, products that alleviate everyday ailments, such as a device for spine-support.

On the display shelves there were everything from high-tech products to seemingly everyday articles, including travel aids. TripTracker is a Slovenian innovation used enthusiastically by world travellers. One of them, Gregor Födriansperg—Fedr (www.fedr.net), says, "TripTracker is a marvellous invention that helps us create interesting travelogues using two travel aids – a digital camera and a GPS device. It's simple to use, it utilizes the Google Earth application to display our journeys, and inserts photographs according to the time and place where they were taken."

Additional information is available at: www.sfi.si

IMAGES OF SLOVENIA ADORN EU'S NEW YORK MISSION HQ

The headquarters of the EU's mission to the United Nations in New York are traditionally artistically adorned by the presiding country. For the next six months the premises in Manhattan will bear life-sized images of what photographer Aleksandra Vajd associates with life in Slovenia.

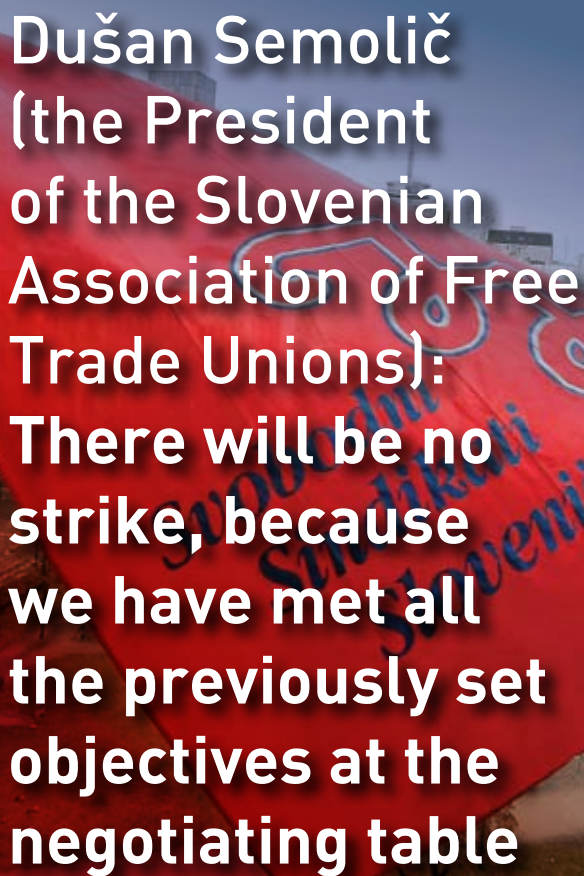
Upon inspecting the premises, Vajd came up with an idea of what she calls "living walls", a display in which her photographs make up part of the background and in this way part of the space in which they are set.

Vajd's objective was to make a reconstruction of 20 years of life – snapshots evoking memories through identifying elements, such as the mountains represent for Slovenians. The image that has proved to be most popular with EU ambassadors and staff working at the mission is a perfect life-size shot of a door, which has been labelled the entry to a "secret room".

The "Custom-Made" project was organised by the Foreign Ministry through the Consulate General in New York and the Slovenian mission in the UN, in cooperation with the company Luminus.

Vajd (37) has had her photography exhibited in Slovenia as well as in Prague, Sarajevo and Bratislava, and has been featured at a number of group exhibitions in neighbouring countries, Poland and Germany.

WHATMAKESTHENEWS



**Dušan Semolič
(the President
of the Slovenian
Association of Free
Trade Unions):
There will be no
strike, because
we have met all
the previously set
objectives at the
negotiating table**

After the trade unions at the beginning of January announced a general strike of public sector workers for 30 January and a strike of employees in the private sector for 6 February, and after almost a month of negotiations, the employers and the Government, and the Presidency of the Slovenian Association of the Trade Unions decided on 29 January that the negotiations had been successful, so there were no more reasons for the general warning strike of the private sector announced for 6 February. The Minister for Public Administration, Gregor Virant, and the delegates of the representative trade unions of the public sector also signed an agreement on 24 January which provides for an arrangement on the time schedule of eliminating pay differentials or the time schedule of pay increases following the new collective agreements on activities and occupations, respectively.

Social partners in the private sector were expected to sign a collective agreement implementing a wage increase agreed on 25 January, but the signing has been cancelled. Company bosses claim that the unions had put forward an unacceptable demand. Under the agreement, wages would rise by 4.7% in February, but taking into account wage increases carried out at individual companies in 2007. Together with supplements, this should cover the 5.6% inflation from the last year.

The minimum wage would increase by 20 euros immediately. Yet in proposing the wording for the actual collective agreement, the unions wanted an automatic increase of all base wages by 4.7%. In effect this would mean that even companies which raised wages by 10% last year but did not raise base wages, would have to agree to the 4.7% hike.

In August last year, pay should have already increased by an agreed two per cent. The companies that have already done that only have to increase the salaries by the remaining difference, 2.7 per cent. Companies suffering losses or those in which the trade union together with the management established that a certain pay increase would endanger a greater number of jobs, may defer the pay adjustment for six months by mutual agreement.

They also agreed on a minimum pay increase. The employers consented to an immediate increase in pay by 20 euros as of 1 January this year; however, employers and trade unions will propose to the Government that the collective increase in minimum pay should be 35 euros, in reference to the agreement. The agreement contains a directive that discussions of pay increases based on productivity should start and be included in the collective agreements of activities. Employers and trade unions agreed on the beginning of negotiations on a collective agreement for 2008 and 2009, which should be adopted in May at the latest. This collective agreement should provide for pay to be adjusted after February and August. During negotiations on the new collective agreement, the length of this year's and perhaps next year's holiday allowances should also be agreed.

AGREEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR ALSO SIGNED

The Minister for Public Administration, Gregor Virant, and the delegates of representative trade unions of the public sector also signed an agreement on 24 January which provides for an arrangement on the time schedule of eliminating of pay disparities or the time schedule of pay rises following the new collective agreements of activities and occupations, respectively. On 1 May this year, they will enter into the system of pay disparities equalisation, irrespective of the time the negotiations finish, with a right to balance payments until 1 May. The second quarter will be paid on 1 January 2009. The next two adjustments should follow on 1 September 2009 and on 1 March 2010.

For the latter two dates, a safeguard has been established. If real growth in pay in the public sector exceeds real growth in productivity by more than 0.5 percentage points, a safeguard is triggered and the dates are redefined, Virant explained.

He said they were ready for partial admissions into the new salary system; when a branch (activity or occupation) concludes a collective agreement, it may enter into the new salary system three months afterwards. However, the Government wishes to acquire the consent of an appropriate number of trade unions.

After signing the agreement, Mr Virant said that this might be a turning point, since the tensions between the Government and the public sector had lessened. So new possibilities opened up to complete negotiations on 13 collective agreements regarding activities and occupations as soon as possible, which is the final stage of admission into the new salary system in the public sector.

The Minister designated the agreement as a "reasonable compromise between both parties". In his opinion, both parties got what is essential to them. Thus he emphasised again that it was crucial for the Government side to keep the salary growth in the public sector moderate in the macro-economic sense, so as not to cause inflationary pressure.

In the coming years, salaries in the public sector will grow slightly faster than salaries in industry, as inscribed in the social agreement. According to the Minister, this is the result of pay stagnation since 2002 and the accumulation of funds to eliminate income disparities.



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (left) and Prime Minister Janez Janša (right) making statement after meeting

On 25 January at Brdo pri Kranju, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia and President of the European Council, Janez Janša, met with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, who visited Slovenia at the Prime Minister's invitation. After the meeting concluded, Janša observed that it was indeed taking place at an appropriate time and expressed his conviction that the meeting would contribute to a more effective and timely response to common challenges in the future.

Prime Minister Janez Janša also said he was delighted that the Secretary-General was paying a visit to Slovenia during Slovenia's EU Council Presidency, since both the European Union and the United Nations share a number of priorities. In the Prime Minister's words, the European Union is an important part of this organisation, since it contributes almost 40 percent to the capacity of United Nations peacekeeping operations, while also providing contributions to a number of other priority activities of this international body. The common priorities, such as climate change, intercultural dialogue and challenges in the Western Balkan region, were indeed the main topic of discussion between the Prime Minister and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Prime Minister Janez Janša warned against a repeat of events in Bosnia-Herzegovina in Kosovo. We have to remember that, while

discussions went on about the legal basis for intervening in Bosnia, thousands of people were killed, Janša said. According to him, the world needs to learn from the events in Bosnia in the early 1990s. "We have to keep that in mind when we speak about the legal basis" for an international mission in Kosovo, he added.

In his opinion, the international community can "behave as a responsible factor or it can look into details and never come to the bottom". He added that while UN Security Council resolution 1244 "may not provide the complete legal basis, it is a legal basis".

"We have to act reasonably, use the possible legal framework, it is our firm belief that sending the mission to Kosovo is in accordance with the legal basis in resolution in 1244," he said.

Asked whether he would endorse plans by the EU to deploy a mission to Kosovo, Ban said that he would have to assess the situation. He said his decision on how to act would bear in mind the need to preserve peace and stability in the region. The UN secretary general warned that the impasse in Kosovo could mutate into a dangerous situation if left unchecked. "I will take the necessary measures in close coordination with parties and countries concerned on this matter," he said.

Janša and Ban met as part of the secretary general's two-day visit to Slovenia, the current EU president. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also met Slovenian President Danilo Türk and Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel.



Minister Rupel presided the meeting of the Council on General Affairs and External Relations

EU OFFERS SERBIA AN INTERIM AGREEMENT

The European Union offered Serbia an interim political agreement to accelerate Serbia's drawing closer to the Union. This conclusion of the General Affairs and External Relations Council was communicated by Slovenian Foreign Minister and GAERC President Dimitrij Rupel, who in this regard emphasised that this agreement proves the Union's unity on Serbia's European future. The Council's conclusion was adopted unanimously.

Upon the communication of the conclusion, GAERC President Dr. Rupel emphasised that Serbia plays a key role in stabilising the region and encouraging the region's economic and political development. "Serbia's future lies in the European Union. Serbia's drawing closer to the EU is thus crucial, including being granted candidate status as soon as possible," said Dr Rupel. The EU has indicated its willingness to sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement at the earliest possible opportunity.

The interim agreement stipulates measures concerning political dialogue, assistance in strengthening the rule of law, the enhancement of EU-Serbia political contacts, cooperation with Serbia in establishing a market economy, the introduction of free trade between the EU and Serbia, and cooperation in education which would enable a greater number of Serbian students to enrol at universities in the EU Member States within the Erasmus programme.

In order to enhance close cooperation with Serbia during its integration process, the GAERC has established a special task force for monitoring Serbia's approach to the EU, accelerating the implementation of the Thessaloniki Agenda, which is aimed at securing a European future for the Western Balkans, improving Serbia's knowledge of the EU, and, in cooperation with the Serbian authorities and the Hague tribunal, reviewing Serbia's fulfilment of obligations.

Rupel also touched upon other Council conclusions, including the conclusion on establishing dialogue between the Commission and Serbia on visa liberalisation. "Young people need to be able to travel to the EU," said Dr. Rupel. The Commission will thus continue negotiations with all countries in the region.

Minister Podobnik: Energy and Climate Package Ambitious But Realistic

The goal of the Slovenian EU Presidency regarding the energy and climate package is to reach a political agreement in the first reading in spring. It is an ambitious goal, but hopefully a realistic one, said Environment and Spatial Planning Minister Janez Podobnik after an informal meeting on the environment in Brussels on 24 January.

Meeting with the three future EU presidencies, European lawmakers and Commissioner for Environment Stavros Dimas, Podobnik said the European Parliament would play an important role. It will also nominate a rapporteur for this policy area. It is of key importance to reach an agreement with the parliament in its current term, and that is why it is necessary to cooperate closely and listen to MEP's opinions, agreed his Swedish counterpart Andreas Carlgren, who attended the meeting together with representatives of France and the Czech Republic, the next EU troika.

As regards the member states' support for the package, the participants agreed that in general the countries supported the EU's efforts to fight climate change. "My impression is that the countries support the aims of the package," Podobnik said, adding that there were details where solutions are yet to be found.

This was echoed by other participants, who said that Europe needed a push to remain the leading force in international negotiations on climate change.

After the end of Slovenia's spell as EU president in the summer, the rotating presidency will be handed over to the next presiding troika of France, Czech Republic and Sweden.

Next year will also be marked by European Parliament elections, which is why the EU would like to finish the chapter on the energy and climate package by the end of the parliament's current term.

THE GOVERNMENT WELCOMES THE PROPOSAL FOR THE CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY PACKAGE

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia welcomes the proposal for the climate change and renewable energy package aimed at reaching the goals of Europe's new energy and climate policy and the legislative framework adopted at the 2007 European Council. Regulations of the climate change and energy package will contribute to the development of technologies enabling the EU to become a society with an increasingly low use of fossil fuels. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia believes that the European Commission is right in basing the targets on national GDPs, enabling efficient implementation, while expecting the principle of solidarity and fairness to prevail among Member States. The European Commission proposed that Slovenia may increase greenhouse gas emissions by 4% over 2005 in industries which are not subject to emissions trading in order to facilitate the country's economic growth by 2020. At the same time, however, the EC's proposal commits Slovenia to increasing the share of renewable sources in the final energy consumption from the current 16% to 25%. The Government believes that the proposed way of sharing the burden demands a national approach as well as certain modifications to the national development strategy so that the targets can be met without endangering the country's rapid economic development. The Government will do everything so that the measures of the package encourage innovation and are used as instruments of further economic growth, while observing the principles of sustainable development to ensure a healthy environment for future generations.



I Feel Slovenia

Government wants to breathe life into new Slovenia logo

The year 2008 is the right time for the presentation and establishment of the brand 'I Feel Slovenia' at home as well as abroad. The Slovenia brand was presented on 15 January by the Government Communication Office, the Ministry of the Economy and Pristop agency. At the heart of the brand is 'Slovene green'. The brand manager, the Government Communication Office, has already begun activities involving managing the brand.

After being used in tourism, the Slovenia brand will come to life in the state administration and other institutions as well. This year, the Government will spend 400,000 euros on branding.

"We have a hard task ahead of us. Slovenia is introducing an umbrella brand covering tourism as well as the presentation of Slovenia as a country for the first time," said the Director of the Government Communication Office Anže Logar. "A handbook on the integral graphic image which will among other things determine the method of logo application will be prepared by March."

The handbook on the Slovenia brand and the handbook on the integral graphic image will be distributed among organizations having the greatest impact in advertising, such as sports, culture, tourism, entrepreneurship, foreign investment, science and public diplomacy.

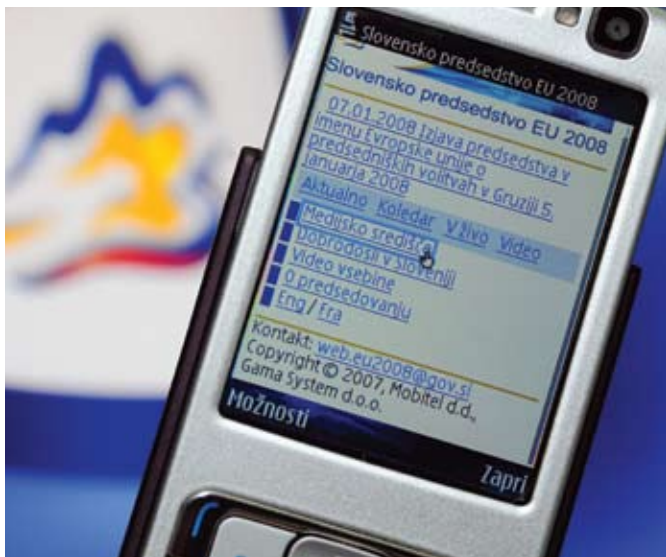
The Slovenia brand has been used in tourism since the beginning and the first responses of foreign public were extremely positive.

The core of the brand is the so-called 'Slovene green', and the logo expresses the Slovenian vision, a promise. The creators of the brand believe that it has to represent something with which all Slovenians will identify. In the handbook, the central image is divided into individual areas. The Slovenian story is divided into chapters, such as Slovenia as a country in the field of the economy, as a tourist destination, Slovenia in the fields of the arts and culture, science and sports. There are so many different stories, but all of them are by the same author, Slovenia.

In February, the Government Communication Office in cooperation with the coordination group comprising representatives of the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenian Tourist Organization and Public agency for entrepreneurship and foreign investments will select more prominent events at home and abroad within which the presentation of the Slovenia brand will take place. By June, they will provide every household with special pamphlets, decide on promotional gifts, launch an advertising campaign and produce a promotional film to encourage Slovenian citizens to identify with the brand.

By the end of June, the Government Communication Office will have prepared the first interim report on executing the plan, consider the possibilities for the implementation of branding in individual areas, and monitor brand application in communications with the general public.

WHATMAKESTHENEWS



GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENCY 'LIVE'

The Government Communication Office in cooperation with Telekom Slovenije, its subsidiaries Mobitel and Avtenta.si, and the company Gama System, has established a system for downloading and archiving video content via the Internet, mobile phones and the Siol TV service. The Office decided to offer the, at a cost of € 134,000, in order to provide the best possible information for the public on all the events of the EU Presidency. This is a new, user-friendly system, which is the result of the domestic knowledge and development.

"What we are presenting today will definitely be a broadly used service in the future," said Anže Logar, the Director of the Office. Like Logar, Iztok Klančnik, the Director of Avtenta.si underlined that Slovenia is the first EU member to bring Presidency-connected events closer to its citizens in such a way.

The service is intended for the general as well as the specialised public. It will enable the following of press conferences of the Presidency in Office, Slovenia, 'live' from the Congress Centre Brdo and all the Government's press conferences – via the Internet, **mobile phones** or the Siol TV. Users will have access to a video archive via the Internet or **mobile** portal and read content on the WAP portal of the Presidency and the Office of the Prime Minister.

The service is also available on the web page of the Office of the Prime Minister www.kpv.gov.si and will be available on the Slovenian Presidency to the UE Council web page www.eu2008.si. The content of the **mobile** portal will be available on mobi.eu2008.si and mobi.kpv.gov.si.

The simplest way for users to access the content of the **mobile** portal is to send the phone text message 'EU' (for the Presidency portal) or '**vlada**' (for the portal of Office of the Prime Minister) on 2008. They will receive a return message and when they click on the received link, they will be directed to the **mobile** portal.

The procedure for users of Simobil and Tušmobil is the same, only they will send their messages with the same message on (+386) 051 66 2008. The service will also be available on this number from abroad.

Telekom Slovenije ensures the telecommunication connections and maintenance, and Avtenta.si the web-hosting of the application and servers for video content downloading in real time and on request.

Mobitel enables the hosting of the application for the **mobile** portal of the EU Presidency and the Office of the Prime Minister content editing and automatic synchronisation between the **mobile**

portal and the website.

The Gama System company provided all the necessary adjustments and solutions for the synchronisation and content downloading, automatic release on the **mobile** portal, and graphic conformity with the integrated graphic design of the Presidency.

EU ROAD SHOW

During the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, the project EU Road Show will also take place. The Slovenian Tourist Board in cooperation with the Government Communication Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and others actively involved in preparations for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, will organize 26 events for the promotion of Slovenia in 26 Member States in the 26 weeks of the EU presidency. Cultural, tourist, sport, scientific and other events will be presented.

Slovenia wishes to be presented to each EU Member State with at least one promotional event. Most of the presentations will take place in state capitals, probably likely in frequently visited places, city centres or parks and the like. The target public is the general public, but the events will also be intended for economists, tourist representatives, diplomats and, of course, journalists. Target publics also vary depending on the content and place of individual events. STB, for example, is preparing most of the events in connection with their participation in tourism fairs, while the GCO will in some countries organise them alongside existing events.

In this manner there will be various exhibitions, presentations of dishes and wines, performances by Slovenian musicians, Slovenian specialties and traditions will be presented. Participants will be selected depending on the event and eventual wishes of local partners.

The 'I Feel Slovenia' campaign officially started on the 1st January' and it is understandable that STB and GCO pursue it even within EU Road Shows. However, the EU Road Show is intended not only to promote Slovenia, but also to inform of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

During the time of the presidency, Slovenia will host a large number of foreign journalist; around 3, 000 journalists are expected. Before the Presidency, journalists were being regularly informed of the preparations and the Presidency itself, therefore good foreign media coverage of Slovenia is expected.

The EU Road Show begins with a presentation of Slovenia in Lisbon at the beginning of the Lisbon-Dakar race. In France, at the end of the Presidency in June, there will be a Slovenian evening for journalists in which Slovenian experiences will be presented to French journalists and the Presidency will be symbolically handed over to France, will be organized.

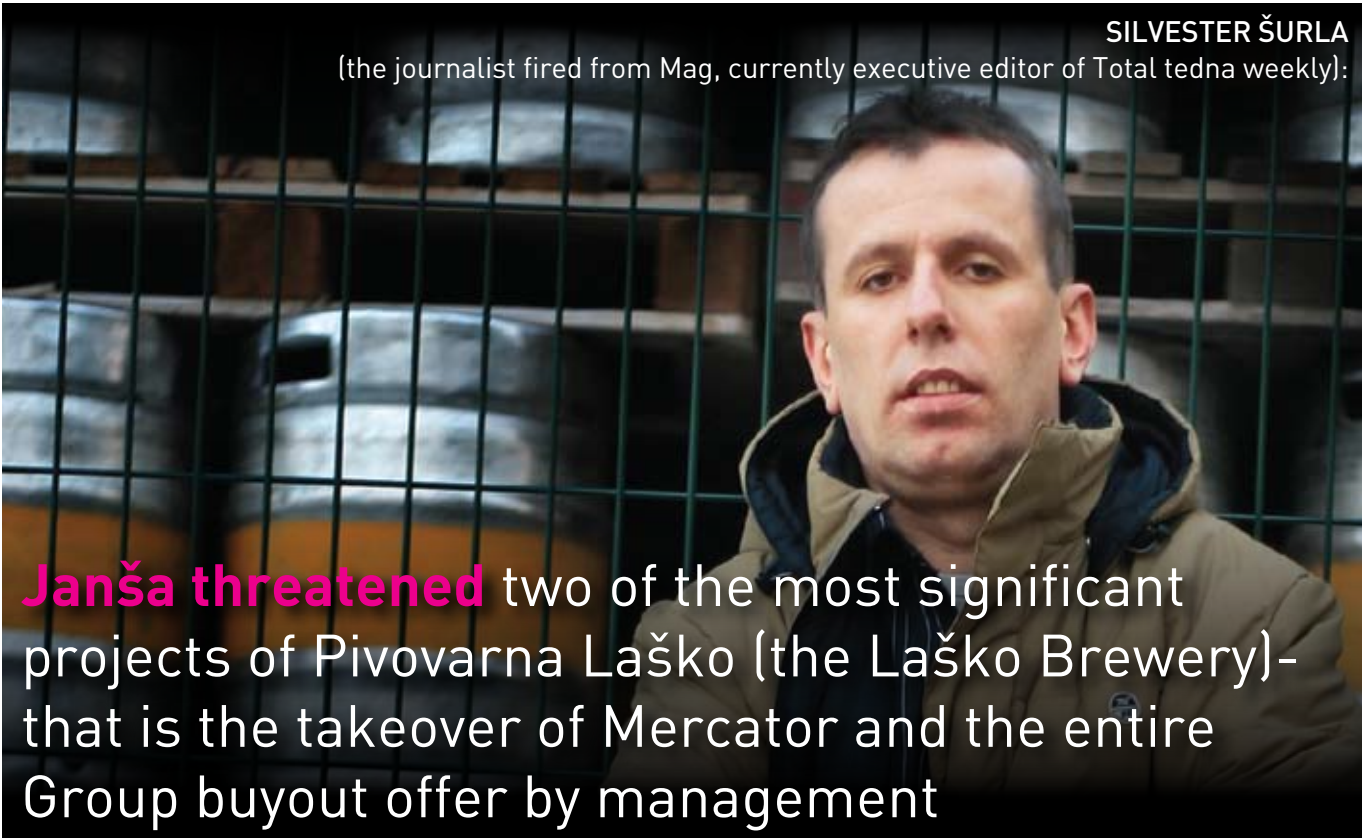
The concert in Grand Place in Brussels in June will be a fitting conclusion to the event.



Photos: Leon Vidic

SILVESTER ŠURLA

(the journalist fired from Mag, currently executive editor of Total tedna weekly):



Janša threatened two of the most significant projects of Pivovarna Laško (the Laško Brewery)- that is the takeover of Mercator and the entire Group buyout offer by management

Interview summarised according to Ampak monthly, January 2008/1

The replacement of staff at the Delo newspaper house, the signing of a petition against censorship by newspaper journalists, the appeal for an ethical approach and professionalism, the speech given by the Prime Minister prior to the vote of confidence, and the approval of the new managing editor of Mag weekly, are just some of the events in the second half of last year that attracted public attention to goings-on in the media. Although supervisors first offered the position of editor of Mag to the former editor, Silvester Šurla, they later changed their minds. According to Šurla, this happened because he did not give in to demands that Mag should include some positive articles on the Pivovarna Laško company. Thus we witnessed a public call for a new editor on 1 December. From the six candidates who applied, the supervisory board of Delo, together with the president, Andrijana Starina Kosem, decided to appoint as the new managing editor of Mag, regardless of the opposition of all the journalists, appeals made by the in-house organization of Delo journalists, as well as the Association of the European Journalists, without an agreement among journalists. Thus the supervisory board member, Veselin Stojanov, was appointed to the position, otherwise the seventh signatory of the controversial petition against censorship.

HOW DID POLITICS ENTER THE CONTENT OF MAG?

The fact that Mag became a disruptive factor right at this moment can be explained in the context of attempts being made to create an entirely homogenous media space prior to the parliamentary elections this autumn, where those who governed Slov-

enia for a number of years prior to the present government will try to win at any price. Obviously, they do not want any media-related surprises, and even quite a small weekly magazine such as Mag presents a threat to them. This is not normal. It is bordering on paranoia. Mag, since its establishment, has always been an outlet devoted to alternative views on social and political events, most of all, those that were not featured in other media, or were even overlooked.

This very thing was the attractive side of Mag, and due to its being out of tune with other media, it helped it to survive in this small and thus even more cutthroat Slovene media market. People wanted to hear the other side of the story - for example, on the new political party Zares, established by Golobič, which in most of the media, with the leading role assumed by the Delo newspaper house, was accepted and discussed quite uncritically. We at Mag seriously doubted that such a political personality as Golobič could change so suddenly. That is, that someone who was thought of as embodying clientism and political corruption in the transition period could so suddenly become a messenger of new politics and the surmounting of bloc politics.

COULD YOU TELL US HOW IT IS POSSIBLE THAT AT DELO NEWSPAPER HOUSE, ACCORDING TO THE NEW SYSTEM, EDITORS ARE NAMED BY THE SUPERVISORY BOARD AND NOT THE MANAGEMENT, AS HAS BEEN USUAL?

The Pivovarna Laško company in October changed the working statutes and shifted the competence for appointing or dismissing managing editors from the management to the supervisory board. The same day that happened, Danilo Slivnik, who was al-



ready being systematically divested of power, quit the position of management board president. Obviously, they assessed that they could thus ensure for themselves greater influence over editorial policy in specific Delo publications.

WHAT WERE THE EXACT REQUIREMENTS OF THE DELO SUPERVISORY BOARD MEMBERS, ANDRIJANA STARINA KOSEM AND STOJAN ZDOLŠEK?

They attempted to change Mag from an independent and autonomous weekly magazine to a propaganda vehicle for Pivovarna Laško to realize their business and political objectives. We on the editorial board reacted strongly against this. They tried to act as super editors, deciding on whose interviews we are allowed to publish. Mrs Kosem even requested that we should not write negatively about tycoons, claiming they would prove useful to Slovenia, and that she would like to see an article against Janša once in a while.

If the assessments were true that the main printed media in the country are controlled by capital which is linked to conservative political tendencies, that is, to parties arising from former socio-political organisations, why did Mag suddenly become a thorn in someone's side? Whose problem is this, actually? After all, you were owned by politically quite similar structures, yet they allowed you more freedom.

For the last two years, Mag was owned by Delo, which was then acquired by Pivovarna Laško in May last year. The management of the latter has, besides business, also political interests. In the autumn, they managed to carry out a takeover of the Slovenian People's Party (SLS), whose president became brother of the leading man in the brewery. The demonstrated political and capital-motivated power of the three Šrot brothers at the SLS Congress was more than evident. Since Prime Minister Janša announced he would settle the score with tycoons, people at Laško first identified themselves as possible targets of government measures and went on the counter-offensive immediately. The open letter signed by Boško Šrot is intended to undermine the Janša government, just like the letter written in June by the former Secretary of State, Andrijana Starina Kosem, who is now a consultant to Pivovarna Laško. Here, questions pose themselves: why did people at the brewery turn against Janša? The answer is simple: because he threatened their two most important projects – the Mercator takeover and the complete management buyout of the Pivovarna Laško Group, including Pivovarna Union, Fructal, Radenska, Delo, Večer, etc.

AND WHAT ROLE IS PLAYED IN THIS BIG TRANSITIONAL SETTling OF SCORES BY MAG?

Mrs Kosem, who is supervisory board president at Delo, offered me in one of the two longer talks that were held together with Stojan Zdolšek, the position of new managing editor. They later changed their minds, because I did not give in to pressure, and said that they would not let Janša win the election because of Mag, as supposedly happened in 2004. Such insinuations were really preposterous and tell us a lot about the person making them. They attempted to change Mag from an independent and autonomous weekly magazine into a propaganda vehicle for Pivovarna Laško to realize their business and political interests. We on the editorial board reacted strongly against this. They tried to act as super editors, deciding whose interviews we would be allowed to publish.

HOW DID THEY GET INVOLVED IN THIS AND IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE OF THIS?

On certain occasions, I wrote about this to Boško Šrot, yet there was no response. An appeal was made for him to dismiss both supervisors from the supervisory board because they had exceeded their powers, yet he did not do so. This tells us that they had his full support for their actions. The talks that were held between me, Mrs Kosem and Mr Zdolšek are duly documented. There is other material evidence and witnesses. I have already said in public that I am at any time willing to testify to the law enforcement authorities or before the courts about how they pressured me. On the 'Vroči stol' (Hot Seat) talk show on national television I provided documents that I had obtained from Laško in order to write an article on how the brewery does not exploit the monopoly position that it holds in the Slovene market. I refused to do this adamantly, of course.

Andrijana Starina Kosem mentions in the well-known letter, that she was sent to carry out the takeover of Delo newspaper house on behalf of the Prime Minister, but then in cooperation with the new owners, tried to take a stand in defence of freedom or independence of this media. How do you comment on that? What is her role exactly, and why did everything happen the way it did?

On the basis of personal experience with Mrs Andrijana Starina Kosem, I can only say that she says one thing and acts in a completely different way. What was supposed to be her role when she acquired Delo on behalf of the Prime Minister is not known. She appeared there as president of the supervisory board last summer, after the takeover by Pivovarna Laško, and soon after both the managing editor of Delo newspaper, Peter Jančič, as well as the president of the management board, Danilo Slivnik, had to resign. And then the “defender of journalistic freedom and independence” directed her attention to Mag.

DR. PETER JAMBREK (PRO-RECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOL OF LAW IN NOVA GORICA) HAS RECENTLY ASSESSED THE FACT THAT THE BREWERY TOOK SUCH A GREAT INTEREST IN THE MEDIA AS VERY UNUSUAL. HOW DO YOU COMMENT ON THAT?

The interests of Pivovarna Laško are both political and business-related, and these are all intertwined. They need political support to realize their own interests. To get what they want, as could be clearly observed in the case of pressuring Mag, they try to exploit the media that they own. We had a chance to read articles in Delo newspaper, where only the lawyer, Zdolšek, was presented defending the guardian of competition Andrej Plahutnik, who resigned. Or, to put it differently, he was attacking the new acting director, Jani Soršek. They also try to promote their new SLS president as much as possible, and even more so, since the surveys are not in favour of this party. Recently, there appeared an interesting article on the childhood of the three Šrot brothers in the Slovenske novice newspaper, together with photos from their family albums. There could not be more transparent propaganda than that. We shall see whether similar articles start appearing in Mag, too.

WE KNOW WHAT THE MEDIA IMAGE WAS AT THE TIME MILAN KUČAN WAS IN CHARGE OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS OF SLOVENIA (ZK). DO YOU THINK THAT AFTER 17 YEARS OF LIVING IN DEMOCRACY, THE FORMER PRESIDENT REALLY WANTS SLOVENIA TO HAVE ONE-SIDED MEDIA?

Kučan always showed a fascination for the media - in particular, absolute control over them. His participation at last year’s media meeting on truth that took place in Cankarjev dom, which was organized by the Peace Institute (Mirovni inštitut) together with the Slovene Association of Journalists, whose president is Repovž, as well as the Union of Slovene Journalists, unambiguously shows that he wants to take control over the media once more. I, for one, never, not even in my dreams, imagined that they would go so far as to try and get Mag. What could this be, other than an attempt to establish one-sided media coverage?

WHAT ROLE WAS PLAYED BY GREGOR GOLOBIČ (PRESIDENT OF THE ZARES

POLITICAL PARTY AND FORMER GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDS)? IS IT TRUE THAT HE HAS FOSTERED CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH MILAN KUČAN SINCE THE TIME OF SLOVENE TRANSITION? WHAT DO YOU THINK HIS NEXT PLANS ARE?

According to reliable information, Golobič tried to find media support before the actual establishment of Zares, both with the owners as well as the editors of the largest print media in the private sector. We at Mag published a story in November on how he was systematically inviting to lunch certain columnists who greatly influence public opinion. To this so-called Golobič committee belong Vlado Miheljčak, Nikola Damjanič, Peter Božič, Franco Juri, Mile Šetinc, and Igor Vidmar. It seems interesting that the present managing editor at Delo publishing house has quite a good opinion of Golobič’s Zares political party.





WHAT IS THE ROLE OF POLITICS IN THE CASE OF THE PETITION ISSUED BY JOURNALISTS AND THE NEW TURN OCCURRING AT DELO?

The journalists' petition is nothing more than a political project supported and influenced by some opposition parties. This is completely clear to many, and all the tracks lead back to Gregor Golobič and Milan Kučan, who supposedly obtained a concession over Delo some months ago.

IS THE PRESIDENT OF LDS, KATARINA KRESAL, AN INDEPENDENT POLITICAL PERSONALITY OR JUST A KIND OF MERCENARY WITH A FINANCIAL BACKGROUND? BOJAN ŠROT IS PROBABLY A MAN WHO HIMSELF GOT TO WHERE HE IS THROUGH HIS POLITICAL CARRIER, BUT DO YOU THINK THERE IS A THREAT OF SLS BECOMING A CAPITAL ORIENTED PARTY?

Boško Šrot is actually not helping his brother Bojan with any of his actions. The new president of SLS will find it hard to distance himself from his brother. Otherwise, so as to make it clear, the takeover of SLS is an inevitable joint project or project of the so-called left transition policy, trying to undermine Janša's government and regain power in any way possible. Bojan Šrot would help SLS by resigning as president immediately. There is no going back for him, in my opinion, and even less so of realizing his dream of becoming prime minister in 2012.

WHAT IS YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF THE SLOVENIAN MEDIA WHEN WE ARE TALKING OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION? ARE SLOVENE JOURNALISTS WELL-AC-

QUAINTED ALSO WHEN WE SPEAK IN TERMS OF HISTORICAL MEMORY, SO AS TO HAVE A CRITICAL INSIGHT THAT REACHES BEYOND DAY-TO-DAY POLITICS?

The field of media pluralism in the printed media is closing once again. It seems absurd that this is happening in the year 2008, during Slovenia's EU Presidency. This is something completely outrageous. These things occur in media in the private sector that are not state-owned.

WHY ARE JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA CONSTANTLY USED AS A MEANS FOR SETTLING POLITICAL SCORES?

That anything like this is possible is from the outset is the responsibility of journalists themselves, who let themselves be abused and do not protest against it. Sadly, there still exists the fear that one's personal safety and livelihood are at risk in the case of outright protest. But we journalists are only human beings doing a job for which we get paid.

Silvester Šurla is among the most renowned and at the same time rare investigative journalists in Slovenia. He has received the Jurčič award as a courageous correspondent working independently from power centres and capital. In recent months he was the centre of attention of the critical public as acting managing of the Mag weekly magazine, when he publicly exposed political and capital related pressures and related staff changes at the publication.



GZS general manager Samo Hribar Milič; Andrej Denisa, the first person to register a company online with the new service; and Public Administration Minister Gregor Virant at the launch of the electronic company registration service

ONLINE COMPANY REGISTRATION LAUNCHED

Slovenia's electronic administration portal has been upgraded to enable online registration of limited liability companies. Mirroring the system in place for registration of sole proprietors, the procedure for registering a limited liability company takes 90 minutes to complete and is free of charge for basic enterprises. The service is available on the One Stop Shop portal introduced in 2005 as part of efforts to cut red tape and promote enterprise.

While registration itself takes 90 minutes to complete, approval takes another three days. Samo Hribar Milič, the general manager of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS), said the new service was a "small step for entrepreneurs and a big step for the state". Hribar Milič said the service would allow businessmen do to business instead of have to deal with red tape. The upgrade to the electronic administration portal cost EUR 2.4m, of which 85% came from EU structural funds.

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT IN NOVEMBER UP 2.4% Y/Y

Industrial output in November was up 2.4% year on year and down 4% on October, the national statistics office said on 10 January. Meanwhile, industrial output in the first 11 months of 2007 was up 7.6% compared to the same period the year before. Year on year, industrial output expanded by 3.8% in manufacturing, while it decreased in mining and quarrying (-5%) and electricity, gas and water supply (-14%). Broken down by industrial grouping, industrial production increased at the yearly level in capital goods industries (9.4%) and consumer goods industries (2.7%), while output fell in intermediate goods industries (-0.7%).

STOCK MARKET ALL ABOUT GROWTH IN 2007

Last year was marked by soaring turnover and strong growth of indices on the Ljubljana Stock Exchange, with all three main indices reaching new all-time highs, the stock exchange said in a report released on 11 January. The main market SBI 20 gained 78.1% and the SBI TOP blue chip index added 71%, while the PIX investment funds

index was up 45%. The BIO bond index meanwhile lost 2.1%. The turnover in 2007 amounted to EUR 2.23 bn, a 123.5% increase compared to the year before, with shares accounting for 87.7%, investment funds 7.5% and bonds 4.8%. The market capitalisation of shares (bar investment funds) topped EUR 19.74 bn at the end of December, up 71.5% year on year, which can be attributed to the soaring prices as well as the listing of Slovenia's second largest bank, NKBM. At the end of the year the market capitalisation of all shares (bar investment funds) was equivalent to 64.8% of the 2006 gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices. The most heavily traded items last year were the pharmaceuticals company Krka, which added over 56% through the year, energy company Petrol (+81%), Telekom Slovenije (+32%), port operator Luka Koper (+85%), home appliances maker Gorenje (+58%), and NKBM after its flotation in mid-December. Yet these were not the biggest winners among the blue chips last year. This honour goes to chemical-cum-tourism conglomerate Sava, which gained 160.6%, airport operator Aerodrom Ljubljana (+156%) and holding Istrabenz (+132.8%).

MAGYAR TELEKOM OUT OF THE RACE FOR TELEKOM SLOVENIJE

Hungary's Magyar Telekom has dropped out of the race for a 49% stake in Telekom Slovenije, leaving only two bidders – the Icelandic operator Skipti and a consortium of private equity firms, Bain Capital & Axos Capital, the chair of the commission overseeing the privatisa-



tion, Matjaž Janša, revealed on 14 January. All three had submitted binding bids, but Magyar Telekom decided not to raise its offer. Two bidders were willing to substantially correct their offers, but the third bidder stuck to its conditions so it was dropped, according to Janša. Skipti and the Anglo-German private equity consortium have "improved their bids price-wise and, at first glance, regard the conditions as good," said Janša, who would not reveal which of the two offers was better. Magyar Telekom was the proxy for its majority owner Deutsche Telekom, which had filed a second non-binding bid through its Croatian subsidiary Hrvatski Telekom.

NEW ACT ON INSOLVENCY PROCEEDINGS ENTERS INTO FORCE



State Secretary Robert Marolt

The act on financial management, insolvency proceedings and compulsory winding-up entered into force on 15 January. The act, which is expected to decrease the workload of the Justice Ministry, deals with personal bankruptcy proceedings and heritage bankruptcy, two legal areas which have so far not been regulated by Slovenian legislation. The act governs three areas: financial management of legal entities; insolvency proceedings against legal entities and natural persons, including compulsory settlement proceedings, legal entity bankruptcy proceedings, personal bankruptcy and heritage bankruptcy; and compulsory winding-up proceedings of legal entities. Regulations concerning personal bankruptcy proceedings apply to bankruptcy cases for any natural person, business person, private citizen or consumer. According to the new act, the debtor himself as well as creditors will be able to initiate personal bankruptcy proceedings. In all proceedings, the debtor in bankruptcy is to be represented by an attorney. The act aims to modernise financial management, compulsory winding-up and liquidation proceedings in line with the needs of a developed market economy, Justice Ministry State Secretary Robert Marolt has said. He added that it should also speed up insolvency proceedings and make them more efficient.

NLB TO GET CAPITAL INJECTION, KBC OUT OF THE LOOP

The supervisory board of NLB confirmed on 18 January a EUR 300 m capital increase for Slovenia's largest bank with an issue of new shares, and announced that the biggest private shareholder, Belgian KBC, would not be taking part. The bank would not disclose any

further details, saying that more information on the actual procedure would be released when the prospectus for the share issue is confirmed by the Securities Market Agency. KBC, which owns 34% and is the second biggest shareholder after the state, announced in December it would not buy fresh shares despite having a preemptive buying right as an existing shareholder. When the capital increase is completed, KBC's stake will drop to 27%.

SLOVENIA ISSUES NEW BENCHMARK EURO BOND

On 21 January the Finance Ministry launched a roadshow presenting a new EUR 1 bn issue of benchmark euro bonds with lead managers NLB, ABN Amro and BNP Paribas. The bond issue will be presented through January in Amsterdam, the Hague, Utrecht, Reykjavik, Helsinki, London and Budapest. The bonds will have a maturity of 11 or 15 years depending on investor interest, the Director General of the treasury department. Issued by the Slovenian Central Clearing Corporation (KDD) along with Clearstream and Euroclear, the second issue of euro bonds after Slovenia's euro zone entry will be listed on the Ljubljana Stock Exchange, the bonds were a long-term investment offering attractive returns considering the credit risk. The Government decided to issue at least one billion euros in bonds each year to repay old, more expensive debt. A second issue, however, is in the pipeline for this year if the first issue turns out to be successful.

BAJUK, ALMUNIA UPBEAT ABOUT PROSPECTS OF EU ECONOMY

Slovenian Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk and European Commissioner for Financial and Monetary Affairs Joaquín Almunia are upbeat about the prospects of the European economy, even though the United States is widely believed to be headed for recession. "The joint assessment about the economic situation is that the fundamentals of the European economy are firm, much better than in the United States," Bajuk said as he came out of the 22 January session of EU finance ministers, which he chaired. "The economic reforms that we have carried out in the EU have significantly improved the European economy's resilience to shocks." Similarly, Almunia said that recession forecasts do not apply for the EU or the global economy as a whole. "This is not at all the situation in our European economies. Our fundamentals are solid and sound."



REFORMS, STABILITY, PUBLIC FINANCES IN FOCUS OF ECOFIN PRESIDENCY

Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk, the current chair of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN), highlighted on 22 January economic reforms, financial stability, the quality of public finances, the fight against tax fraud and reduced VAT rates as the main priorities of the Slovenian EU Presidency. The Lisbon Strategy is already yielding results and the overhauled guidelines for growth and jobs do not need changing, Bajuk said. As for the stability and growth pact, the minister underlined the encouraging consolidation of public finances last year and said that the "positive momentum" needed to be maintained. He also said Slovenia would continue the work of its predecessors at the helm of the EU, Germany and Portugal, on the quality of public finances, in particular the efficiency of social transfers and public spending on education. Bajuk highlighted the directive Solvency II, which is designed to protect insurance policy holders, boost competition and put in place new supervision policies. He said the insurance industry needed a modern framework, while the directive would also boost competitiveness in the sector. The Slovenian Presidency awaits European Commission proposals on investment funds and financial insurance, said Bajuk, who announced the launch of debate without delay. Measures aimed at combating tax fraud would be taken "with full determination". Finally, Bajuk believes that ECOFIN should also debate the climate-energy package which the Commission will unveil this week, as it will have economic effects.

ECONOMY MINISTER STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION

Economy Minister Andrej Vizjak said on 22 January that promotion of competitiveness and innovation should and would be one of the main priorities of the EU and of Slovenia's Presidency in his opening speech at the European Conference on Innovation and Clusters in Stockholm. Vizjak opened the conference, which places emphasis on the cooperation of political, economic and research-and-development spheres within innovation policy, alongside the Swedish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Energy, Maud Olofsson, and the Vice-President of the European Commission, Guenther Verheugen. Vizjak hosted a round table discussion at the two-day conference on concepts of competitiveness in the global environment, which, according to him, requires cooperation between all key development players in the economy, science and politics. Increasing globalisation also means that distance is no longer significant; the world is becoming a single common market," Vizjak said when opening the discussion, and added that the Stockholm conference was a great opportunity to exchange good practices. He was presented with the recently launched European Clusters Memorandum, which provides a basis for concerted activities at the level of clusters, agencies and regions.

T-2 TO BUILD A 3G MOBILE NETWORK

Slovenia is set to get its fourth mobile operator, as T-2, a provider of voice, Internet and television services, is said to have sealed an agreement with a network communications company for a third-generation mobile network based on high-speed WCDMA technology. According to a press release from Nokia Siemens Networks, the company to provide the network equipment, a full range of solutions that allow high-speed wireless data transfers, multimedia and VoIP will be installed. The contract also covers planning and implementation services, as well as the actual operation of the network.

It is the first commercial implementation in Europe of the pioneering Internet High Speed Packet Access (I-HSPA), the company said on 23 January. Nokia Siemens Networks said the project was already in a "user-friendly phase", with about 1,000 subscribers taking part in the trial. T-2 was one of two companies awarded 3G licenses by the Post and Electronic Communications Agency (APEK) in September 2006. It paid EUR 6.3 m for the license, while the other company, mobile operator Simobil, paid EUR 6.5 m.

LJUBLJANA - THE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE OF E-GOVERNMENT IN THE REGION

The Minister for Growth, Žiga Turk, and the first man of Microsoft, Bill Gates, on 24 January announced a public-private partnership among the states of Southeast Europe, non-governmental organizations and leading technological companies. The co-operation will take place in the form of establishing and managing the centre for the development of e-Government in the region, with its seat in Ljubljana. As they communicated from Microsoft Slovenia, Turk and Gates at the Government Leaders Forum-Europe event in Berlin determined that the mentioned partnership represents an important milestone for encouraging co-operation and development in the region. The centre will be a precious resource regarding efforts for a successful, secure and modern future for Southeast European citizens. The decision to set up the centre in Ljubljana together with Slovene taking over the Presidency over the European Union in this month is a symbol of the rising recognition of the entire region as an equal partner regarding growth and the future of Europe, said Mr Turk in welcoming the agreement. Gates said that one of the most important government functions is ensuring an environment for economic opportunities that encourage entrepreneurship and enable innovation to prosper. Microsoft expects that with the help of the centre in Ljubljana it will cooperate with different governments, organizations and companies in developing and encouraging technological strategies that will encourage economic growth in the region. Microsoft will in accordance with the agreement contribute means, software, educational plans, technical tools and guidelines for the development and management of information systems in public sector. At first, the centre's mission will be aimed at four key functions: education and training, data gathering, workshops and seminars, and project support.



Žiga Turk, Minister for Growth

Photos: Kenda Manor archives

THE KENDA MANOR: A house made of one piece! But what a house!

"Enter a house where time slows down to a pace which people seem to have already forgotten. The Kenda Manor is a haven of peace and tranquillity!" So reads the invitation by the builders and present administrators of the manor.

"The extraordinary tranquillity of the manor, together with the mysterious scent of the past, great works of art, beautiful hand-made Idrija laces, careful attention to the smallest detail, the sheer excellence of the Kenda Manor, accompanied by an exquisite selection of wines, and soft musical tunes" are trademarks of the Kenda Manor Hotel in Spodnja Idrija.

The Kenda Manor traces its roots to 1377, when the first landowners were already running a farm situated above the River Idrija Valley. The influential and distinguished Kenda family encouraged economic and cultural development. Today, the magnificent former Kenda mansion has been beautifully renovated and revived to evoke the spirit of ancient times, and now displays the rich tradition of its local surroundings with great pride and respect. In the interior of the Manor, luxury and elegance

are combined with a feeling of warm comfort, and the attentive friendliness of the staff creates a truly relaxed atmosphere. Generous hospitality, soothing peace and the great comfort of the Manor give the guests during their stay a nice feeling of being welcome. In the year 2000 the Kenda Manor became a member of the prestigious Relais & Chateaux Hotel Association, and thus joined all the other Relais & Chateaux members who support the fundamental values defined by the "5 C's": Courtoisie (Courtesy), Charme (Charm), Caractere (Character), Calme (Calm) and Cuisine (Cuisine). The best small countryside hotels, with capacities below 50 rooms, along with bigger hotels in major cities, form the Leading Hotels of the World association. The roots of Spodnja Idrija, also known as Ydria Sclabonica (Slovene Idria) can be traced back to the year 1156, when the chapel of "Marija na Skalci" was first mentioned in the writings of Pope Celestin III. Spodnja Idrija, a village with approximately 2000 inhabitants, situated in the higher parts of the Slovene Littoral Region, at the confluence of two rivers - the Idrija River and the Kanomljica. Just 4 km from Idrija, a younger, but better-known town. In 1999 Spodnja Idrija won the title of The Most Beautiful Slovene Small Town. In 2001 Spodnja Idrija was also awarded a silver medal in the prestigious competition Entente Florale, thus joining a group of European towns famous for their hospitality, tidiness, and for reflecting rich natural and cultural heritage.

OUTSTANDING! I REPEAT, OUTSTANDING!

Here we excerpt a few impressions from the guest book:
"Outstanding! I repeat, outstanding! Refined taste in every regard. Waiters with exceptional style, warmth at every step. My sincere congratulations."

"The pride of the place and of the people – you can tell it's all done with great love. Thank you for a wonderful presentation of all that is Slovene – first-rate. Congratulations."



Franci Pivk, Kenda Manor's head chef for the past ten years, together with the owner, Mrs Ivi Svetlik, brings back to life old local recipes, rich in tradition and displaying the excellent cooking skills of the Idrija housewives. With his vast culinary expertise and creativity he successfully combines the traditional with the contemporary, and the result is a true culinary masterpiece on a plate. In 2002, he was awarded the prestigious Cook of the Year title by the Slovene Culinary Academy. For centuries, the house winemakers have been passing on their love for wine, vineyards and life, from generation to generation. They are well aware that wine is born in the vineyard and that a lot of sunlight, warmth and love are needed before the ripe grapes are gathered and transformed into wine. The wines in the Kenda Manor wine cellar are historically linked with the area of the nearby Vipava Valley. This link goes back many centuries, to times when the inhabitants of Idrija travelled to the Vipava Valley by cart or even on foot in order to purchase wine. In addition to archive and high-quality wines from the wine region of the Vipava Valley, archive and high-quality wines from the regions of the Gorica Hills (Goriška Brda), Karst and Koper are also to be found in the excellent wine selection of the Kenda Manor wine cellar. Every day, there is the warm smell of freshly baked bread and "potica" (a traditional Slovene dish – a rolled pastry dough with different fillings) wafting through the air of Kenda Manor. Those freshly baked goods taste even better in combination with traditional soups "župe", made of cabbage and other vegetables. Newly discovered Idrija cuisine that includes traditional local specialties, such as "idrijski žlikrofi" (a traditional miners' food – potato balls spiced with ham and herbs, wrapped in a thin dough and cooked), "bakalca" (traditional lamb sauce), "gluhi štruklji" (rolled dumplings) and "bati" (cooked bread), reflects the centuries-old tradition and cooking skills of Idrija housewives.

The delicacies prepared in the Kenda Manor kitchen are a result of carefully selected ingredients, as well as of the chef's industrious hands and superb skills. The menus are cleverly named after the members of the Kenda family, and vary according to the season and prior arrangements made by the guests. There are 11 guest rooms in Kenda Manor, all superbly furnished with 19th-century antique furniture. The rooms are thoughtfully named after former members of the Kenda family and decorated with elements and details of the local ethnographic heritage: the Land-

lord's Room, Erazem Room, Matevž Room, Rozka Room, Katarina Room, Cene Room, Anže Room, David Room, Neža Room, Veronika Room and Olga Room. Table cloths, curtains and bed linen are all exquisitely decorated with delicate traditional hand-made Idrija lace. The ground floor facilities are intended for daily activities, feasts, wedding and other celebrations and business meetings.

WHAT ONCE WAS, REMAINS AS TRADITION, AS HERITAGE, AS OUR IDENTITY. LET US PRESERVE IT FOR THE FUTURE!

"Črna kuhinja" (a typical 19th-century kitchen with an open fire, but without a chimney), the House Great Room with its warm and inviting country oven and an altar-like place called "Bohkov Kot" are unique remnants of the ancient tradition. In the tranquil Črna Kuhinja guests can either sit around an open fireplace and read a book or a newspaper or try various sorts of home made liquor, light a cigar and simply indulge in the sheer pleasure and tranquility. The House Great Room is the best place to enjoy delicious home-baked bread and other products of the baker's oven, have a glass of excellent wine, and drink a dram of home made liquor. Right next to the House Great Room is the "kamra" (small room), a place perfect for two persons. The Hana and Jakob Great Rooms are substantially bigger and therefore suitable for various celebrations, wedding ceremonies and banquets. The Hana Great Room, formerly the Kenda stables, is the biggest in size and an ideal setting for wedding ceremonies, wedding luncheons and dinners, celebrations, banquet receptions, various presentations and education courses. Hana's Garden is at its best in spring and summer, when the hydrangeas are in bloom. It is a perfect venue for weddings and other celebrations, dances with live music, or simply a nice place to sit down and enjoy the beauty of the blossoming surroundings. Next to Hana's Garden there is an orchard, with its mighty, century-old apple trees and other fruit trees, most beautiful in spring, when the blossom is at its peak. In the summertime the magnificent apple trees provide pleasant shade.

The beautiful ambience of the Kenda Manor is also a setting for medieval evenings, and consequently for annual medieval Shrovetide gatherings.



Text: JOŽE OSTERMAN. Photos: STA



LA LA LA DANCERS IN CANKARJEV DOM

One of the bigger cultural events in Ljubljana in January was the guest performance of the famous modern dance group La la la Human Steps with their show 'Amjad', which took inspiration from the classical ballets 'Swan Lake' and 'Sleeping Beauty'. The famous choreographer and leader of the group, Edouard Lock, explained that with the fact that both classical ballets have become a part of the collective consciousness of our era, which on the one hand fascinates him, while his show by no means remains in the past. The dancers upgrade and change it – the distinctive difference is especially found in the substantially higher tempo of dancing, which is also otherwise characteristic of our era. The group has otherwise been quite a frequent guest of Slovenian stages in recent years: in 2000 it appeared with the performance 'Salt', and in 2003 with 'Amelia'. Considering the strong efforts of Slovenian modern dance to keep up with all the best achievements, that is hardly surprising.

"ROOSTER'S BREAKFAST" RECEIVES GREAT GOLDEN ROLL AWARD



The biggest Slovenian box office hit in the last four years and the second most popular Slovenian film ever, "Petelinji Zajtrk" (Rooster's Breakfast), received on 15 January the Great Golden Roll Award for surpassing the 125,000-ticket milestone.

The first full-length feature by Marko Naberšnik has so far received four Golden Roll Awards, given to Slovenian films that sell over 25,000 tickets, since being released on 17 October; it has also picked up a number of awards at the Festival of Slovenian Film.

Receiving the award on behalf of the film crew, Naberšnik told the press he was surprised by the number of people who have turned out to see the movie. "Rooster's Breakfast" was the biggest hit in Slovenian cinemas in 2007 with 126,275 viewers, leaving behind Hollywood blockbusters "Pirates of the Caribbean 3" and "Mr Bean's Holiday", the only other films to sell over 100,000 tickets.

The film, set in the late 1990s, is a social drama that traces the story of Gajas, a car mechanic, and Djuro, his apprentice, the former fantasising about Croatian pop star Severina and the latter embarking on a risky love affair with a local beauty.

SLOVENIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS IN PARIS

At the premises of the Representation of the European Commission in Paris, an exhibition of four Slovenian photojournalists, Jaka Adamič, Jure Eržen, Manca Juvan and Jože Suhadolnik was opened under the title 'Covering the Real'; the exhibition is among the events organised by Slovenia as the state holding the Presidency of the European Union.

The project was designed by art critic Brane Kovič, and each of the artists is represented by a complete thematic cycle focused on one topic. Adamič links his photographs to the streets of Ljubljana, Eržen studies a boxing competition at an American military base in Iraq. Juvan focuses on youth in Iran; while Suhadolnik's theme is mornings in Russia. They have deliberately avoided the already quite standard photo-journalistic themes – photos from various battlefields and crisis points, and have dedicated themselves to content, through which they most easily expressed their individual vision and the creative power of their photographs.

IN ZAGREB AN EXHIBITION ABOUT THE SOČA FRONT (PHOTO STA, 24 JANUARY 2008)

One of the most interesting and also most well-attended Slovenian museums, the Museum of the Soča Front in Kobarid, is mounting an exhibition in Zagreb, The Great War in the Krn Mountains, linked to one of the biggest battles on the Soča Front during the First World War. The exhibition was also visited by the Croatian President, Stipe Mesić, and in his official speech at the opening he emphasised that Slovenian and Croatian people fought side by side on the same side and added that he hopes that this joint fight of the Slovenian and Croatian people would soon continue within the scope of European Union, which Croatia would like to enter as soon as possible. This is the first of the exhibitions prepared by Slovenian Embassy during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, and is comprised of beautiful panoramic photographs of the range of mountains where the Krn battle took place, which is contrasted with authentic images of suffering soldiers, the wounded and killed, who came from numerous European nations and soaked the mountains around Soča with their blood. After Zagreb, the exhibition will travel to Vienna, and from there to Rome, Paris and London.



Museum of the Soča Front in Kobarid

SLOVENIAN THEATRE IN CHILE

The leading Slovenian theatre, SNT Drama from Ljubljana, set out at the end of January to give a guest performance in the capital of Chile, Santiago, where they have five times performed the work of Christopher Marlowe, 'Edward II', at the international theatre festival Santiago a Mil 2008. The work was directed by one of the best of the younger directors, Diego de Brea. Other members of the



Photo: Peter Uhan

From the Performance Edward II

team represent the first league of Slovenian theatre production: the costume designer is the renowned Alan Hranitelj, the music was written by Aldo Kumar, while the dramaturge was Diana Koloini. The Slovenian theatre, which was invited by Chilean friends, continues with a series of big guest performances from Slovenia on the stages of Latin America, from Mexico to Chile, which in past decades has definitely been one of the most successful breakthroughs of Slovenian culture in the world.

BEGINNING OF TRUBAR'S YEAR

In January, Trubar's year also started - so named after the writer of the first Slovenian book, a great religious protestant reformer and a cosmopolitan, who in fact put Slovenians on the map of civilised European nations, and whose five hundredth birthday we are celebrating. It started in the right place - the lobby of the Slovenian Parliament, where its president, Dr Franc Cukjati, opened an exhibition prepared by experts with the help of the citizens of Trubar's birth place, Rašica pri Velikih Laščah, where there is also a Trubar Museum. The exhibition, entitled 'To All Slovenes', was organised by the Parnas Institute for Culture, and from Parliament it will first move 'home' to Rašica, and afterwards visit Sarajevo, Vienna and some towns in Germany, where Trubar was active most of his life.

HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORCHESTRA OF THE SLOVENIAN PHILHARMONIC



Slovenian Philharmonic

This year, 100 years will have passed since an orchestra was founded in Ljubljana named the Slovenian Philharmonic (the institution, and especially the building of the Philharmonic are otherwise much older, as we have celebrated the three hundredth anniversary since it was built seven years ago), which was commemorated with a festival concert by the current large orchestra. The concert was attended by the highest representatives of Slovenian political, economic and cultural life, with the President of the Republic, Dr. Danilo Türk at the head. For its programme the orchestra chose by compositions the first director of the Slovenian Philharmonic after the Second World War, composer Marjan Kozina. Before the beginning of the event, the Minister of Culture also unveiled a bust of the composer in the lobby of the building, and the great concert hall was named after him, while the small concert hall will bear the name of his composer colleague, Slavko Osterc. Also, new honorary members of the Slovenian Philharmonic were announced: flautist Irena Grafenauer, violinist Igor Ozim, composer Ivo Petrič, and musical historian Primož Kuret, and posthumously also composer Marijan Lipovšek and musicologist Dragotin Cvetko.

MARJETICA POTRČ IN NEW YORK

Slovenian architect and artist Marjetica Potrč is certainly one of the most penetrating and most recognisable names of the younger artistic generation, and exhibits abroad quite frequently. In the middle of January, in the gallery Max Proecht in New York, she opened the exhibition 'Future Talk Now: The Great Republic New Orleans', which focuses on the changing landscape after the hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. In her research exhibition, Potrč has focused on the question of the durability of nature, on water, on the formation of new geographical areas, and also on the formation of new human relationships which have appeared due to the changed natural environment, the mixing of architectures, art and sociology. She is especially interested in how individuals, on the basis of the great changes which they witness and live through, create conditions for their own different life. Ms. Potrč was invited to participate by Dan Cameron, curator of the Centre for Modern Art in New Orleans, and based on that she also received a scholarship for 2007 and 2008, and decided to conduct this research. She is therefore breaking through the traditional boundaries between art and actuality and searching for a new meaning in everything that happened in New Orleans.

TOURISM PUTS ITSELF ON SHOW

The three-day Tourism and Leisure Fair, hosted by Gospodarsko razstavišče Exhibition and Convention Centre in Ljubljana, introduced as many as 542 companies from 25 countries, and bears witness to the flourishing of tourism, which is becoming an increasingly important branch of economy in Slovenia, and also to the fact that Slovenian people are becoming very eager world travellers. The fair will offer an overview of tourism in Slovenia, as well as the possibilities of getting to know the world. In the Boat Show section, which is always well-attended and conveys big interest in nautical tourism, it will introduce the offers of smaller sports and tourist vessels, while the Camping and Caravanning section offers camping vehicles and equipment. The motto of the Fair that there is something for everyone that everybody's wishes can be met is definitely a good basis for promotion of the fair, which aims to become a link between Western and South-Eastern Europe in this field.



The Tourism and Leisure Fair

SLOVENIAN FILM AT INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL IN ROTTERDAM

The well-known Rotterdam Film Festival, now in its 37th year, will also offer to its audience three Slovenian movies: the feature 'L for Love', directed by Janja Glogovac, the short film 'On the Sunny Side of the Alps' by Janez Burger and the new feature by established director Damjan Kozole, 'Forever'. Both features films are included in the main programme of the festival, while Burger's film, which is a kind of provocation, as it features only black actors, was invited due to the enthusiasm it aroused among the Rotterdam selectors. Also, for that reason, it was awarded the best short Slovenian film last year.

GENEROUS SLOVENIAN LIONS

The Lions movement came to life 90 years ago in the USA. Today, it has 1.4 million members around the world, of whom 1400 are active in Slovenia.

Although this barely represents one thousandth of the entire membership, Slovenian district 129 is deemed to be one of the most active ones. In 18 years, the Slovenian Lions have raised and donated 3.7 million euros. One of the main annual social and humanitarian events is a ball with an occasional cultural programme organised in the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre by the oldest Lions Club Ljubljana. At this year's eleventh charity ball, 40,000 euros were raised by selling tickets, making donations and selling collages created by the children of the Dolfka Boštjančič Centre (an institution for the education of children with disabilities).

Part of the money went to a good cause already during the event. Since Lions especially support blind and visually impaired persons, they helped to buy adapted devices for one visually impaired female high school student and one male student for them to continue their schooling, and 4000 euros were donated for the construction of a handicapped-accessible elevator. For two years, the Lions Club has provided a good amount of money for the operation of the Never Alone (Nikoli sam) programme, which helps to get children in a particular region of the capital of Slovenia off the streets.



The first donation: 4000 euros for a handicapped-accessible elevator (In the photo: Valerija Bužan, Director of the Dolfka Boštjančič Centre, Nuša Kerševan of the Lions Club Ljubljana)

Text: BOGI PRETNAR, Photos: Tomo Jeseničnik



Gostilna Pri Kuklju Inn in Velike Lašče: Crackling instead of walnuts

Margareta Damjanič is taking over the reins of the Gostilna Pri Kuklju Inn

After a 30-kilometre drive southeast from Ljubljana on the road to Kočevje, you arrive at Velike Lašče. In European terms, Velike Lašče is a suburb of the capital of Slovenia, but when you look around, there is no doubt that you are definitely in the Dolenjska region. The Male Lašče road sign before Velike Lašče reminds you that you are close, and then just below the church at the side of the road, at the top of its gentle slope, the Gostilna Pri Kuklju inn greets you. The name of the inn is supposedly linked to the forebear Jakob who returned from a war with a wooden leg and produced a distinctive sound (kukljanje) when walking. The inn used to be the bakery of the market town, with a tradition dating from the first half of the 18th century. Today it is run by the descendant of Jakob's adopted daughter, Lojza, who was an excellent cook and took over the inn. Vanja, Lojza's granddaughter, is married to Peter Damjanič, a Dalmatian from the Croatian island of Hvar, whose presence can easily be noticed in the annual and much praised Dalmatian cuisine days at the inn. Vanja is slowly passing the reins to her enterprising daughter Margareta. And this is just about the only change. Where everything runs smoothly and the guests are satisfied, nobody likes changes, especially the guests.



A mighty ocvirkovka, a type of savoury potica

GOODSLOVENIANINNS

Velike Lašče and its surroundings is known for some renowned Slovene literary names, such as Fran Levstik and Jože Javoršek. It is also the birthplace of Primož Trubar, who took the spoken language from the Dolenjska region as the basis of his written language in the first Slovene book written in the 16th century. Cultural evenings still take place sometimes, although the Gostilna Pri Kuklju inn is more famous for its annual exhibition of Christmas breads called poprtniki. These beautifully adorned festive breads used to be blessed, broken and given not only to family members, but also to animals for good luck and health.

Christmas and Epiphany have past, and it seems that we are slowly beginning to smell the spring. If the winter is so mild, we will soon be able to pick dandelion leaves on the meadows exposed to the sun's rays. To this "healthy grass" which the Slovenians love to eat with hot potatoes and crackling or hard-boiled eggs and beans, special attention is devoted at the inn every year. Dandelion leaves are served with a Gorgonzola dressing, and you will find them in the company of a sauce or in dumplings and even as a filling in potato štruklji. The so-called sekanica made of minced meat and risotto is an absolute specialty. In the former Yugoslavia, the Slovenes had to swallow many sarcastic remarks about eating dandelion, being the richest in the country and the only ones eating grass. This 'grass' is not to be missed, because you will be amazed by it and your body delighted by the amount of vitamin C hiding in the toothed green leaves resembling the more precious arugula, but with an entirely different taste.

Vanja Damjanič has always been holding on to the local cuisine of the Dolenjska region. Here, well-fed young pigs, game and štruklji rather than potato are preferred. Although we mention štruklji in almost every restaurant, you should not forget that in the 40 culinary micro-regions of Slovenia there are from 100 to 150 different kinds of this rolled dough, with thousands of fillings. At the Gostilna Pri Kuklju inn, you will be able to try another specialty from the world of štruklji: gluhi štruklji, which will not remind you of a roll at first sight. People in the Dolenjska region call them gluhi (deaf) because they have no filling. The dough consists of flour, water and yeast. It is not rolled out and rolled up as a roll. Instead, we form thick sausages from the risen dough, wrap them in cloths and cook them. The dough becomes fluffy and quite interesting, because it tastes completely different from what you would expect. Gluhi štruklji are without any doubt an ideal companion to all kinds of game, since a dark game sauce makes a delicious contrast to white, airy slices of štruklji in colour as well as taste. You can order them as a side dish with neck of pork, but you need to make a special

Gluhi štruklji in the company of game, pear and cranberries



request, because pork at the Gostilna Pri Kuklju inn is traditionally served with classic buckwheat štruklji. The dough is darker, due to the buckwheat flour, and like classic štruklji they are filled with a homemade curd cheese. You can order buckwheat štruklji as a dessert as well. Strewn with breadcrumbs and fried in butter and sugar, they are really worth the sin.

Do not go to the inn if you are full, and especially not if you have decided to consume fewer calories. Even though the inn's cuisine has introduced some of the dictates of modern diet by avoiding traditional lard and reducing the endless number of eggs in recipes, home cooking is nevertheless filling. Do not let yourself be seduced already at the entrance by two or three mighty homemade potica flirting with you from the counter. Potica with walnut filling and potica with tarragon filling are a part of the permanent offer. If you are not very familiar with Slovenian cuisine, let the third one, which is savoury and filled with crackling get the better of you. Ocvirkovka or špehovha is known in several regions of Slovenia, but the one made at the Gostilna Pri Kuklju inn in the Dolenjska region is the true queen. Not only because of its dimensions, but also because of the softness of the dough and the temptation of its light brown crust. Maybe you will like to combine two treats in one and order ocvirkovka (instead of bread which is magnificent as well since, as already mentioned, there was a prominent bakery here for several years) and homemade goose liver pate.

What drink goes with homemade food? Only one – genuine cviček from the Dolenjska region, which wicked people refuse to recognise as a wine due to its low level of sugar, but still it is the only wine identified as indigenously Slovenian. It is especially praised by people suffering from hypertension and those who know that the digestive tract needs to be moistened with a light, but slightly sour liquid in order to successfully digest strong food. Otherwise, you can choose from the limited, but decent wine offer and drink classic red or white wine. The inn has some sweet wines to offer as well, if the sweetness of the homemade strudel pastry does not suffice. You will be able to choose from five or six desserts, even very "city" and sophisticated ones, but passers-by like to stop - or come to the Gostilna Pri Kuklju inn on purpose - to pick up homemade doughnuts of magnificent dimensions and thick leavened flancati. Flancati is another example of how many ways one dish can be prepared from the east to the west of Slovenia. Let us just say that flancati can be divided into leavened and shortcrust flancati, as well as sweet and savoury flancati. People from the Karst region call the savoury ones štraube, but we will discuss this in one month's time when we visit Ada Špacapan in Komen.

Buckwheat štruklji go excellently with marinated neck of pork



Text: JOŽE PREŠEREN, Photos: Darinka Mladenovič



France Prešeren a poet of imperishable fame

THE US PRESIDENT ADMIRES THE WORDS OF THE SLOVENIAN ANTHEM

When visiting Ljubljana a few years ago, the US president Bill Clinton emphasised in his speech the prophetic and symbolic meaning of the words of the Slovenian anthem. He seemed to be sincerely impressed by the words: "God's blessing on all nations, who long and work for that bright day, when o'er earth's habitations, no war, no strife shall hold its sway..." He congratulated the Slovenes for having survived as a nation in the turbulent European centuries, as well as in particular for the European and globally oriented anthem, the lyrics of which were written by the poet France Prešeren when the Slovenes were becoming a contemporary European nation in the 19th century.

President Clinton and numerous other foreigners cannot have the knowledge of the exceptional significance that Dr France Prešeren has had for the history of the Slovenian nation, although the majority comprehend the deep substantive dimension of aspirations for personal and national freedom. It should be emphasised that this specific poem, A Toast, is the culmination of Prešeren's political poetry. It was written in 1844 during a period of tight political censorship in the former Austrian monarchy of which Slovenia was a part. Due to censorship, the poem could not be published in Prešeren's 'Poems', therefore it could only be published after the fall of Metternich's absolutism and the removal of censorship in 1848. The censors were most troubled by the aforementioned line, which are today in the lyrics of the Slovenian national anthem and whose liberalism is so much admired by foreigners too. The leading thought of the poem is the demand for the liberty of the Slovenian nation originating in a humanistic vision of equality and the amicable co-existence of all nations and the right to independence. New ideas from the French Revolution on equality,

liberty and fraternity, adapted to the basic political necessities of the Slovenes are behind this thought. This poem was exceptionally important during the history of the formation of Slovenes as a contemporary European nation; the poem was particularly topical in the period of the national and liberation war during the occupation from 1941-45, and it was during Slovenian independence (1990-91) that the idea of Prešeren's Toast as the anthem of independent Slovenia arose. The idea was adopted by a great majority.

HIS THOUGHT WAS AHEAD OF HIS TIME

France Prešeren was born on 3 December 1800 in Vrba in Gorenjska, into a quite well-off peasant family. It is interesting that there was a strong awareness of the importance of education in the family, since there were quite a few priests among his close relatives. France thus left home at eight years old and lived with his priest uncle in Kopanje near Grosuplje, where he first went to school, later continuing in Ribnica and then at secondary school and the lycee in Ljubljana. From here, he left for Vienna, taking three years in philosophy and registered to law in 1822. He finished his PhD in 1828, and returned to Ljubljana to find employment. First, he worked in the law firm of Leopold Baumgarten and in the court, and in 1832 he passed the bar exam in Klagenfurt, returned to Ljubljana and worked for the advocate Baumgarten. In 1834 he moved to the law office of the Blaž Crobath, where he remained for twelve years. Throughout this time he tried in vain to set open his own law firm and it was not until 1846 that he was allowed to do so in Kranj. By this time he was already ill and disappointed; he died on 8 February 1849.

Outwardly, Prešeren's biography is from many perspectives a characteristic biography of a secular educated person of the

CULTURAL TRAILS



time. It should be specifically taken into account that Prešeren was a representative of the neglected peasant classes, that he was from a consciously Slovenian family, and that for his whole life he was accompanied by the numerous traumas he had been through in his youth. He went through a series of romantic disappointments, and was most affected by his unrequited love for Julija Primic, and strongly affected by the premature loss of a series of loyal friends. France Prešeren was certainly not a man corresponding to the narrow-minded closer and wider environment: he was too liberal and, as a poet, he deviated far too much from the established literary currents of the time both from the substantive and formal aspects.

In his time, France Prešeren actively participated in the cultural struggles, which were animating Slovenian educated people in the first half of the 19th century. He was always striving with progressive forces and acting against the Jansenist evolutionist view of Slovenian culture. He chose romantic poetry that is an autonomous creation and cannot be influenced by existing moral rules or politics. The poem carried democratic principles, taking a warm interest in the love of freedom and striving to catch up with the European cultural spirit.

PREŠEREN AS A NATIONAL LEGEND

It is impossible to note every important work of the poet in this short article, although we should mention that in his youth, Prešeren was influenced by folk poetry, and later he dedicated himself to ballads and romances, then passing on to higher artistic forms. The culmination of Prešeren's poetry is represented by A Wreath of Sonnets, the poem The Baptism at the Savica, A Toast and many of his other poems. The only book published in his lifetime was the collection 'Poems,' in 1846 (dated 1847).

Literary historians were soon to establish Prešeren was the first to pass fearlessly the boundaries of didactic poetry writing and to constitute poetry as an independent art evaluated by the aesthetic measures of developed literatures. His poems were only

correctly assessed only after decades after his death, and in some aspects, his work was not completely recognised before the 20th century. Thanks to some well-founded written thoughts of Slovenes poets of that time, such as the poet and critic Josip Stritar in 1866, a legend slowly started to form of him as an unattainable national genius who helped the Slovenians to form an idea of their national identity, literary language and, in recent decades, influenced the formation of demands for an equal place for Slovenia in the international community of nations and the formation of the independent country.

VRBA – ONE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN SLOVENIAN VILLAGES

It was inscribed into the Slovenian national consciousness forever by its most famous inhabitant, the poet France Prešeren, who was born there in 1800. In a sonnet that every Slovenian pupil today knows by heart, he wrote the most beautiful monument to his home village. He expressed his deep love and respect towards his birthplace, where "My father's cottage stands there to this day". With this and some other poems, Dr France Prešeren placed his home village in a wider area of an 'image of heaven', the surroundings of Bled and Bohinj, which he looked upon as the most beautiful small nooks of his homeland. The poet included the poem on his home village in 'Sonnets of Unhappiness', since he wrote it in moments of personal crisis, when he was regretting the fact that he had ever abandoned his home village, which is why he resorted to the environment of his youth, "safeguarded by Saint Mark", the saint to whom the parish church is dedicated.

Today, Vrba is generally known in Slovenia principally as the birthplace of the greatest Slovenian poet, and travellers driving across Gorenjska, the most westerly part of Slovenia, can see the village just near the highway from Ljubljana to the Karavanke Tunnel. The village is set in the plain on the south side of the Karavanke Mountains, under the highest peak, Stol. The greatest sight of the village today is the house where Prešeren was born, and is now a museum, with the poet's statue, and St. Mark's church.



Prešeren's birth house

Text: MIŠA ČERMAK, Photo STA



You must always see the light at the **end of the tunnel!**

Her c.v. is colourful and rich: after her graduation as a Doctor of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine in Ljubljana, she specialized in paediatrics. Afterwards, she received her Master's degree at the Faculty of Medicine in Zagreb and currently she is working on her doctoral dissertation under the mentorship of her professor from Ljubljana and the co-mentorship of her Harvard professor. Her everyday life is dynamic and filled with concern for others. Her soul is thoughtful, warm and full of optimism, in spite of the crying of premature infants who she and her co-workers save from death and open the door of life to. She is head of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Ljubljana maternity hospital where each member works independently, but they are close and highly harmonized as a team. She considers herself to be primus inter pares or first among equals. President of the Premature Infants Help Association (Društvo za pomoč prezgodaj rojenim otrokom), a researcher and a teacher, Lilijana Kornhauser Cerar, has received a flattering title from Jana magazine: the Slovenian woman of the year! She was chosen due to all the aforementioned and especially because of her unconditional love of the most vulnerable infants, whom she knows how to help and can and does so unselfishly.

YOU DO NOT DO YOUR WORK EFFECTIVELY BECAUSE YOU EXPECT REWARDS, BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE DETERMINED TO HELP WITH YOUR EXPERT KNOWLEDGE.

AS MUCH AS I KNOW, THIS WISH TO BECOME A DOCTOR WAS FORMED IN YOUR CHILDHOOD.

Maybe I was really born to be a doctor (laugh): as a child I wanted to help fish, cats and birds - we had a real zoo at home and I am grateful to my parents for allowing it (laugh). In high school I was very much interested in physics and meteorology, but the wish to help others would not go away and so I started studying medicine. From the beginning of the studies I wanted to work as a paediatrician (my father is a paediatrician, as well). I am probably one of the few whose wish from early childhood came true.

THE STUDY OF MEDICINE IS LONG AND HARD: AFTER SIX YEARS OF STUDIES AT THE FACULTY, COME INTERNSHIP AND SECONDMENT, RESIDENCY LASTS FIVE YEARS. IT TAKES SOMEONE WHO IS PERSISTENT, DETERMINED AND EAGER FOR LONG-TERM LEARNING. BUT YOU ACTUALLY INVEST IN YOURSELF IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO GIVE TO OTHERS.

There are many professions, especially medicine, which require constant learning. Studying for a Master's and Doctor's degree in mature years is very hard once a person is buried in clinical work. But if I wish to stay in the clinic where I really love working, research work is a commitment. Although I study first of all in order to be more successful in medical treatment, I sometimes feel that I am not qualified enough for research work, for which I have to compensate every day. My generation at the faculty did not participate in research enough. The emphasis during the residency was on practice. And yet, successful research methods are crucial for progress. On the other hand, it is very bad if research work is torn from the context of clinical practice. We sometimes fairly criticize the fact that in Slovenian medicine a doctorate is considered the most important thing, even if the research has been carried out on a small number of mice and its results have never been used in favour of a patient. The success of clinical work is grossly underestimated. And when it is evaluated, the number of publications in professional magazines is more important than the number of cured and satisfied patients and the professional growth of the entire team. I find this work evaluation system, which is sadly valid not only in Slovenia, unfair to many doctors who perform excellent work, but are not praised enough and presented with awards, just because the criteria for the evaluation of clinical work was not set equally.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION IS SURELY TO HELP PEOPLE, BUT RESEARCH AND NEW INSIGHTS MOVE BOUNDARIES. YOU PROBABLY HAVE TO FIND A REASONABLE BALANCE AND NOT FORGET THE COMMITMENT TO THOSE WHO NEED HELP.

That is true, but changes in peoples' heads occur slowly. I still laugh at the story of a well-known professor from the Faculty of Medicine who asked the director of the clinic if he could arrange for his sick relative to be taken over by the best doctor in the house. When the director said that he knew best which doctor was the best, since he himself set the academic criteria, the professor replied, "No, no, I need someone who can treat people!" I am confronted with this kind of evaluation confusion here and there in our University Clinical Centre as well. When I am looking for help for 'our' premature infants, I often meet doctors or nurses of whom I have never heard before, or knew very little about their work because they have kept a low profile. After a while I get to know them as excellent experts and wonderful personalities. Being a good doctor has a deeper meaning than the title and a wider extent than the eight-hour working day.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO WORK IN THE NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT WHICH YOU RUN? WAS IT BECAUSE OF THE HUMAN WARMTH, THE POSSIBILITY TO GIVE EXTRA AND EFFECTIVE HELP TO PREMATURE INFANTS, OR THE HELPLESSNESS OF THE BABIES AND THEIR PARENTS?

The intensive treatment of premature infants is a very young science, which can turn a life-threatening situation into the begin-

ning of a happy life in a very short time. I am always delighted when I see how the work of a small group of experts can change the destiny of such threatened small creatures, and give them not only a chance of survival, but also a chance for normal growth and development. I am still amazed by the energy that these infants have: although they cannot smile or cry loudly, they can show their feelings, even if it is only by changing their way of breathing or moving. Sometimes I have the feeling that besides their mother they recognize the nurse and the doctor as well. This is beyond any doubt ascribable to the atmosphere present in the dedicated team. It has been so for generations.

HOW DO YOU SEPARATE OR COMBINE THE WORDS AND DECISIONS OF A DOCTOR AND A PERSON WHO UNDERSTANDS THE NEEDS OF EVEN PREMATURE INFANTS WEIGHING 500 GRAMS AND THEIR PARENTS WHO WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO SURVIVE AND TO LIVE – IN SPITE OF POSSIBLE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES?

It is easier if we can talk with future parents about everything, even the outcome possibilities before such a baby is born. It is much harder when we have to make quick decisions. We normally always decide for life, but under condition that the chances of survival without consequences are good. Untruths and half-truths which parents read or hear often build up false hopes that their baby has every possibility of surviving after 22 weeks of pregnancy. Unfortunately, that is not true, and there are no miracles. That is why we always give parents enough time to take it in, accept the tragic news, and say goodbye to memories of their baby. Without this, mourning is substantially longer and harder.

YOU HAVE TWO GROWN-UP SONS, TAKE CARE OF YOUR HOME, FAMILY, GARDEN AND TWO DOGS, YOU DO SPORTS AND OFTEN STAY LONGER AT WORK ...HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO COORDINATE YOUR FEMALE AND MATERNAL SIDE AND MEET YOUR WISHES AND NEEDS?

I am really not too occupied with my "female side" - after all, my husband does not notice if I wear old or new shoes, let alone creams etc. As far as my family is concerned, I have done well so far - if I do not take into account the apartment, which is not a model of tidiness all the time, or the garden where some nettles spring up, and too little time to spend with my friends: I miss this and a good book. And the family - when I look back, I think that despite everything, we have had a lot of beautiful moments which firmly hold us together. We all still like being at home. I have always been afraid of the moment when the sons would move out and my husband and I would be alone, but quite the opposite has happened: our sons did not move out, instead they brought their girlfriends and two additional dogs to our home. Having four furry friends which are real family members in the house, I would not notice a woman's hair if my husband had a mistress (laughs). And in the end, just like Edith Piaf, I also like to say: "No, I don't regret anything..."

Photos: Darinka Mladenovič



Kurentovanje in Ptuj

Kurenti¹ – invincible earth demons

At the beginning of February, the Kurenti, who jump, wear sheepskin coats, hold wooden clubs with a hedgehog skin attached at one end called "ježevke", and wear cowbells tied around their waist, began making a noise. In the areas of the Dravsko polje and Ptujsko polje it sounded like the earth was opening up and the dead were rising. In this way, Kurenti announced that winter is saying goodbye and that spring is coming. On the territory of Slovenia, the most Shrovetide characters and masks have been preserved on the Drava plain, in Haloze and Slovenske gorice. For 50 years, they have been an invincible foundation of all Shrovetide carnivals, such as Kurentovanje in Ptuj, and Fašenk in Markovci, Dornava, Videm, Cirkulane, Lancova vas and Cirkovce. Kurentovanje is the biggest Shrovetide carnival of public interest in Slovenia. This year, Kurentovanje in Ptuj is taking place for the 48th time. Last year, 408 Kurenti took part in the carnival and over 100,000 visitors came to watch. The purpose of such events is to preserve and develop a unique cultural heritage and ethnographic tradition. Kurentovanje adds a touch of mysticism, and is one of the most important traditional events in Slovenia and middle Europe. Its roots are in the centuries-old tradition of Shrovetide celebration in the areas of the Dravsko polje and Ptujsko polje. The Kurent originates from popular tradition. In times past, wearing the Kurent outfit was the privilege of unmarried young men. Nowadays married men, children and women can wear the outfit as well. The Kurent wears a sheepskin coat and a chain belt with cowbells attached around his waist. He wears gaiters and heavy boots as well, and his head is covered with a mask. In his left hand, he holds a club called 'ježevka'. There are many different Shrovetide customs and more than one hundred different types of mask in Slovenia, but the most attractive and the most famous can be seen at the Kurentovanje in Ptuj. The Kurent is known not only in Slovenia, but also around the world.

Kurentovanje goes on the whole day. The town streets and squares come alive because of the performances of artists, street theatres, musicians and others. In the evening, a costume party with plenty of good food and drink continues in a carnival hall, where musicians take care of the entertainment. Kurentovanje reaches its climax on Sunday with a traditional international Shrovetide procession, and ends on Tuesday with the 'funeral' of the Carnival. Also other Slovenian cities and towns come alive with carnival celebrations and masquerades. The masks from different parts of Slovenia represent the people's traditions and local history, and through the centuries they have been changing and adapting to the life of today. With carnival dances, masquerades and special dishes, this is a period which once a year gives you the opportunity to change your persona. However, only a few places still have an original tradition of carnival masks, such as the škoromati in Brkini, or the pustarji in Banjšice.



1 The 'Kurent' (plural, Kurenti) is an original Shrovetide mask originating from pagan times in the Ptujsko polje area (translator's note).



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**