

Sinfo

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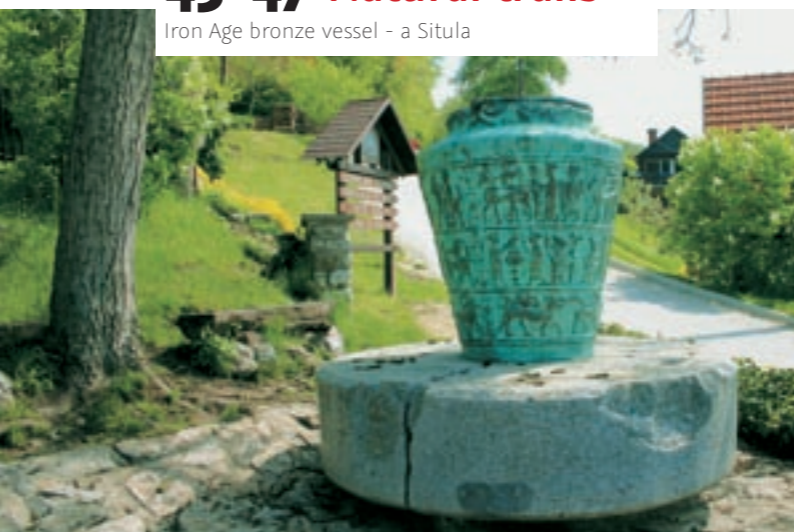
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Veronika Stabej

Dear readers,

The economic crisis shaking our planet has destroyed financial markets, increased unemployment and shaken trust in the bank system. The Slovenian Minister of Finance, who we talked to for this issue, assures that the supplementary budget has important measures to mitigate the consequences of financial crisis. "The supplementary budget is strong and comparable to other supplementary crisis budgets now being adopted in Europe."

However, recession has not had the same effect everywhere. We are pleased to report on the high technology company Instrumentation Technologies, which is not feeling the consequences of the financial crisis. Their strictly specialised market niche - offering solutions for instrumentation and diagnostics for basic particle accelerators - leaves them practically without competition. They also expect a lot from the measures taken by the new American president Barack Obama, who has increased resources for research and development by a fifth. A group from the company from Solkan is soon to visit Stanford and Berkeley Universities and the Brookhaven Laboratory.

At Easter, we enjoy the departure of winter, greyness, dark and heavy clothing, and are pleased to welcome spring, awakening nature and the period of newly springing life. The Easter Holidays are also symbolised by painting the eggs. Slovenian Easter eggs, 'pirhi', 'pisanice', 'pisanke', 'remenke' or 'remenice', as they are called in various parts of Slovenia, are among the most beautifully decorated examples in Europe. Today, only a few people make authentic Easter eggs in Bela krajina, but in the past, girls especially made them, frequently adding a verse to the decoration, and gave the most beautiful egg to a boy as a love token.

Sinfo - Slovenian information

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● Andrej Savelli

Road to mediation

The Prime Ministers of Slovenia and Croatia, Borut Pahor and Ivo Sanader, met on the 24th of February at Mokrice Castle, but came no closer to an agreement on how to solve the border issue. Mr Pahor announced his support for the solving the issue by mediation, while Mr Sanader stood by the suggestion to present the matter to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The European Commission greeted the meeting as “a very positive sign”, but refused to comment any further. A few days later, the Slovenian government released their consent in principle to the European Commission’s suggestion to solve the Slovenian-Croatian border dispute by mediation, while the Croatian government took some time to respond. In the meantime, the Slovenian government discussed the report of the Slovenian part of the Slovenian-Croatian commission of legal experts tasked with defining a framework for resolving the disputed border between the two countries, and decided to end the term of the commission. A few days later, Croatia also decided to support EU mediation, but under the condition that this leads to an agreement on transferring the issue to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Slovenia greeted the move as a step forward, although possibly too small a step to start the mediation. European Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn met the foreign ministers of both countries, Samuel Žbogar and Gordan Jandroković, on the 10th of March, but the interpretation of the meeting was different on the two sides. Minister Žbogar said that the European Commission saw mediation as the final road to a settlement of the border dispute, while Minister Jandroković claimed that Slovenia is not prepared to accept the Croatian proposal of mediation. A week after the first meeting, Commissioner Rehn presented a new compromise proposal to Žbogar and Jandroković, which is said to envisage a signing of a joint Slovenian-Croatian statement that no document or action after the 25th of June 1991 will prejudice the outcome or in any way oblige one or the other country to resolve the border issue in any certain way. Mr Žbogar emphasized that a statement alone will not be reason enough for Slovenia to release Croatia’s accession negotiations.

The Prime Ministers of Slovenia and Croatia, Borut Pahor and Ivo Sanader, met at Mokrice Castle, but came no closer to an agreement on how to solve the border issue.



photo: STA



photo: Bobo

PM Pahor visited Germany on the 17th of March and, after meeting the Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin, he expressed hopes that the Slovenian-Croatian border dispute would be resolved by mediation.

Slovenia strengthens ties

The Montenegrin President Filip Vujanović visited Slovenia on the 4th and 5th of March at the invitation of his Slovenian counterpart, Danilo Türk. The Slovenian President expressed firm support for Montenegro’s efforts to join the EU and NATO. The presidents also paid particular attention to economic cooperation between the two countries. Slovenian PM Borut Pahor also met the Montenegrin President, and the two agreed that economic cooperation between the countries could be strengthened. PM Pahor expressed once again Slovenia’s support for Montenegro’s EU bid.

PM Borut Pahor made a first official visit to Serbia on the 6th of March, dedicated to economic cooperation between the two countries. With his Serbian counterpart, Mirko Cvetković, he agreed that the visit was “a symbolic gesture, which opens a new, positive chapter in bilateral relations, on the political, economic and other areas”. According to Mr Pahor, this first official visit to the region shows that Slovenia sees Serbia as a crucial factor in the stabilisation of the region, and as a friend in this field. Intensifying economic cooperation between the two countries topped the agenda. Pahor also met the Serbian President, Boris Tadić. They emphasized that a new era has begun in the relations between the two countries.

Mr Pahor visited Germany on the 17th of March and, after meeting the Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin, he expressed hopes that the Slovenian-Croatian border dispute would be resolved by mediation. Chancellor Merkel greeted the Commission’s role in trying to solve the dispute. The focus of the talks was on strengthening economic cooperation. Merkel and Pahor also exchanged views on reducing the negative effects of the economic and financial crisis, and agreed on the necessity for concerted action by EU Member States. They also agreed on further cooperation between Slovenia and Germany at the expert and ministerial level on the preparation of measures to relieve the economic and financial crisis. They also expressed willingness to renew talks with Deutsche Bahn on possible cooperation on modernising the Slovenian railway.

The erased and interpellation

The Ministry of the Interior has begun issuing retroactive decisions to the erased and the next step, according to the Interior Minister Katarina Kresal, will be a law regulating conditions to settle the status for all the erased who do not live in Slovenia, or those who live in Slovenia, but do not have a settled status. This led Democratic Party (SDS) MPs to file a motion to oust Kresal. They accuse the Minister of abusing the ministry for political purposes and ignoring results of the referendum. Kresal stated that she is not afraid of the interpellation, because she knows what is right and is doing just that. “As a Minister, I swore in front of Parliament to respect the Slovenian legal order, and that is what I’m doing,” she said. “If this interpellation goes through, I will surely be the first and only Minister in Europe to be ousted for following the decisions of a Constitutional Court.” Prime Minister Pahor expressed his support for Kresal’s actions, stating that the legal way is the only right way to solving the problem of the erased. Responding to the motion, Kresal stated that the story of erasing a few ten thousand citizens of the former Yugoslav republics from the register of permanent residence is a 17-year-long story of manipulation, speculation and collective denial. Not to mention that the unconstitutionality of the erasure was twice determined directly, and seven times indirectly, by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia. Solving the problem of erasure (which happened in 1992) is, according to Kresal, a necessary step that a mature country has to take to settle an injustice and (at least to some extent) restore human dignity, the provision of which is the foundation of legitimacy and existence of the rule of law, which must be upheld in Slovenia.

The Ministry of the Interior has begun issuing retroactive decisions to the erased and the next step, according to the Interior Minister Katarina Kresal, will be a law regulating conditions to settle the status for all the erased who do not live in Slovenia, or those who live in Slovenia, but do not have a settled status.



photo: STA

One hundred days of prime minister Pahor’s government

March 1st marked the first hundred days since the inauguration of the ninth Slovenian government since the country’s independence. Pahor’s government was appointed on the 21st of November last year, exactly two months to the day after parliamentary elections. The main focus of the new government in its first hundred days has been drawing up measures to relieve the affects of the global financial and economic crisis in Slovenia. Relations with neighbouring Croatia have also coloured the government’s present term, as did finding a way to cooperate with the opposition and trying to establish new standards in personnel policies. Before the first “hundred days of peace” were over the government was faced with a first interpellation for solving the problem of the erased. Prime Minister Pahor estimates his first hundred days in office as successful. In his opinion, the government’s reactions to problems connected with the economic and financial crisis are much better than they may seem to the public, where “the attention may have turned too much to individual controversial decisions.” The coalition MP groups also view the work of the new government as successful, especially considering that they took the lead in strained economic and financial circumstance. On the contrary, the opposition is more critical, emphasising as flaws the personnel changes and anti-crisis actions, which they say were taken too slowly.

The government celebrated its first hundred days in office with a new web page, available at the following address:

www.vlada.si/en/



Dr Mojmir Mrak, Professor at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana

Financial and economic crisis in Slovenia:

CAUSES, TRENDS, RESPONSES AND CHALLENGES

Like most other Central and Eastern European countries, Slovenia was relatively unaffected by the first wave of the financial crisis. In the second half of 2007 and until September 2008, economic performance slowed in comparison to the previous years, but this cooling down was far from being a serious economic crisis.

There are several reasons why Slovenia weathered the early effects of the crisis relatively well. Firstly, Slovenian banks and the financial sector in general were only marginally exposed to the toxic assets associated with the US sub-prime crisis. Secondly, households and the corporate sector were relatively less indebted than they were in most other countries of the region. And thirdly, and at the same time most importantly, economic growth in major trading and economic partners of Slovenia was at that time still relatively stable, so the country's exports were largely unaffected.

Slovenian banks have been faced with similar challenges as banks in other countries in the region.

photo: M. Slavec



photo: STA

Wall Street's problems started to spill over into 'Main Street'.



The situation drastically changed in September 2008. The Lehman Brothers investment bank collapse was the point when the crisis turned from a rather narrowly defined financial crisis into a full-fledged economic crisis. This was really the point when the crisis entered a new stage and when Wall Street's problems started to spill over into 'Main Street'. Due to the almost complete dry-up of funds on inter-bank markets, especially of funds with longer maturities, credit growth was drastically reduced, and spreads on debt financing significantly increased. All these developments, accompanied by a sizeable decline in equity prices, have resulted in a dramatic slowdown in economic activity in all the major economies.

The rapidly deteriorating international financial and economic environment is being increasingly felt in Slovenia.

External demand, as the key ingredient in the country's GDP growth, has declined sharply due to severe recession in Slovenia's main trading partners, and similarly negative trends have been observed in investment demand faced by tightened liquidity conditions. Due to these developments, accompanied by weakening domestic consumption caused by increasing unemployment and by general decline in confidence, it is realistic to expect that Slovenia's GDP in 2009 will contract for the first time in the country's almost two decades of independence.

Being a part of the EU, and of the euro zone as its inner economic circle, Slovenia has responded in line with the actions of other European countries. This, in fact, means that Slovenia has articulated and put into operation two sets of policy measures.

According to the March 2009 projections of the International Monetary Fund, the world as a whole will have a negative GDP growth rate this year, the first time for 60 years, with a contraction of over 3 per cent of GDP expected for the euro zone.

With the first set of measures adopted by the government already in October 2008, and by Parliament in the following month, the authorities have aimed to address promptly and adequately the potential vulnerabilities of the country's financial sector and, more specifically, of its banks.

Slovenian banks have been faced with similar challenges as banks in other countries in the region. On the one hand, they have been under increased liquidity pressure caused by extremely tight conditions in international financial markets. In contrast to the liquidity risk - which has been of an immediate nature and has been reflected quickly in reduced credit growth - the banking industry may expect challenges on the solvency side. It is realistic to expect that, due to the likely increase in non-performing loans caused by the economic slow down and by generally worse conditions for the real sector, at least some of the banks will have to be recapitalized.

This 'financial sector package' of policy measures consists of the following measures: an unlimited guarantee for all deposits held by individuals and small enterprises for the period until the end of 2010. With this measure, Slovenia has successfully safeguarded the deposit base in its banking sector as the backbone of its credit activity. It is precisely the relationship between domestic deposits and the total volume of credits that is now being considered as the key indicator of banking sector vulnerability in Central and Eastern Europe. Secondly, the provision of up to 12 billion EUR in guarantees for newly issued debt by financial institutions until the end of 2010. The main objective of this measure is to provide sufficient room for the refinancing needs of the Slovenian banking industry. Within this framework the publicly owned Slovene Export and Development Bank Inc., Ljubljana (short: SID Bank Inc., Ljubljana) is expected to take a much more active role than hitherto. Thirdly, an authorization was given to the government to strengthen financial institutions by providing guarantees, by recapitalizing these institutions and/or purchasing banks assets.



photo: STA

In the period between October 2008 and March 2009, several measures have been taken to ease the liquidity squeeze. For example, SID Bank Inc., Ljubljana has issued bonds on the domestic market and made them available for refinancing purposes. Later, a portion of the 1 billion euros in eurobonds issued on the international capital market in early 2009 was temporarily deposited in domestic banks.

As far as bank recapitalization is concerned, Parliament passed a law in March 2009 whereby the capital of SID Bank Inc., Ljubljana would be increased from 160 mio EUR to 300 mio EUR, with the

funds to be provided from the budget. And last, but not least, a guarantee scheme for enterprises which will amount to up 1 billion EUR is being established. The scheme is to be coordinated by SID Bank Inc., Ljubljana and is to be implemented in cooperation with the banks. Each bank will be able to set up a portfolio of loans that comply with the prescribed terms and to obtain a guarantee for this portfolio. In the case of non-repayment of a loan, up to 80 per cent of the bank's claim would be covered by the guarantee.

The second set of policy measures, called a "fiscal stimulus package", consists of measures aimed at supporting economic activity and increasing confidence.

At the EU level, the response to the severe economic downturn, with profound repercussions in labour markets and public finances over the next medium-term period, was articulated in the European Economic Recovery Programme endorsed by the European Council in December 2008. The Programme called for immediate and coordinated action to boost demand, suggesting a fiscal policy response equivalent to 1.5 per cent of GDP. This figure includes measures at both EU and national levels. In the longer run, the Programme supports a number of policy measures articulated in the Lisbon Strategy. All these measures are designed to adapt the EU economies to long-term challenges, such as ageing population and the nexus of energy supply and climate changes. The Programme clearly states that the implementation of structural reforms must continue in order to raise the EU's potential growth. Slovenia has followed the guidelines of the Programme.

In contrast to some larger EU member states that have based their fiscal measures on stimulating domestic demand, the overwhelming philosophy of the Slovenian package has been to support its export-driven enterprise sector. The total fiscal stimulus is estimated at around 2 per cent of GDP for 2009, with measures heavily concentrated on the expenditure side of public finances.

More specifically, the policy measures could be categorised into three groups. Firstly, there are measures aimed at slowing down the impact of the crisis on the enterprise sector. The flagship measure within this group, worth 230 mio EUR, involves fiscal subsidies to shorten working hours. Views differ on the value of this measure. The main criticism, which has at least partly been confirmed in this, the early stages of the policy's implementation, is that it is not sufficiently targeted, is difficult to monitor, and involves risk

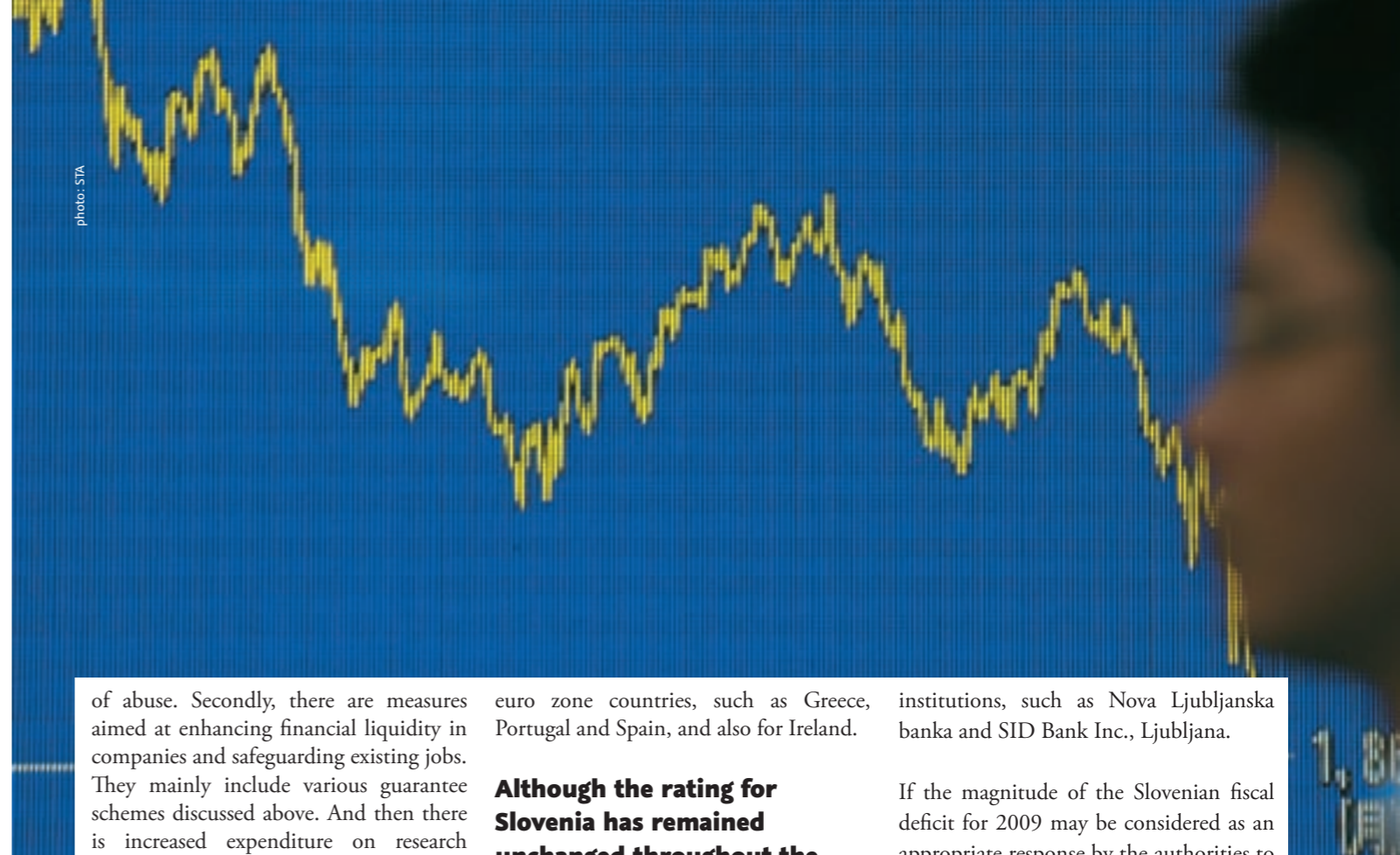


photo: STA

of abuse. Secondly, there are measures aimed at enhancing financial liquidity in companies and safeguarding existing jobs. They mainly include various guarantee schemes discussed above. And then there is increased expenditure on research and education aimed at improving the growth potential of the economy and its resilience.

As a consequence of the fiscal stimulus package (equivalent to around 2 per cent of GDP) and the working of automatic stabilizers (equivalent to over 1 per cent of GDP), Slovenia's public finance deficit will increase from around 0.3 per cent of GDP in 2008 to 3.4 per cent of GDP in 2009. The deficit would be even larger if some delay in implementation of the mid-2008 public wage reform had not been reached with the trade unions, if excise duties were not raised, and if government did not introduce some other rationalizations in various categories of budget expenditures.

In the circumstances of drastically tightened liquidity conditions on international financial markets on the one hand, and the enormously increased volume of sovereign bonds issues on the other, the yield spreads on government bonds relative to benchmarks have widened substantially since August 2007. After a series of downgrades by the rating agencies in early 2009, spreads for all sovereign borrowers increased further in January 2009. The increase has been particularly marked for some southern

euro zone countries, such as Greece, Portugal and Spain, and also for Ireland.

Although the rating for Slovenia has remained unchanged throughout the recent financial and economic crisis, the country's access to international financial markets has become much more difficult than before, and much more costly.

The benchmark 1 billion EUR bond issued by the Republic of Slovenia in January 2009 had a maturity of not more than 3 years, and the spread was as much as 165 base points above the benchmark. The achieved issuance conditions are not to be applauded. They clearly confirm that, apart from the rating, there are other systemic factors, especially the liquidity of the paper, which have a strong influence on the spread. Last, but not least, the high spread of the Slovenian bond over the benchmark was caused partly by a contradictory statement about the country's creditworthiness by one of its senior officials published in the international financial press. With an objective of public deficit financing the Republic of Slovenia is expected to enter the market with one or two more bond issues in the coming months. Later, bonds with a sovereign guarantee are expected to be issued by some other financial

institutions, such as Nova Ljubljanska banka and SID Bank Inc., Ljubljana.

If the magnitude of the Slovenian fiscal deficit for 2009 may be considered as an appropriate response by the authorities to the severe economic crisis, the relatively high spread on its recently issued bonds has sent a clear message that the country has to keep the borrowing level well under control and that there is not much room for further fiscal loosening.

In order to bring down the deficit over the medium-term period, Slovenia will have to embark on a serious fiscal adjustment as soon as the peak of the crisis is over.

Due to the ageing of its population, the country will have to substantially adjust its pension and health systems to make them fiscally sustainable over a longer period. Later, in a euro zone environment in which the Slovenian authorities cannot use national currency depreciation as a policy measure to improve the country's international competitiveness, much stronger pressure will be put on the efficiency of fiscal policy, as well as the flexibility of the labour market and improvements to the financial market.

And how do some Slovenian companies deal with the financial crisis?

photo: company archives



Jože Colarič /President of the Management Board and Chief Executive of the Krka Company, Novo Mesto/:

Today, the Krka company is one of the leading pharmaceutical companies in the European market producing generic medicinal products. We have been proving ourselves successful for decades in foreign markets, and we are used to various, even critical market circumstances. For instance, during the Russian financial crisis in 1998, Krka persisted in that market despite severe economic oscillations and, in the end, we even expanded our market presence. We, at Krka, are always trying to adapt to new circumstances as quickly as possible, and whenever a certain market descends into a crisis, we look for ways to emerge from the situation even more powerful than before.

We detected the turbulent atmosphere leading to the crisis in February of last year, but nevertheless, Krka's business results for 2008 show that the global economic crisis spreading through the world has not yet touched us significantly. We are aware of the fact that we are not living in a safe oasis, and that is why we are carefully examining circumstances and activities in all the markets where we sell our products, including the measures taken by the

governments of those countries.

As our competition does, we too are facing the payment difficulties of our buyers, exchange rate differences which force us to adjust our prices, as well as the erosion of medicinal product prices and the rationalization of health funds. At the same time, we at Krka see this crisis as an opportunity, because countries are trying to reduce their costs also by buying more generic medicinal products, which are more easily affordable than the original products, but are at the same time of the same quality, efficiency and safety.

We believe that the right answer to the global economic crisis lies in increasing sales and, at the same time, being prudent regarding our costs. We are determined to carefully monitor all aspects of our costs, monitoring them daily, and adjusting funds dedicated to costs on a monthly basis. When it comes to financing, we have already been careful about borrowing. This enabled us to start the year 2009 liquid and solvent. We intend to maintain this policy in the future.

Of course, we will continue to invest in research and development, to employ in fields which generate additional sales, and enable the market share growth, as well as invest in the knowledge of our workers.



Franjo Bobinac /President of the Management of Gorenje, Velenje/:

The global financial and economic crisis which washed into Europe from the United States is in full spate. As producers of domestic appliances, along with car makers, we are the most exposed industry, because domestic appliances are consumer durables which, due to strained economic conditions, fear of job losses and more difficult access to consumer credit, consumers have postponed purchasing to better times. The white goods industry is facing the biggest fall in demand in recent history, because the crisis has taken hold in all countries, and especially in Eastern European markets, which are crucial for Gorenje's business.

In the first two months, we had 20-25 per cent fewer orders, and despite a slightly more positive situation in March, we do not yet see the light at the end of the tunnel. We are combating the reduced demand by taking numerous, intensive anti-crisis measures in all spheres of business, from marketing to reducing the costs of material, services and labour, searching for new

markets and new business opportunities created by ecology and energetics. We are striving to preserve as many productive jobs as possible, and reducing the number of employees by natural wastage, through retirement, voluntary redundancies, etc. This year is marked by a struggle for positive cash flow, which in Gorenje we are realising by optimising our stock and receivables, obtaining new long-term credits and preserving current liquidity.

Because of numerous unknown factors, the crisis has created a lot of uncertainty in our business operations. So we prepared several different scenarios for the current business year which enable prompt responses to the changing conditions and implementation of adequate measures. The current situation is extremely difficult and unpredictable, but – in this already saturated industry – according to current indicators, Gorenje is resisting them better than the competition. We are determined that we will come out of this crisis even stronger and more flexible, and we are putting all our efforts into that goal.

photo: company archives



Rok Uršič /Director of Instrumentation Technologies, Solkan/:

The high-tech company Instrumentation Technologies created over four million euros of revenues and a good million euros in profits, which is similar as in 2007. The company is not feeling the impact of the economic crisis. Last year's business operations were realised according to the plans, even though the final data are not yet available. Among other things, the company has just finished installing 224 Solkan Liberas, instruments for beam position measuring, in the biggest European synchrotron ESRF in Grenoble, which should place the institution among the largest such facilities, according to the French in their message.

As far as concrete numbers are concerned, we cannot yet talk about this year's plans, pointed out the first man of Instrumentation Technologies. Namely, last year the company began to develop new products that they intend to gradually introduce into the market from May onwards. Many buyers from Japan to the USA have already expressed great interest in them. It is a completely new product, which enables extremely precise beam acceleration in accelerators. It is suitable for the latest generations of free-electron lasers.

Our company, which currently employs 45 people and plans to hire 15 new ones, is not feeling the impact of the economic crisis due to our specialised field. Because, Instrumentation

Technologies is the solution provider for instruments and diagnostics for basic particle accelerators and has almost no competition in this highly specialised market niche. Our success is closely related to the development of new products, which is why we will be spending several million euros on research in the following years. We haven't changed anything. We just strengthened the development cycle. We haven't detected any changes in demand. Our clients are state-of-the-art science institutes around the world. There are stricter conditions when seeking financial sources at the banks, but for the time being, we're not having any difficulties.

The decision to increase research and development funds by one-fifth adopted by the American president Barack Obama is also very promising for Instrumentation Technologies. A group from the Solkan-based company is visiting Stanford and Berkeley universities and the Brookhaven laboratory in March.

We have to be aware that our current good position, which enables development and provides employment also during the crisis, is closely related to our participation in the international arena of major reference projects, which are financed by countries or group of countries that, despite the crisis, will terminate their financing only at the last moment, because they are of key importance for the future of humanity – from new energy sources, research of materials, to new revolutionary methods of cancer treatment.

photo: company archives

INTERVIEW

Vesna Žarkovič,
photo: Mateja Jordovič Potočnik

The supplementary budget includes important measures to eliminate the consequences of the crisis

Franc Križanič (Minister of Finance): The supplementary budget is strong and comparable to other supplementary crisis budgets now being adopted in Europe. Even stronger ones were adopted in the USA and Japan, and in a few months, the influence of increased expenditure on the market

is to be expected. If this influence proves insufficient, like reductions in taxes in the transition from the last year to this year were, then additional, even stronger measures will have to be taken at the global level in order to turn around the crisis and bring back economic optimism.

Mr. Minister, at the moment, you must be the most burdened minister in the Government. How do you live with this fact?

As a challenge, working task and mission.

Did the fear of recession not obsess you?

No. I remain an optimist. I believe this will be the first crisis to be mitigated in a coordinated manner, at the broad global level, and it will give us a new quality of global economy ...

.... which will most probably result in a new economic order?

That is right. New relations, new criteria and new moral elements will be established.

You presented the new supplementary state budget, which also includes important measures to eliminate consequences of financial and economic crisis. What was your purpose?

There are several purposes. The first is adaptation to the duties of ministers, which have changed a lot within the last year. Within the last year and a half, since the budget for this year has been adopted, and last year it should have been rechecked. This never happened because of the election campaign and pre-election work, and probably because of the tasks the previous Government had by presiding over the EU; therefore, in three months, we prepared major changes in the budget with respect to the new structures, changed circumstances, modified tasks and relations with the Ministries. These measures follow the joint programme of the European Union.

The second reason lies in the fact that the coalition took over the task of performing development turnabout, which

INTERVIEW



But there are rumours of belts being tightened. How do you intend to maintain social order?

During the crisis, Slovenians are able to stand together. Various fiscal measures will lead to a turnaround, and growth will begin, associated with a restructuring of international relations. I expect an increase in value of the Chinese currency, of the importance of China in the global market, not only as an exporter of simple products, but also of more developed technologies. I also expect something similar of India. This change will lead to a number of new jobs in the EU and USA. I also expect some necessary changes in technologies, notably in energy. Without changing energy for transportation, a new wave of economic growth is not feasible. Another fuel will be necessary for the car, not liquid fuels.

The supplementary budget is supposed to increase government debt. The opposition say that the supplementary state budget does not reflect the situation, and that it increases debt. All investments envisaged in the budget are supposed to increase the debt. So is Slovenia no longer able to make investments without making debt?

The supplementary budget is a reflection of the situation; it is a fact that the debt is growing, but for after the crisis, we are already preparing a plan to provide a surplus during the period of conjuncture to reduce the debt, certainly as a proportion of GDP and, most probably, nominally.

How did the second wave of the crisis affect the Slovenian economy?

The circumstances are critical, since we are a small economy dependent on export orders. The surprising thing is that the fear moved here very quickly - personal expenditure fell or stagnated, in particular on consumer durables, and the fear strongly affected consumption.

So Slovenia is part of the developed economic world. We acquired the crisis from this developed economic world. We are solving it in the same way as comparably developed economies, in compliance with the plan of restoring economic growth and fiscal stimulation of the European Commission. According to this plan, we somehow targeted a 3% deficit and taking into

tor employees, who postponed some salary increases for a year - thereby saving up 0.3 of GDP - on the assumption that we will pass through the crisis, and the following year will be more normal and discrepancies could be resolved. By doing this, they helped to keep a deficit of three per cent of GDP during this year's expected GDP stagnation.

Recently, you met the German Chancellor Merkel. Germany is our biggest partner, therefore the future of our economy largely depends on the state of its economy. It is our biggest buyer and at the same time, the biggest supply market. What are the main agreements that came from the recent meeting?

The Prime Minister had the meeting, not me, and they discussed a plan for restoration and growth. We informed our partners of the fiscal stimulus now provided by the supplementary budget, and we were acquainted with their supplementary budget, which they are adopting at the same time.

In mitigating the crisis, Slovenia is therefore largely dependent on other countries.

Absolutely. We are very dependent on our traditional partners. If they do poorly, then we will have a hard time. We expect to enter the Chinese and Indian market, but this will take time, and the question is how these two markets will respond to demand reduction in Western markets. Actually, the situation in 1929 would thus be repeated. This should never happen again, given the experience the world got at the time. A tariff war enabled a global expansion of the crisis. The stock exchange breakdown was not so fatal; border closures played a more decisive role, and the development of National Socialism was associated with the breakdown of the liberal economy.

The Prime Minister has announced radical new measures to mitigate the crisis; can you tell us more about them?

Crisis headquarters will meet and verify all the possibilities for potential savings in the supplementary budget, which will possibly be necessary if the crisis continues. This is only possible if countries begin to close their borders to imports.

hope that such radical measures will not be necessary. In this case, we would be affected, because our growth is strongly dependent on export markets, and if these markets started to close, we would be forced to manage the costs of survival.

In these circumstances of demand reduction, in both the EU and Slovenia, public expenditure should be increased, thereby providing the first stimulus for an economic turnaround.

Indeed, this is being carried out by the supplementary budget and, at the same time, we are conducting developmental restructuring in order to improve GDP, competitiveness, price stability and living standards.

The National Assembly adopted the Warranty Scheme Act, which will be used to mitigate the credit crunch, improving terms and the structure of loans in a major part of the economy.

We also plan measures in the labour market to alleviate the problems of financing the basic living standard of employees in companies with serious liquidity problems. Let me add that I am grateful to public sec-



ceeded in reaching the position of a stable Central European country, a euro member, it is desired in the capital market, and it is a credible partner as a Central European country - as a Eurozone Member. Let me emphasise that the euro has proved very useful to us - the introduction of the euro was a great measure, incomparably better than having our own currency.

Therefore, the supplementary budget serves against the crisis and for development.

Yes, the supplementary budget is strong and comparable to other supplementary budgets against crisis now being adopted in Europe. Even stronger ones were adopted in the USA and Japan, and in a few months, the influence of increased expenditure on the market is to be expected. If this influence proves to be insufficient, like reductions in taxes in the transition from the last year to this year were, then additional, even stronger measures will have to be taken at a global level in order to turn around the crisis and bring back economic optimism. I should say that here we are following the actions of developed countries, both on the side of government expenditure and on releasing credit. We are acting again - we are increasing resources available to the Slovenian banks; today we succeeded in selling long-term, five-year debentures. In addition, the Warranty Scheme Act is included in this session of the National Assembly; this will enable long-term loans to companies and, consequently, an easier transition for these companies through the crisis and into a new development cycle.

Some critics have said that there was no need for a supplementary budget. That is certainly wrong; it was urgently needed for normal government operations!

What if, in this crisis, countries began to become protectionist?

If EU countries begin to be protectionist, which in my view is less probable, then a radical supplementary budget will be required, including reductions in public expenditure. This will be a supplementary budget for survival over several years, and then some rights will have to be interfered with, the rights of a non-social nature, which were adopted as election gifts at the beginning of the last year. But I certainly

means that the implementation of incentives for technological competitive restoration and reinforcement of science began. The coalition's mission was included in the package of measures to mitigate the crisis, which we are obliged to carry out. These measures follow the joint EU programme adopted by the EU Council in December last year aimed at the restoration of economic growth. This requires a 1.2% budget deficit as an additional fiscal stimulant, dependent on what a certain country considers a priority. We leant notably on stimulating economic development.

We took over a number of legal tasks from the previous Government, such as free food for pupils, free kindergarten for second and subsequent children, supplements for higher education, public sector salary reform. These costs amount to a good 400 million euros that had to be included in the supplementary budget.

Where are we in comparison with the most developed?

We endeavour to achieve the level of the most developed. In the last four years, Slovenia started to become a structurally dependent country with an external deficit that reached six per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). This is a very large deficit and a big structural problem, which should be tackled with appropriate measures in the field of technological and investment policy, competitiveness policy, restructuring companies and improving their business operations. Some money is also earmarked for investments in EU programmes, for large infrastructural energy projects, in which we participate with 40 million euros, and projects of rural modernisation and improvement of internet connections. Thereby, we have acquired 50 million euros from the European resources intended for stimulating economic help. Slovenia suc-

consideration the unfavourable development measures of previous governments, we directed this deficit particularly into the most intense technological policy and stimulating the growth of small companies. That is to say, we collected the venture capital; we will stimulate technologies in our wider economy in various ways, and we will enable the growth of small businesses and help them. So that is a big change. I believe even a historic one, in this case. Due to the crisis, we also increased resources for the Ministry of Labour, which will deliver them a bit faster within the third package of measures to employees of companies that have not gone bankrupt.

When do you expect a turning point for the better?

The fiscal measures currently being carried out in Europe, if the fear of spending is not too great, should already have had an impact in the summer. There are already signs in the US market of growth in expenditure.

What will capitalism be like after the crisis?

The market economy will get a lecture, a strong central bank will be established at the global level, the International Monetary Fund should become a normal creditor at the final level enabling the functioning of a global economy at the global level. These measures should lead to exchange rate stability. All tax havens will be abolished; business operations transparency will be significantly better; various funds will be brought under control; the market will be more regulated, and business operations will be easier without being exposed to great risks.

Vesna Bertoncelej Popit, DELO, photo: STA



The Revoo company from Novo Mesto, a subsidiary of Renault, has remained the biggest Slovenian exporter since 1992

According to a survey by Delo newspaper of major exporters in the last few years, the two largest Slovenian exporters in 2008 were Revoo and the Gorenje Group, followed by the pharmaceutical company Krka, Novo Mesto, the SIJ Slovenian Steel Group, the Impol group, the Petrol oil company, the Cimosa company of Koper, the Helios group, the HSE group, and Talum of, Kidričevo. Many export companies, especially in the automobile industry, electrical appliances, and in construction, already noticed a decline in orders in the last months of 2008. After a number of years when Slovenian exports rose steeply, the statistics based on a preliminary estimate show they rose by only 1.9 per cent last year.

Unfortunately, Slovenian industries are among those encountering major problems all over the world. It used to be considered reputable if a company in the automobile industry was working for the most prestigious car brands, even more so if it worked on the first installation. Today, this could be considered a weakness, at least temporarily.

Nevertheless, many companies achieved record exports last year. The biggest exporters to the EU were Revoo, Gorenje, SIJ, Krka and Impol; and to the countries of the former Yugoslavia: Petrol, Gorenje, Merkur, Helios, Krka and Droga Kolinska. At the same time, the biggest exporters to the countries of the former Soviet Union were Krka, Gorenje, Helios, Iskratel and Kovintrade, and to other markets, Splošna plovba company, Hit, SIJ and Danfoss Compressors.

The Revoo company from Novo Mesto, a subsidiary of Renault, has remained the biggest Slovenian exporter since 1992, or since Slovenia has been doing business as an independent country. Moreover, its predecessor, IMV, was also the biggest exporter during the years before independence. Gorenje, Krka, and the Lek company from Ljubljana were always among the biggest, although the latter have not been publishing their export data in the last few years because they say that these are so intertwined with the data of the parent company that they can not be extracted and presented separately.

But this year, many exporters have faced a significantly different situation than what they were used to in times of high conjuncture, leading them to announce smaller, some even significantly smaller exports.

Although companies have been careful in their forecasts, some have declared loud and clear that they are not feeling the effects of the crisis and that they have enough orders on the books.

In recent years, some economists have emphasized that managers are largely to blame for the difficulties of some companies, due to their poor vision or lack of vision, and slow or inappropriate development. Dr Jože Mencinger, an economist and a former rector of the University of Ljubljana, believes those managers who pulled Slovenian companies out of the crisis that followed independence, could guide them better today than their successors, who are facing their first economic crisis and thus have less experience.

Members of the Slovenian Christian Intellectuals Association and members of the Christian Business Association, who met at a conference on crisis management in companies in February this year, were of a similar opinion – that current Slovenian managers lack crisis experience.

Dr Dušan Mramor, the former Slovenian finance minister and current Dean of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana, has estimated that the crisis is reaching Slovenia with a lag, and that in these circumstances, the role of the state will have to be strengthened – something that companies would prefer to avoid in more favourable circumstances. Mramor also states that in 2004, Slovenia was still a net creditor, and had 3.3 per cent of GDP more in foreign claims than liabilities. At the end of 2008, Slovenia was a net borrower up to as much as 23 per cent of GDP. As Mramor emphasises, in four years



Dr Dušan Mramor, the former Slovenian finance minister and current Dean of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana, has estimated that the crisis is reaching Slovenia with a lag

Slovenia, went from a financially fairly stable country into a debt that seemed almost unbelievable before, and which could cause difficulties if the crisis lasts very long or even deepens. One should not forget that 70 per cent of Slovenia's GDP depends on exports, of which 70 per cent go to the EU.

It sounded reassuring when the President of Slovenia and an economic delegation visited Albania and heard that Albania has not been affected by the crisis and that the financing of investments is proceeding normally.

Among other contracts, Poteza and Interenergo, two Slovenian companies, have signed a concession deal to build six hydroelectric plants on the Shala River. The projects are worth a combined total of 150 million euros, and are supposed to contribute 500 kilowatt hours per year to the Albanian national grid.

The SCT company is already building a part of the port in the city of Drač, and

is also said to be participating in the construction of Albania's highways.

The less encouraging news is that Slovenian GDP decreased by 0.8 per cent in the last quarter of last year. If this happens again in the first quarter of this year, which it will, Slovenia too will declare a recession. Inflation in Slovenia has been falling in the last three months; but this February, it rose again by half a per cent. According to some economists, this should be the last breath of inflation before a period of more calm development. Some even predict deflation in the next few months, while a repeated conjuncture has inflation rising again.

During times of crisis, people try to cope in various ways. Many invest in precious metals. According to the World Gold Council, the non-profit association for monitoring the market, private Slovenian investors were mostly buying gold bars last year. The demand for kilogram and half-kilogram gold bars is said to have risen in the second half of 2008. On the other hand, according to Umicore, the Belgian mint, Slovenian citizens bought so much gold in the last 18 months that they surpassed the gold reserves of the Bank of Slovenia, which is supposed to hold something over three tons.

The World Economic Forum has published a new Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report. Slovenia ranks 33rd among 133 countries, one place better than last year. The most attractive environments for developing the travel and tourism industry are Switzerland, Austria and Germany. Croatia ranked one spot higher than Slovenia.

One of the various tourist activities on offer is hunting. There are approximately 500 bears in Slovenia, according to the genetic method; 700 if you count in the young. In Slovenia in 2008, bears attacked 634 times, killing approximately 400 sheep, and caused around 183 thousand euros worth of damage to animals and crops. Around 90 per cent of the bears live in the area of 13 municipalities, where 75,000 people live in an area approximately one tenth of Slovenia. This means there is one bear per 500 hectares, which is said to be a bigger number per hectare than in other European countries with bears.

At the same time, wolves live all over Slovenia. They have killed more than 500 head of small cattle and 60 hoofed mammals, causing almost 270,000 euros worth of damage.

Private Slovenian investors were mostly buying gold bars last year





Jaap de Hoop Scheffer,
Secretary General of NATO

NATO at 60 – work ahead

When twenty-six heads of state and government meet on 3-4 April in Strasbourg, France and Kehl, Germany, for NATO's 60th anniversary Summit, they will certainly have much to celebrate. An alliance that was initially little more than a piece of paper has evolved into the world's premier security organisation, and contributed to an unprecedented period of peace, freedom and prosperity for all its citizens. And by welcoming Albania and Croatia as new NATO members, we will contribute to greater stability in the Balkans, and bring the region closer to the European mainstream, which is clearly where the region belongs.

But the Summit must be more than a celebration. It must also deliver new policies to meet a series of challenges that are more difficult than anything NATO has ever faced before. Three challenges stand out.

First, Afghanistan. A stable Afghanistan is central to our own security. We must enhance our own stabilising presence and our support to the Afghan National Army. Together with the rest of the international community, we must also help the Afghans to build functioning institutions, fight corruption, and tackle the narcotics problem. Military and civilian institutions must coordinate their activities better. And we need to reach out to Afghanistan's neighbours, who all have a strong interest in stability in the region, too.

Second, NATO-Russia relations. NATO-

Russian cooperation is vital for European, and indeed global, security. Afghanistan is one key area of common interest, but there are many others, such as the fight against terrorism and countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Our Summit offers an excellent opportunity for NATO to reaffirm its commitment to a genuine partnership with Russia -- a partnership that not only encourages cooperation, but also discussion of the more difficult issues.

Third, new risks and threats. Cyber attacks and energy disputes can devastate a country without a single shot being fired. Piracy has already become a serious security challenge, and there are clear security implications from climate change. NATO may not be the complete answer to these questions, but I am sure it can be part of the answer. And so we need to identify NATO's added value.

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and 5 years after Slovenia joined NATO, we must demonstrate the political will and solidarity to face a radically different security environment. The time is ripe. A new US Administration is keen to engage its allies; France is taking its full place in NATO's military structures; and Croatia and Albania are about to join NATO. Our Summit will be an excellent opportunity to start work on a new strategic concept and demonstrate NATO's continuing relevance and vitality.

Dr Ljubica Jelušič,
Minister of Defence

NATO young at 60

In April this year, NATO is approaching its 60th anniversary, which calls for celebration, but also presents an opportunity to reflect upon past achievements and setbacks, as well as to anticipate the future.

A few days ago, Slovenia also celebrated an important event - the 5th anniversary of its membership in the North-Atlantic Alliance. Slovenia was invited to start accession negotiations with NATO at the Prague Summit in November 2002. Slovenia was among very few countries that held a referendum on NATO membership. It was carried out on 23 March 2003, just after Operation Iraqi Freedom had started. A sound majority of 66 percent of voters supported Slovenia's membership, and on 29 March 2004, the country became a full member of the North-Atlantic Alliance.

Current complex security risks and threats are not strictly military in nature, and cannot be solved by military means alone. We cannot look only to security within our borders or inside the Euro Atlantic area. We also have to deal with instability beyond our borders. Slovenia is fully aware that NATO membership is important both for the provision of peace and security in the world, as well as for Slovenian security.

Without the standards of equipment and skill set by the Alliance, the majority of the fighting forces would be outdated, and the national defence doctrine still devoted to the concept of total national defence. We may say that the membership in NATO decisively influenced a breakthrough in the professionalization and modernisation of the Slovenian armed Forces and the whole defence sector.

The experience gained from conflicts in the international arena contribute to better readiness of the military for transformation, as well as to the adjustment to the joint efforts of multinational units in which Slovenia is involved. In the past twelve years, Slovenia has

participated, with its military and police forces, as well as with civilian experts, in numerous international operations and missions.

Our participation in these various operations shows that Slovenia is fully aware of the importance of its participation in the UN, NATO and EU-led operations. We also guarantee that each involvement of Slovenian capabilities is based on UN Security Council resolution mandates. Slovenia has always endeavoured for a comprehensive participation strategy within these operations. Therefore, we have tried to provide the best help for local populations in crisis areas by concentrating our military, police, economic, donor and expert capabilities in one place.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our military personnel, civilian experts, police forces and diplomats, as well as the men and women who are serving in these operations and missions. With their outstanding commitment and work, professionalism and efficiency, they are not only contributing to international peace and security; they are also defending our homeland, and serving as the main source of experience needed for the transformation and modernisation of the Slovenian defence and security forces. I am extremely proud of that.

Due to its contribution to international security, NATO is an organization within which several other countries would also like to realize their security-political interests. Slovenia hopes that the NATO door will remain open to all democratic countries in Europe.

Through the transformation of the national security systems of NATO countries, and the new security concept that is being developed by the Alliance, as well as with the freshness and abilities of all its future members, the NATO Alliance will remain young, despite its 60 years.



MAY '68



in Slovenia

The symbolism of the year 1968 has never disappeared, as its achievements are still present today. The movement of '68 stands out, on the one hand, for the replacement of conservative morality with liberal values; and on the other hand, for innovative change in the cultural scene. The exhibition *May '68 in Paris and the student movement in Ljubljana, 1968-1972*, running at the International Centre of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana, is dedicated to the latter.

Student demonstrations in front of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, 14th of April 1971. Photo archive of the museum and galleries of the city of Ljubljana. Photo: Žare Veselič.

May '68, the beginning of a long battle. By permission of 'Centre de la Gravure et de l'Image imprimée', La Louvière, Belgium.



In a varied range of cultural examples from the time, the exhibition depicts the significant role of art and culture in those days of action. After squatting the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris, the rebellious students opened its doors to anyone devoted to revolutionary change. By doing so, many young artists joined this Atelier Populaire (Popular Workshop) and political rebellion. In the allocation of responsibilities, the workers organized the material, while the students and artists created large quantities of posters expressing their demands and criticism of educational and working conditions. It is clear that these posters, designed anonymously for pasting onto the walls of Paris, augmented the mass revolt of May '68, and give good insight into the spirit of the time. May '68 in Paris and the student movement in Ljubljana, 1968-1972, exhibits about eighty original posters by Atelier Populaire, loaned by the Centre de la Gravure et de l'Image imprimée in La Louvière in Belgium.

The Paris flame was later on felt in Ljubljana faculties, where students were concerned about the state of education and fought for solidarity within Slovenia and around the globe. Albeit to a lesser extent, the movement in Ljubljana was of the utmost importance for the Slovenian population, according to writer Ali Žerdin. Many different groups were formed between 1968-71, bringing together all those players who experienced social change in Slovenia and its society twenty years later. Without the student movement, Slovenia would not have gained some crucial experience - within this period, a political movement and its logistical background were successfully organized. Various institutions were founded in the centre, as an expression of the up-coming liberal thinking, which with a minimum time lag brought Slovenian society closer to progressive European social movements. The fact that the Slovenian spirit was fairly similar to the French student movement is unique, considering that socialism reigned in Slovenia in 1968. Despite all the achievements of the Yugoslav student movement being later overturned, the smell of liberty and essential liberalisation never disappeared and were part of the social transformation Yugoslavia and Slovenia underwent in the following twenty years.



photo: Andrej Kriz



photo: Andrej Kriz

Slovenian stand at the ITB

PRESENTATION OF SLOVENIA IN BERLIN

As is the tradition, this year Slovenia was presented at the International Tourism Exchange in Berlin, which is certainly the biggest business tourism event in the world. This year, the attention of the (tourism) public was focused on the effects of the crisis on tourism.

At the Exchange, Slovenia was presented with a new exhibition stand, for which it was awarded at the London Tourism Fair in November last year. The prospects for Slovenian tourism are good, despite the crisis. At the traditional reception, the Slovenian exhibition stand was teeming with visitors enjoying Slovenian cuisine and the music of the legendary Zoran Predin. Generally, interest in Slovenia as a tourist destination was rather great and the outlook for this year's season are not so pessimistic,

they believe at the Slovenian Tourist Board. The central event accompanying the Tourism Exchange in Berlin was the Slovenian evening in the Adlon Kempinski Hotel organised by the Slovenian Tourist Board, the Government Communication Office and the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Berlin. The purpose of the evening was meeting of Slovenian and German tour operators, guests engaged in tourism in both countries, people from business, political life, media and diplomatic representatives. Cooks from Terme Ptuj provided the culinary experience and the Ptuj Cellar provided the wines. The culmination of the evening was the musical guest Zoran Predin, a legend of the Slovenian music scene, with his Gipsy Swing Band.

TESTIMONIES OF HISTORY IN STONE AND CONCRETE

Aleksander Jankovič Potočnik provided us with an authentic meeting with history of a particular kind, unknown to many people. An architect by occupation and an internationally distinguished expert on fortification studies, he is the author of a book written in Slovenian and English, 'Slovenian Fortifications'. There are around thirty such fortifications in Slovenia and near foreign countries. In chronological order, the author presents them with photos and excellent sketches and drawings of those objects for which no documents are available.

First, we get to know the oldest, fourth century network of Roman fortifications and defensive walls, called limes, with the centre in Ad Pirum Fortress. The counter-Turkish fortifications constructed between the 15th and 17th century then follow. The next category of fortifications belongs to the period between 1850 and 1910. These were constructed by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in expectation of an Italian attack. The author then takes us to the thirties of the previous century, to the Rapallo Border area, which in 1920 became the dividing line between Italy and the newly created State of Yugoslavia. There, in the Alpine world, was a group of Italian fortifications. Unlike these, adapted to the configuration of mountain terrain, the Yugoslav fortifications built between 1935 and 1941 followed the example of French and Czech models.

The last chapter presents the time of the Italian occupation of Ljubljana, when the city was surrounded by barbed wire and concrete bunkers. Today, recreation areas for citizens are arranged on this route, called the Green Ring. Eleven itineraries add further value to the book. They are designed to lead visitors to the historically most important fortifications presented in the first part of the book.



photo: Peter Uhan

NERO, THE FIRST SLOVENIAN POP-ROCK OPERA

"No text has ever tormented me as much as this one!" So says the author, Andrej Rozman Roza, of a work that took four years to complete, and of which the conceptual and musical father is musician Davor Božič. Only Božič knows how much enthusiasm was needed for the inspiration, which he got when reading The Twelve Caesars by Suetonius, and in particular Nero's biography, to bring it to life on stage. "I felt the story had funny potential for a musical about an emperor who, instead of leading the state, plays his lyre and sings, despite having a weak and rough voice. He allegedly even burned Rome for inspiration: the story just called for a satirical comedy!"

And where there is a will, there is a way: on the second Saturday of March, on the main stage of Slovene National Theatre Drama Ljubljana, the first performance of the Slovenian pop-rock opera Nero happened. It was directed by Matjaž Zupančič, who has excellently led Nero's story, interweaving it with the present time, which in addition to politicians, glorifies different stars and turns even politicians into pop stars. Even more, Nero's life story seems to have been written for the present time: themes such as politics, art, sex, power, megalomania, parties and executions, were not part of everyday life in Nero's time alone; they can also be recognised in contemporary media

and modern life. The infantile Nero - the actor Jurij Zrnec does a great job in lending him his face and talents - who grew up in the embrace of a possessive mother (played by the better than excellent and convincing Polona Vetrih), feels a passionate desire for destruction and for rebuilding everything anew - and in particular, to show himself off as an artist and to live only for his music. However, Nero does not master the art of political tragedy, and therefore the drama is also the story about the decay of his family and, finally, himself.

A bit of luck when casting the actors (Seneca, Nero's tutor and philosopher is played by Janez Hočvar Rifle; Saša Tabakovič is Tigellinus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard; and the dancing chorus are also excellent!), and having costume designer Bjanka Adžič, choreographer Tanja Zgonc and set designer Alen Ožbolt, was not a coincidence: it seems that a true muse was watching over what is in every way an extremely demanding performance - the muse that turns a performance into a piece of art. Therefore, it is no wonder that the more than two-hour long parade of singing, dancing, laughing and acting more than deserved to be awarded with the immediate excellent responses of the spectators and repeated curtain calls of the enraptured audience at the first performance.



photo: STA

TOMAŽ ŠALAMUN WINS THE GOLDEN WREATH OF STRUGA

Tomaž Šalamun, Slovenia's most famous and exciting poet of the last three decades of the 20th century, received the Golden Wreath, the main award at the well-known International Poetry Festival in Struga (Macedonia). By being honoured at Struga Festival, which is not only one of Europe's oldest and renowned poetry festivals, but is also often regarded as the most prestigious happening in Europe, Šalamun has found his place among the most noted contemporary poets in the world.

Šalamun was touched and affected by the news that he had won the Golden Wreath. "I cannot describe how happy I am, that this year it was me to whom they gave the most prestigious poetry prize which exists in Europe," he said. In addition, he promised that he would write the statement that is published by all laureates each year with special care and dedicate it to Macedonia and its writers.

In 2000, Šalamun, who is living in the USA, where he is also translating, received Slovenia's most renowned prize for art, the Prešeren Award. He has already published 34 poetry books, some of which have been translated into several European languages.



photo: City Theatre archives



THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE DANCE-THEATRE PERFORMANCE 'G MONUMENT'

On the 27th of February this year a special theatre event took place on the stage of Ljubljana City Theatre. In a co-production with the Maska Organisation a reconstruction of the legendary dance-theatre performance 'G Monument' was staged, based on the satirical happening of the late theatre director, journalist and essayist Bojan Štih. Originally staged in 1972 at the Experimental Theatre Glej, by the former enfant terrible of Slovenian theatre (and today's esteemed director) Dušan Jovanović, with Jožica Avbelj in the leading role (then a 20-year-old student of the theatre Academy), the performance to this day is regarded as a turning point in Slovenian theatrical and historical memory.

This year's reconstruction is a work of a theatre director and theoretician of the younger generation, Janez Janša, who has put it into context and adapted it for today's day and age. He faced the project in a scientific and analytical way, and prepared a completely new

performance, which remains an echo of the original one. He again offered a role to Jožica Avbelj, who is now one of the greatest Slovenian actresses and a drama teacher at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana. The live music is performed by Matjaž Jarc, who was also one of the original cast members. Dancer Teja Reba and musician Boštjan Narat also participate in the staging.

The performance is a reference to a similar Janša project in 2006, when he reconstructed the theatrical happening 'Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa pupilčki' ('Pupilija, papa Pupilo and the Pupilceks') at the old city power plant. The original version of this performance was also staged by Dušan Jovanović in 1969, and it became the iconic event of Slovenia's theatrical neo-avant-garde. Janša's staging gives it a new meaning and reflection in the modern social, political and cultural context, similar to this year's 'Monument G'.



photo: CD archives

VIVA MEXICO IN CANKARJEV DOM

This spring again, Cankarjev dom is preparing a festival of faraway cultures; in this seventh edition, Mexico is the theme. Between 10 March and 26 June, there will be several cultural and artistic events – exhibitions, concerts, literary events, films lectures and theatre – in Cankarjev dom. Mexican culture from prehistoric times to the present will be presented to the Slovenian audience. They have had only positive experiences of similar themes in Cankarjev dom. As the Director of Cankarjev dom, Mitja Rotovnik said, they have all been extremely well attended. This year, by putting Mexico in the forefront, they wish to avoid Eurocentric thinking in this house of culture. And, should you think that Mexico and Slovenia are completely unknown to each other, you would be greatly mistaken. So far, there has been quite a lot of cultural co-operation between the two countries, mainly in the area of theatre. The exhibition will be among the strongest elements of the festival and will embrace three presentations. The central one will be the exhibition Mexico before Columbus – the Eternal Life by the National Institute of Anthropology and History in Mexico City, installed outside Mexico for the first time. In Cankarjev dom, besides many other events, the Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra will make a foreign concert appearance, some contemporary Mexican films will be shown; there will be lectures, and also workshops for children, where the youngest visitors will become familiar with the richness of Mexican culture. Also worth mentioning is a literary evening presenting the Slovenian translation of the book The Pleasure Principle, where the guest will be Jose Emilio Pacheco.

THE LJUBLJANICA - A RIVER AND ITS PAST

There is an interesting exhibition until the 27th of September at the National Museum of Slovenia on the rich cultural heritage of the Ljubljana River. More than 1000 finds, graphical depictions of the river, short films of the underwater world and archaeological research, as well as scenes from life by the river in various historical periods are presented. Due to the very rich finds, which shed light on the life along the riverbanks from the prehistoric times to the modern age, the Ljubljana River is a very important archaeological site and was declared a site of cultural importance in 2003. More than 6,000 artefacts have been found and stored at the National Museum of Slovenia since divers first decided to investigate the riverbed in 1884. The oldest finds come from the Middle Stone Age, but more often the finds are from the Copper and Bronze Ages, when pile-dwelling sites stood on the Ljubljana Marches. During the Copper and Bronze Ages, the Ljubljana was the site of votive offerings. Early Roman military equipment and objects of practical use testify to the arrival of the Romans, while objects from the Middle Ages and later prove that the Ljubljana was an important traffic route until the modern period, when the first industrial plants were built on its banks. In recent centuries the River became an environment dedicated more to entertainment and nature, while with Plečnik's architectural design of the embankment and the Three Bridges, it also became an attraction of the city of Ljubljana.

The project 'Ljubljana – the Cultural Heritage of the River' was designed and prepared by Timotej Knific, with Andrej Gaspari, Janka Istenič, Tomaž Nabergoj, Neva Trampuž Orel and Matija Žargi as co-authors.



photo: Barbara Jakšič



photo: Slovenian National Museum



SLOVENSKO MLADINSKO GLEDALIŠČE – THEATRE AS AMBASSADOR

Slovensko Mladinsko gledališče (SMG) is something special. It was established almost 55 years ago as the first professional theatre for the children and the youth of Slovenia. In the 80's, it was re-structured into a theatre that started connecting borderline theatrical experiments with addressing political subversion in an interdisciplinary fashion. Today, the SMG is recognized by a broad spectrum of innovative poetics of various young directors and by an actor's laboratory, where individual roles are united into a powerful ensemble of actors. Mladinsko is a theatre that does not accept traditional values. It is also well recognized globally, as it has the most guest appearances abroad of all the Slovenian theatres.

"This theatre is the place of the rise of many significant people from the world of theatre, who, within the path of innovation, daring and extreme poetics,

established, at the European and even at a global level, a particular style of poetics. One that recognized, within the world of theatre, a context of advancing into the world of simulacra, phantasms and scientific and technological possibilities," says theatre manager Uršula Cetinski.

SMG is recognized in the international arena where, since 1975, it started to establish its expression intensely. So far it has had guest appearances in 34 countries throughout the world, visiting some 140 cities, performing more than 700 shows at 116 international theatre festivals.

"A particularity of SMG is its special place at prestigious festivals in North and South America, where the ensemble, performances and directors receive not only the highest critical marks, but top awards too," Cetinski adds. In 2008 the European Commission awarded SMG the title European Ambassador of Culture.



photo: MGL archives

The award for the best photo story went to Jaka Gasar from the Indirekt daily for the photo story "Financial Crisis on Wall Street"



FIRST SLOVENIA PRESS PHOTO COMPETITION

"SPP – Zavod za promocijo fotografije" (The Institute for the Promotion of Photography) has organized the first competition for Slovenia's press photography of the year – the Slovenia Press Photo 2009 award. Slovenian photographers and photojournalists, who daily report on events and deliver interesting stories, were given a chance to win an award for the best achievements in the past year. Any photographer who publishes in the Slovenian media and has a permanent residence in Slovenia can join the competition, which from now shall be carried out annually.

The international jury of esteemed photographers and editors announced

the winners on the 16th of March at the National Gallery of Slovenia. An exhibition of photos of all the awarded participants will be on display until the 29th of March. The award for the best photo went to Luka Cjuha from the Dnevnik daily for the photo of the Guard of honour and the Book of condolences for the former President and Prime Minister of Slovenia, Janez Drnovšek. The award for the best photo story went to Jaka Gasar from the Indirekt daily for the photo story "Financial Crisis on Wall Street". The awards in the various categories were presented as follows: in the News category, the award went to Jure Eržen (photo) and Maja Hitij (story), in

the People category, to Šimen Zupančič (photo) and Borut Krajnc (story), in Sports, to Simon Plestenjak (photo and story), in Entertainment & Culture, to Edi Einspieler (photo) and Andrej Korenč (story) and the Nature & Environment award went to Edi Einspieler (photo). Accompanying the competition is an exhibition entitled 'Big Moments: Best Photojournalism Photography from the American News Agency The Associated Press', which, among others, features photographs that have marked the visual culture of the 20th century and became part of our collective consciousness.

Jože Osterman, Jana Bogataj, photo: archive Elan

Elan,
running
with
the best



Beauty and elegance

It is actually surprising what a beautiful and elegant product a pair of alpine skis can be. When stepping into Elan's reception hall and seeing them carefully aligned along the dark brown wall, filling the otherwise dull room with their shiny, colourful surfaces, one has a feeling of stepping into an art zone. The impression is repeated when Vinko Avguštin, head of Elan's development department, invites us into his office. The walls are decorated with thirty or so shiny, newly designed skis, each one more attractive than the other. "This is just one of the approximately ten collections we are preparing for the 2010/2011 winter season," he explains. Has he made a mistake? A collection for two years in advance? "Of course," he smiles, "next year's collection is already in production, and we are finishing this one, which will go into further development in the next few days."

So the ski factories only produced a few types of alpine ski. It is different today. Factories must specialize and adapt to target customers. Their special needs, according to their knowledge, the terrain where they usually ski and their physical characteristics, have become the key to the production of modern skis.

"This year we have designed approximately 375 different types of ski in all collections combined. If you add to this number the different lengths of skis, which is also an important feature in choosing the right skis for yourself, the number amounts to 1751 different types,"

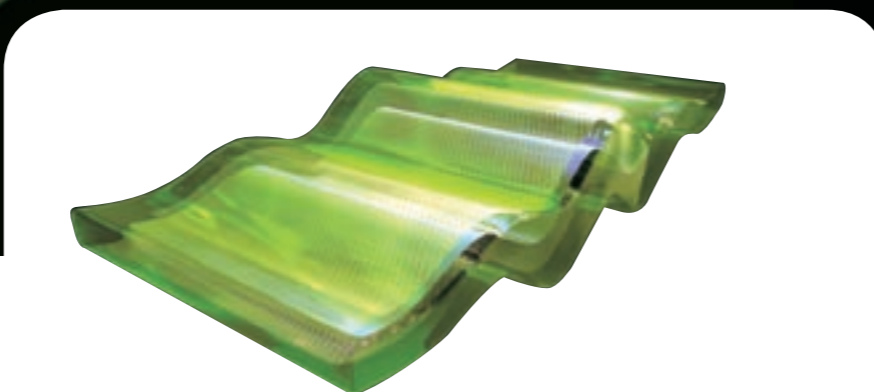
This extreme care when designing new skis is no coincidence. Skis have for a long time been one of those products for which a comprehensive design is one of the keys to good sales.

And not just skis – bindings, boots and ski-wear have also become designer products, carefully considered to the last detail, and every brand is staying true to its own design characteristics. "Everything has changed since I first came here twenty years ago," says Avguštin. In those days, skis were designed only for ski racers, who were the key element in ski marketing.

explains Avguštin, pointing to the fact that setting up a ski production line is very different and more complex today than it was years ago. Ski racers remain important promoters, but today one can not focus only on them when offering skis to those whose needs are completely different. That is why Elan has focused on developing top-level skis for recreational skiers, catering to the needs of a fairly broad and demanding segment of good skiers. Those are the ones who are most dedicated to the sport and are prepared to invest the most in it. "Skis for competitions are very specific," says Avguštin. "Ski racers require tougher skis, so they can use their great physical strength to manoeuvre them during one or two races daily.

Whatever Stenmark and Križaj were using was the standard for everybody else who skied more or less recreationally.

On the other hand, recreational skiers use them for longer periods, so the use of tougher skis would exhaust them and deprive them of a great deal of pleasure. And skiing must be a pleasure!"



Waveflex

Which is why Elan, whose designers have succeeded in developing a great collection of race skis every year, began to consider how to develop skis that would enable good skiing in combining torsional stiffness, which prevents transverse bending of the ski with great flexibility, evenly distributed along the ski, which would enable a better edge grip for a skier of average strength.

They have combined two of their great innovations. One is the binding system, called FreeFlex, where the binding becomes a part of the ski, making it equally flexible all along its length. The other innovation is the implementation of stiffening elements in the ski further from its central line.

Due to their innovative arrangement, the ski maintains its torsion stiffness and enables its extreme flexibility and adaptability to the slope. The Waveflex innovation thus enables the recreational skier to perform clean, equal turns of various radiuses without having to change the skis for short and long turns. It seems almost simple. Egg of Columbus? "Perhaps," smiles Avguštin, "but for us mechanical engineers, a ski is just a carrier we have to design and construct to satisfy the demands as much as possible." He adds that they also tried to perfect their design with the cooperation of experts from the University of Ljubljana, but they were not very enthusiastic about investing in research and development if the financial benefits became available only after the new product had proved successful. So they found a construction team of young doctoral students at the University of Maribor, who worked hard and received a reward only after their innovation had produced results. And what results they were! In 2007, they received an award for the innovation of the year from the

Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia. At the same time, these skis received several other awards at various international fairs and ski tests. At the biggest ski fair, ISPO 2006, the Speedwave ski received the European Ski Award for the best ski of 2006. They also received two other awards for the best design: the Red Dot Award 2007 for innovative design, and in 2008, the Designpreis award and the Snowstyle of the Year award at the world ski test.

They had achieved their goal – to design the best skis for recreational skiers.

But Avguštin remains composed when reading the good reviews of ski tests in magazines. "Well, ski tests are not exactly a relevant reference point. Sometimes the reviews for the same type of skis were very bad. There are times when the results of such tests are more influenced by the gifts you give to those testing them than the skis themselves."

The future?

The company at the moment is going through a crisis, not just because of external circumstances, but also because of their own mistakes.

Elan's nautical programme was obviously a bit overrated, and is now showing its true value. It is different with the skis. This part of the company has a marvellous product, well accepted in the market and well sold. Avguštin points to a surprising fact: "The number of skiers has declined a great deal during the last ten years. If there were about 5 million of them at the turn of the millennium, there only remain about four million today."

He adds that the younger generation is more eager to surf on the internet that to ski on snow, which of course has an effect on sales.

Marketing and promotional strategies are also very different today than in the past. Elan today invests less in race skiers, although they do support some good racers, like the Swede Brolenius, the Slovenians Vajdič and Valenčič and two talented Czech skiers. But the difference in the brand value is quite different if you invest 800 thousand euros or a few million euros, like some premium brands. Despite all of the above, Avguštin still considers that Elan is somewhere between fifth or seventh place among the world ski brands. They are well-known in North America and Europe, and they are also achieving globally competitive prices. In terms of production, Elan even ranks among the first three world producers.

With some bitterness he adds that the crises of recent years have left a mark on the company. The former feeling of loyalty to the company and the pride of its workers has greatly declined, although they still hold together. But the sadness in his voice when he spoke about his first steps in this great company shows that he is dedicated to it with all his heart. And that is most convincing. Because of people like him, Elan will surely survive!



Sabina Popovič, Photo: Tomo Jeseničnik



Bela krajina lies in the most south-eastern part of Slovenia, in the most southern point of the country in Kot, near Vinica. It is a unique border landscape, a country of white birches and ferns, and white national costumes, which are still the pride of the residents of this warm country between the Gorjanci Mountains and the Kolpa River, a country of vine hills and rich folk tradition. Linen and embroidery are still woven and handicraft products are still manufactured here as well.

Bela krajina is a developed countryside intertwined with vineyards; therefore, wine and viticulture are particularly significant. So particularly significant that the noted 'Wine Spring' in Metlika, a traditional event in May, is dedicated to it; it attracts many people from the region and from different parts of Slovenia. Which lover of vintage wines does not know Metliška črnina, the red wine of Metlika?

Metliška črnina is dry red wine with designation of origin from Bela krajina. The wine is blended from all the red varieties grown in this region (Blaufränkisch, Blauer Kölner, Blauer Portugieser, St. Laurent and Gamay). Metliška črnina is classified as a medium heavy Slovenian red, and is distinguished by its lower alcoholic content and pleasant dryness expressed in pleasant bitterness. The wine contains a good deal of tartaric acid, which gives the wine its heaviness and stability. For its specific dryness, it suits roast or grilled meat, venison dishes and cured meats, and mushroom dishes and spicy cheeses exceptionally well.



Hand in hand with good wines, of course, goes good food, which is abundant in Bela krajina.

Lamb and sucking pig have a special place in the local cuisine. The people roast the majority of them during spring, when hundreds are cooked at the 'Wine Spring'

in Metlika, and grilled in restaurants and farm tourism establishments. During these months, lamb constitutes the main restaurant ingredient, and it is worth a drive to Bela krajina just for a delicious lunch, where you will be served crunchy roast lamb. Cooks devote special care and effort to grilled lamb and pork. Well-salted lambs are grilled for good two hours, then cut at the thickest parts and grilled until golden-yellow on all sides. The meat is usually served with onion, tomatoes and, of course, pogača, the flatbread typical of Bela krajina. It is similar with sucking pig - and nowhere in Slovenia is it roasted to be as savoury and crunchy as in Bela krajina.

Out of the multitude of good dishes, some came to the region from the other side of the Kolpa River, others from the other side of the Gorjanci Mountains, and many are original, old-fashioned authentic local recipes. The everyday food was always more modest, and also without meat. Such everyday dishes are barley with pig's trotters, potato dumplings, čezenj, mixed bread with heated milk, sauerkraut and beans, kropec or camomile thickening, buckwheat porridge...

However, the dishes found on Bela krajina tables on special occasions are quite different. At weddings, you will be served chicken soup with noodles, boiled hen and pork roast, unleavened potica and žlinkrofi, sumptuous wedding potica and cake, compulsory flancati - and soup made with yellow turnip and beans will also not be absent.

At major rural undertakings, such as grape harvesting, boiled mutton and chestnut will be found on the table; at St. Martin's feast, roast goose and buckwheat potica; at haymaking, fried minced meat, ham and flat cake; and at harvest time, sour soup, rolled dumplings and fried bread.

The festive dishes are also rich, such as at Christmas and New Year's Eve, when there is roast goose or duck stuffed with buckwheat groats or turkey stuffed with flat cakes. Poprtnik, the local Christmas bread in the shape of a big loaf, is also baked at the time. The good food prepared at Easter is another story.

Easter blessing

At Easter, we enjoy the departure of winter, gloomy moods, dark and thick garments and sometimes boring food. At the same time, we are full of expectations of spring, awakening nature and a period of newly springing life.

For Easter, they have the famous 'spring blessing', which should be colourful and with lots of good dishes. This really is a feast - an offering to God and to the people who produced this good food. Various cured meat products, such as sausages, salamis, ham in pastry, and potica, pogača, horseradish root and, of course, an Easter egg for each family member, are found in the basket. None of this should be missing from the richly laden Easter table, and since the people of Bela krajina are very good and generous hosts, they welcome every guest, who will certainly not leave hungry.

According to tradition, the people of Bela krajina start to prepare for Easter holidays during winter, when, in addition to weaving, they also paint eggs.

The egg is an ancient Indo-European symbol of spring and a natural image of fertility and rebirth in spring. Christianity symbolically associated it with Christ's resurrection; therefore it was established as an Easter dish in Christian countries. Slovenian Easter eggs, pirhi, pisanice, pisanke, remenke or remenice, as they are called in various parts of Slovenia, are among the most beautifully decorated examples in Europe. In many parts of Slovenia, ornaments were painted on the eggs with melted wax, but this tradition was preserved notably in Bela krajina. Easter eggs are called pisanice here, which means they are painted or colourfully ornamented. Geometric and stylised figures are characteristic of Easter eggs in Bela krajina, therefore straight zigzag and wavy lines, crosses, spirals, triangles, hearts, circles and points are found on them, filling up empty areas. To produce the eggs, the makers need bee's wax, a special pen, a candle, red dye, black dye and, of course, plenty of skill. Wax ornaments are first painted on an egg with the pen, which has a special tip in which they melt the wax over a candle flame. First, they paint the ornament in the natural colour of eggshell

slovenian delights

and then each colour coating follows. With each coat, which follows from the lightest to the darkest, they cover with wax those parts of the surface on which they want to paint certain ornaments. Another type of Easter egg is made, the drsanka, which originates in Metlika and is decorated in a slightly different way - the eggs are first dyed, and then patterns are scratched out.

Today, only a few people make these authentic Bela krajina Easter eggs, but in the past, girls in particular made them, and frequently added a verse to the decoration, and then gave the most beautiful egg to a boy as a love token.

Source: Cuisine of Dolenjska and Bela krajina



Slovenian Easter eggs, pirhi, pisanice, pisanke, remenke or remenice, as they are called in various parts of Slovenia, are among the most beautifully decorated examples in Europe



Bela Krajina pogača (flatbread with caraway)

Ingredients:

1kg soft white flour
6dl warm water
2 tablespoons of salt
1 tablespoon of sugar
2 bags of dry yeast
1 whole egg

Mix the flour, salt, sugar, yeast and water, and knead for a few minutes until dough becomes smooth, not too hard and does not stick to the hands. Leave to rise in a warm place, covered with a cloth, until its volume doubles. Grease a baking tray with oil or fat, then punch down and spread the dough flat to a size of about 30cm. Stretch the dough on a baking tray to about 1 or 2cm thick. Cut in lines approximately 4cm apart all the way through to the bottom. Coat with whisked egg and some caraway, maybe even sprinkle it with coarse salt. Bake in a preheated oven at 220°C for 20 to 25 minutes until the bread is golden and crispy.



Bela Krajina buckwheat potica

Dough ingredients:

500g buckwheat flour
80g butter
salt
boiling water
1 egg for coating

Filling ingredients:

1.5l Bela Krajina cream (made with preheated milk)
500g cottage cheese
50g butter

Scald buckwheat with a small amount of boiling water, and leave to cool. Then add other ingredients and knead. Form a loaf, and leave to rest for 30 minutes. Roll out the dough in a rectangular shape about 1cm thick. Mix the ingredients for the filling and spread evenly across the dough. Roll the dough and place it onto a greased baking tray. Coat with whisked egg and bake at 200°C for 1 hour.



Bela Krajina cvrtje (fried minced meat)

Ingredients:

600g minced meat (various meats)
1 baked roll or an equal amount of bread
2 tablespoons of oil
2 tablespoons of chopped onions
1 egg
salt
pepper
fresh parsley

Ingredients for the breadcrumb coating:

flour
egg
breadcrumbs
frying oil

Soak the bread roll in milk. Season the meat with fried onions, add the rest of the ingredients and mix by hand. Form smaller burgers, roll them in flour, then egg, then breadcrumbs and fry in preheated oil. Serve with a creamy potato salad.

Bela Krajina povitica (rolled cake)

Dough ingredients:

500g white flour
1 egg
3 to 4dl warm water
2 tablespoons of oil
1 teaspoon of vinegar
a pinch of salt
50g of butter to pour over the dough

Filling ingredients:

1kg homemade cheese or cottage cheese with 'škrlupci' (warm cream)
2 eggs
2 teaspoons of salt

Make the dough and roll it out on the table, pour a spoonful of oil on it and spread it thinly. Mash cottage cheese, add eggs and cream and stir well. Spread filling on one half of the dough and melted butter on the other half. If the filling is too thin, add some breadcrumbs. Roll the dough and bake at 200°C.

Vesna Žarkovič, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

The snow queen Planica



Planica celebrates its 40th anniversary of ski flying competitions - Planica – Slovenia's trade mark - World Cup Finals in ski jumping

Each year, the ski flying competition in the valley beneath Mt Ponce is one of the biggest sporting spectacles in the country. It seems almost incomprehensible. Ski flyers realise the ancient human desire to fly like birds. Some 46,000 spectators attended the competition in the first three days. Combined with 18,500 on Sunday, the total number (64,500) exceeded last year's record attendance.

From March 19th to March 22nd Planica hosted the World Cup Finals in ski jumping. Even though the spectators did not see a record distance, they were able to celebrate the best Slovenian result this season, when Slovenia's best ski jumper Robert Kranjec with his best placing of the season, joined the winners on the podium.

The Harri Olli of Finland won Sunday's final competition on the biggest large hill ski jump in the world, constructed 40 years ago by the Gorišek brothers. Adam Malysz from Poland came second, while the Slovenian record holder Kranjec and Simon

Ammann of Switzerland both finished in third place. Norway won the Saturday team competition, Poland came second and Russia third. Slovenia, represented by Pikel, Hrgota, Kranjec and Damjan, finished fifth, only 0.9 points behind Austria. Kranjec jumped as third in the team competition, and his distance of 226.5 metres was only two and a half metres short of his personal best of 229 metres recorded two years ago. The best ski jumper this season, Schlierenzauer, won the first competition on Friday. The Polish veteran Adam Malysz came second, and the Russian, Dmitriy Vasilijev, finished third. The world record of Norwegian Björn Einar Romören was not broken this year either. Surprisingly, after flying 239 metres on March 20th 2005, he failed to qualify for the competition on Thursday.

The history of ski jumping in Slovenia officially begins with a first record and competition in 1921 in the town of Bohinj, when Jože Pogačar, the first champion and record holder, jumped 9 metres. The first ski jump was built in Planica before 1930. Ideas of a bigger hill soon followed - one that would be up to official FIS standards for bigger competitions. From March 23rd to March 26th 1934, the first international competition was held in the valley beneath Mt Ponce, with a total of fourteen ski jumpers from Norway, Austria and Slovenia. And a new world record was set. Planica's glory spread around the world, and its constructor and builder added another feature – due to the soft snow in Planica, he chemically treated the snow, and thus 'invented' so-called snow cement. Planica became the biggest ski jump in the world. Not long after, in 1936, Planica acquired a new hero.

The young Austrian, Sepp Bradl, became the first man to fly over 100 metres (101 metres, to be exact). From then on until 1954, there were no official competitions in Planica, only trials between ski teams, with no evaluation. The ski jump constructor Bloudek made many adjustments and improvements to the bigger ski jump of the two in Planica, enabling more world records to be achieved in three competitions before the WW II. After the war, the hill was very much in need of repair, and even though Bloudek and his team managed it, the FIS still refused to allow competitions in Planica, which even in those days was considered a large hill ski jump.

The first competition in Planica after the war was in 1947. A year later, Tschanen of Switzerland set a new record distance - of 120 metres - which would last for 21 years. In the next few years, the brothers Janez and Lado Gorišek took over Bloudek's constructional heritage. Investing a lot of knowledge and devotion in their task, blueprints for a new large hill ski jump were drawn up. The location was near the two existing ski jumps (of 90 and 120 metres), towards the Tamar valley. Even from the beginning, it was constructed in such a way that it would easily allow further enlargement.

The dreams of pioneers Stanko Bloudek, Jos Gorc and Ivan Rožman became a reality when at a congress in Opatija, FIS decided to hold the 1972 world championship in the valley beneath Mt Ponce. Ski flying finally became equivalent to other ski disciplines.

Urban Praprotnik, photo: STA

Slovenia is jogging



Slovenia is jogging. This is a fact, not just an advertising slogan. Almost anywhere and anytime, you can find someone jogging. In the last ten or fifteen years, running or jogging has become the number one recreational sport in Slovenia.

More and more people feel the need to exercise, especially because our day-to-day work offers so little of it. Therefore, an increasing number of people do sports, which is beneficial for health. And jogging, like any regular exercise of sufficient intensity, can have many beneficial effects. Jogging is a natural, cost-effective and practical way of staying healthy. Available every day, one has the chance to sweat it out, enjoy the natural surroundings and refresh one's mind.

The interesting question is, why is jogging so popular. The number of participants running the 42-, 21- and 10-kilometre distances in the Ljubljana Marathon, the biggest running event in Slovenia, increases by an average 25% annually. At this year's 14th

Ljubljana Marathon at the end of October, more than 10,000 participants are expected.

So, why are more and more people going jogging?

During the last twenty years, more and more people started to think about how to live healthier. Advice about eating healthier and exercising regularly if we want to reduce the chances of getting coronary diseases, osteoporosis, diabetes, some forms of cancer and to improve our immune system are regular topics in the media. People have realised that one simply can not be healthy if one is not physically active. But because our daily lifestyle does not offer many chances to exercise – we drive to work, we sit at a desk all day long, and we are easily persuaded to sit

in front of the television when we come home – it is necessary to exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, or 60 minutes three times a week. Many have begun by taking a walk. Then, when the fear of running faded, the number of runners increased rapidly. At first, many were convinced that running is only for the young and the athletic. But when you personally witness a lady in her seventies completing a marathon with a smile on her face, it gets a bit embarrassing that you are the one standing behind the fence and just cheering. That is when you ask yourself – why should not I try as well? And as the number of runners increases, so does the incentive for those who are still not physically active enough. More and more people who not so long ago thought that they themselves would never run, that run-

ning is simply a form of torture, that they are too old, that running is boring or that they do not have enough time, are runners today. How lucky for them that they were so wrong. Most of the above-mentioned is simply not true. If you jog in the right way, make sure you have the right equipment and choose speeds that suit you, jogging can be suitable for almost anybody. Compared to less intensive exercise, jogging can have important advantages. It takes less time to get the exercise, to strengthen the muscles and use more energy. Not to mention the fact that more endorphins (hormones of happiness) are released in the brain in the same amount of time. One can go jogging in any weather, all year long.

The increase in the popularity of jogging has also had a

beneficial effect on the supply of equipment. There are more and more running events taking place around Slovenia, and the stores are better supplied with running equipment, and joggers can participate in group training under professional guidance or in other educational events for recreational runners.

Recreational running competitions

Recreational running competitions are not really competitions, because nobody is competing with anybody else but themselves. Other competitors are there more for motivation and to keep you company during the run. Come to think of it, this is actually the best, the healthiest way to participate in sports. We are making the best progress when we overcome

ourselves, our fears and doubts about our abilities, our indecisiveness. That is when we become younger and freer. Running competitions take place throughout the year.

Jogging groups

Anyone can go jogging alone. This is the great advantage of jogging compared to other sports. Nevertheless, it is so much more interesting and fun to jog in pleasant company. In every bigger town, joggers are setting up groups, training together and participating in competitions around Slovenia and abroad. Some groups are guided by coaches. I myself coach one such group in Ljubljana. Training is useful both for absolute beginners and experienced marathon runners. We run in various groups, do strength, stretch and run-

ning exercises and laugh a lot. Laughter is highly welcome! Training lasts throughout the year, in any weather. When it is cold and rainy, good company can keep you warm.

Education

As a trainer, I give running courses all around Slovenia. They are suitable for beginners, and for experienced runners who wish to extend their knowledge of techniques, training planning and possible injuries.

Getting to know Slovenia through running

If you are curious and would like to experience Slovenia in a different way, join us on our running days, entitled 'Lahkih nog radovedni naokrog' (Curious Light-Treaders). Each

month, we meet in a different town, discovering its beauties and sights while running. We usually have lunch together and listen to a short lecture on health, history, science or art.

If you have not started yet – try running. First, start with walking, and every once in a while, season it with a one-minute, slow jog. Gradually, you will progress. After three months of regular walking and jogging, you will become a genuine runner. A genuine runner is not someone who just runs, but someone who can also enjoy it. Have fun!

Tadej Golob, photo: Maja Slavec

Miha Mazzini

Carrots and radishes as he likes them

Miha Mazzini, the 47 year-old Slovenian writer, comes from Jesenice, a town in the north-west of Slovenia whose principal industry was steel production. Thousands of workers from the former Yugoslavia work there, so it is no wonder that his first literary work also spoke of them - of 'bizarre figures', such as Selim the Bosnian, who fell in love at a distance with Nastassia Kinski, and the Slovenian, Egon, who is separated from the greyness of Jesenice only by Cartier perfume. And when this runs out...

'Crumbs' - the novel's title - sold in 54,000 copies, which must be close to the Slovenian record for a literary work. (The Cartier Project film was also based on this novel). Domestic reviewers generally overlooked it, and Mazzini's subsequent work, so he made an effort to present them abroad. Today, he is one of the rare Slovenian writers whose books can be found in foreign bookshops.



Presumably, 70 per cent of all translations in the world are made among the bigger languages - 20 per cent from these languages - and ten per cent remains for all others. For a Slovenian author pursuing international recognition, this is not really a pleasant start?

It all depends on the perspective. In principle, it is correct. In the USA, for example, not even many German authors have been translated, but Germans were and still are owners of the biggest publishing houses. This means that business policy is separate from editorial, which is as it should be. So, this information is really not encouraging, but my first American tour began with an introductory lecture at a major book fair in Seattle. When my publisher told me about the lecture, of course I asked him: "Wait a moment, how can a Slovenian writer have an introductory lecture here?" "Sure he can," he said, "with the organisers, we registered a lecture on how an American publisher and a Slovenian writer can meet." Since no one knew where Slovenia was, they were extremely interested in what kind of 'Martian' would appear, and so we held the introductory lecture. Which means that this situation can also be turned to advantage.

Your book has been listed as fourth among the translated literature in Serbia. What does this mean for it?

I do not know. I hope it means I will have my 'špikana pleskavica' (stuffed ground meat steak). I have to say that promotion in Serbia was very well organised. The Slovenian government not only pays for the translations, but also for the tours. It's like this: Slovenian writers cram into a van or a plane, they get drunk as lords, then they read something and get drunk as lords again, and the following day they read again etc. Touring America is something completely different. Each hour is busy. If they bring you to a place, they want to use you and you have a performance every hour. It was similar when I went to Serbia to promote this book. I had

a performance, an interview every hour. I started at four in the afternoon and finished at one in the morning. Since the schedule was so full, I only had time for a portion of macaroni. I hope I will return triumphantly, to get a 'pleskavica'.

Do the texts of your novels behave differently in a language closer to ours, such as Serbian, or in the global language, English?

This is a matter of cultural context, which is not so problematic in some of my novels. For example, in 'Guarding Hanna' it is not. It is more problematic in 'The King of the Rattling Spirits', which is a story about socialism, written out of socialism. Here, the context is significantly more problematic.

When writing, do you keep in mind that the foreign market should understand? Is this the reason you set 'Guarding Hanna' outside Slovenia?

No. Well, I will put it this way. With a regular job and hundreds of other things to do, I have little time left for writing, which means it is a hobby. Imagine someone with a small garden and one hour per day for it. They would not say, "Oh, at the request of public, I should plant lettuce and so many carrots and radishes ..." No, he or she would say, "I do not care about the public..." and would plant exactly what he or she wanted. Such is my attitude to literature. For all the years I have been making a living out of computer science

and I do not know what other things in order not to be obliged to write some rubbish, rubbish for commercial sale. I have nothing against commercial sales, but in Slovenia this means that now, when I do what I want, I sell about 600 copies of a novel, and if I flattered the public with disgusting writing, I would sell 800 or 1000 copies and would receive an additional hundred euros.

Last year, Slovenia presided over the European Community. Do you not think that it could have made better use of the presidency by promoting its writers? Among the gifts received by foreign journalists, diplomats - towels, pens, pots... - there were no Slovenian books.

I was following our cultural offer myself. They made an exhibition of beehive fronts, that is to say, 500-year-old things, and a choir performed. Totally bizarre. A country with no economic power, and it does not know what to offer. When Slovenia was entering the EU, I was invited by the Frankfurt Cinematheque, which made a retrospective of films for which I had written the scripts. At the time, a round table entitled 'What can Slovenia offer to the European



Albert Kos, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

Community?' was prepared and some important Slovenians were invited, such as the economist Jože Mencinger and the former Slovenian president, Milan Kučan. A former German minister also attended the discussion, who was obviously well informed about Slovenia. So, our politicians start, "Slovenia will offer this and that ..." And the German politician says, "Well, you do not really have any economic power." "We master international relations," adds Kučan, "different cultures...We are so in command of ..." And the German says again, "Yugoslavia fell apart. Apparently you are not that good at this." Both Kučan and Mencinger went numb, and then Kučan remembers: "Culture - we will offer culture." "Culture?" It was interesting to observe both our representatives articulating this word, since it was obvious it was coming a little stiffly from their mouths. The German knew nothing about that one. In short, Slovenian culture is the winning card, which Slovenian politicians can always use, because no one knows anything about it.

You mentioned your basic occupation, computer science, so I would like to ask you whether the book as we know it, the paper book, will survive in the 21st century?

The short answer is 'yes'. I believe it will. Five years ago, vinyl records were considered something totally foolish,

something only completely obscure people were buying, at some rare fairs, where all people were dressed alike, in jeans jackets. They are bald on top and they wear a long mop behind. If you wanted to go there, you almost had to wear this kind of mask. Buy jeans, rent a mop...Everyone said: vinyl will die with this generation. But no, its revival began, and a growing number of youngsters are buying them again. As an object. Smaller record companies issue an LP to be sold, and on its back the web address is given so you can download the songs using a password. Which means you get music for your iPod and an object at the same time. People are still used to objects. All this virtuality... Damn. One wants to touch something. So I doubt that the book will go extinct, except manuals. I do not see a good reason why manuals should not be in electronic form. They are not meant to be read sequentially, which is perfect for electronic form.

During his visit of to the Slovenian Book Fair last year in Ljubljana, Jason Epstein, the legend of American publishing, presented the idea of an automatic machine for bookmaking, some kind of book-o-mat, named Espresso, which would enable the printing of single copy of a book for an individual reader. What do you say about that?

I have seen such automaton in London and, I guess, in America, too. A kind of

kiosk, like for Coca-Cola or cigarettes, only that it provides books. I mean, there are no books - there is only a hard disc and book covers. You throw a coin into the machine, push a button and the machine prints a book - a real book that cannot be distinguished from the ordinary ones. What else happened? Amazon, which is the biggest bookshop in the world, bought a company dealing with such sales. Therefore, books can be found on Amazon which do not exist, which have never been printed. After you have paid, they print it in a single copy and send it to you. In principle, this is a kind of new self-publishing form. The author pays nothing, the publisher pays nothing; there is no stock and no warehouse. When the customer chooses a book, he or she throws a coin in the slot and a real book comes out. An object again.

Do you see an opportunity here for authors writing in small languages?

I absolutely do - namely, in finally setting up a cultural policy of global expansion; to translate all meaningful Slovenian books and send them around the world virtually. Then, it depends on the author - how much effort he or she would put into it, and submit links in order for people to throw coins in the slot. It is so simple. For example, if I were an American blogger with a million visits per day - and there are several such people - and I decided to publish a book, why would I need a publishing house? You submit a virtual book to Amazon with a link to your blog and if three per cent of a million people push the button, you have earned well. But the problem with us Slovenians is that we always think of a little, a little, a little. Once, I watched a television broadcast with the central topic of how to spread Slovenian culture in the world. They started with this, but after an hour, they were only talking of municipal libraries and local mayors...No one discussed the expansion of anything.



320 years

of Valvasor's 'Glory of the Duchy of Carniola'

In the 17th century, Slovenian culture, apart from religious sacral art, was more or less in a state of torpor, after the Counter-Reformation movement had suppressed the development of Protestant literature during the second half of the 16th century, and thus prevented the further development of Slovenian written language and literature, which had only just begun. That is why the image and work of Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641-1693), a versatile scholar, historian and publisher, who spent the majority of his life studying and researching his homeland, the Duchy of Carniola, stood out even further in that backward milieu of Slovenian provinces.

Valvasor's biography is interesting in its own right: a descendant of a noble family from northern Italy who moved to Carniola, he was born in Ljubljana, where he attended the Jesuit Gymnasium. He then spent 14 years travelling through Germany, England, Denmark, France, Spain, Italy and North Africa, acquiring knowledge in natural science and even serving in the army. Returning home in 1671, he married the following year, bought three castle estates not far from Ljubljana and settled down at Bogenšperk Castle. He spent the next two decades there, his most creative ones, devoting himself completely to studies, research, collecting and the management of his library and museum collection. He also began publishing religious and educationally scientific graphic works, establishing at Bogenšperk in 1678 the first graphic company on Slovenian territory and employing a number of local and foreign draughtsmen and copperplate engravers, masters of their time.

Among his numerous graphic works the most comprehensive and important is his life's work, 'The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola', written in German and published in 1689 in Nuremberg.

The costs of this undertaking broke him, forcing him to sell off his estates, castles and his house in Ljubljana, as well as his rich library and print collection. Since this was bought by the archbishop of Zagreb after the Carniola States refused the purchase, Valvasor's precious heritage remains in Croatia to this day. Valvasor took what was left of his property and bought a house in the small town of Krško, where he died in poverty a few years later.

'The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola' is an extraordinarily extensive work of 3,532 printed pages, 24 supplements and 528 graphic illustrations, mostly taken from his early graphic publications.

Divided into 15 volumes, it is a versatile account of the history of Carniola, the central part of today's Republic of Slovenia. Valvasor systematically described the history of the land from the earliest times, its topography, geography, natural sights,



CULTURAL TRAILS

NATURAL TRAILS

Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts presented the first numbered edition of the publication to the managers of the Valvasor's Museum at Bogenšperk Castle, where Valvasor's heritage, given its origins, rightly belongs



Jože Prešeren

Photo: Darinka Mladenovič and Joco Žnidaršič

Velika Planina

**A New Trademark:
Heart of Slovenia**

**VIVID DISCOVERIES
OF HERITAGE**

customs and the language of its inhabitants, their former and contemporary beliefs, as well as their inclination towards superstition, adding numerous data and several original maps. Even today, his encyclopaedic work is an inexhaustible source for the historical, cultural and ethnological research of Slovenia's history.

As well as being a patriot, Valvasor remained a cosmopolitan, keeping in contact with various scientific circles abroad. He made contact with the Royal Society in 1685, and in 1687 they published in English his report on the invention of a special method of casting metal statues with thin walls, as well as his discourse on the karst phenomenon of the intermittent Lake Cerknica, which won him membership in the Royal Society of London. A few years later, both discourses were published in Latin in the Acta Eroditorum scientific review in Leipzig. Celebrating the 320 years since the publication of 'The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola' an exhibition is open until the end of April at Rajhenburg Castle, near the town of Krško, where Valvasor died. The exhibition, prepared by the Technical Museum of Slovenia in cooperation with the Royal Society, presents his correspondence with the Royal Society. A ceremonial delivery of a digital version of this correspondence to the Republic of Slovenia was made possible by the Slovenian Embassy in London.

Last year, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts sponsored a facsimile of Valvasor's graphic work, of which the originals are kept in Zagreb. This February, the Academy presented the first numbered edition of the publication to the managers of the Valvasor's Museum at Bogenšperk Castle, where Valvasor's heritage, given its origins, rightly belongs.





Kamnik



Volčji potok



Bogenšperk Castle

At the Slovenian tourism fair in January at Gospodarsko razstavišče in Ljubljana, the new trademark Heart of Slovenia was presented to the public for the first time. The designers of the trademark write in the promotional material that they are presenting an area in the central part of Slovenia, shaped like a heart, which originated around the very geographical centre of the country. The area includes the municipalities of Dol pri Ljubljani, Domžale, Kamnik, Komenda, Litija, Lukovica, Moravče, Šmartno pri Litiji and Trzin. At the moment, the holder of the project entitled 'Knocking on Heritage Doors' is Dol pri Ljubljani. Among the partner municipalities, Litija and Šmartno pri Litiji are the most active. This area is not limited only to the aforementioned places, but can also include neighbouring Zagorje, Trbovlje and Hrastnik, located in the valley of Sava River, or on the Dolenjska side, Ivančna Gorica, which prides itself on a variety of known tourist attractions.

Heart of Slovenia is, above all, a tourism project, the task of which is to take care of the promotion, and also the organization of diverse tourist and cultural events designed to attract as many domestic and foreign guests as possible to these places.

Integrating the Traditional and the Contemporary

One of the most precious things about Slovenia is its intact countryside, where numerous interesting traces of the past can be found, from carefully renovated age-old castles and churches to archaeological findings, museums, remarkable old houses and kozolci (translator's note: a type of Slovenian hay-rack) as an exceptional Slovenian particularity, and also to carefully run hotels and homely inns, spas and tourist farms. The rhythm of the Slovenian countryside is still something exceptional, original and underused. Here, there are always enough opportunities for hiking, cycling and horse-back riding in a peaceful environment, possibilities to research and get familiar with individual places and the objects found along the diverse hiking paths, and at the same time, to discover diverse culinary specialities.

The carefully organised brochure 'Tips for Experiencing Wanderings in the Heart of Slovenia' briefly suggests fifteen attractive trips where you should actually feel Slovenia, and become familiar with its numerous faces.

The first trip takes us from Trzin through Jablje and Domžale to Krumperk and Krtina. Here, let us especially mention the special features of Krumperk Castle, where the famous Adam Ravbar, who was written

into history as the winner of a battle against the Turks at Sisak, used to live. There is the Karstic Železna jama cave near the castle, a unique cave in this area, which is arranged for tourist visits. It is also possible to visit the Jamarski dom Museum and its collection of fossils and archaeological finds, the Museum also shows the development of straw-hat making – this craft was very widespread in these parts decades ago.

Another trip takes us from Groblje pri Domžalah to visit one of the pearls of Slovenian baroque architecture, the church of St. Hermagor and St. Fortunat, and further to the Volčji Potok Arboretum, which is located four kilometres away, and is one of the most beautiful botanical gardens in Slovenia. The third trip leads from the famous village of Komenda, which is one of the oldest Slovenian parishes, and where the famous Glavar Benefice House is situated, then further on to Suhadole, Moste, Križ, Gmajnica towards Tunjice where, besides the famous church, we would also visit a healing grove known for its energy springs and sites.

The fourth trip is dedicated to the old city centre of Kamnik, which abounds with sights. Later on, we climb up on Mali grad ('Little Castle'), and from here continue to Šutna. Afterwards, we visit the 350-year-old Budnar House Museum in Zgornje Palovče, and finish our trip next to the spring of Kamniška Bistrica River, where there are numerous natural sites of special interest. A special trip is dedicated to visiting herdsmen on Velika planina plateau, when we head from Kamniška Bistrica. On the plateau, we must definitely visit the Chapel of St. Mary of the Snows, Preskar Museum, Tiha dolina with Dovja Griča cave, and enjoy the mountain air.

Among the newer Slovenian places worth seeing, there is also Terme Snovik in the Tuhinjski valley, falling within the sixth trip. From here, we head to Motnik, where a variety of natural sites of special interest are located. The seventh trip takes us to the Črni Graben valley. The starting point is Lukovica, with visits to Brdo Castle and the fascinating Beekeeping Centre. We can also stop at numerous nicely decorated inns, where they still tell legends about bandits (the stories go back to the time of Napoleon's occupation). The eighth trip, from Dol pri Ljubljani, is also dedicated to a famous mathematician who gained an international reputation, Jurij

Vega, and who came from nearby Zagorica. On our way to Moravče, we stop at Tuštanj Castle.

The ninth trip is dedicated to the centre of the Heart of Slovenia. The theme is geological, since we encounter the mysterious underground, and the heritage of navigation, mining, and numerous legends. We set out on our journey from Dob pri Domžalah, towards Gorjuše with the Železna jama cave. We continue towards Krtina, through the Rače valley, and then turn our steps towards Vače. The marks lead us to Spodnja Slivna, the geometrical centre of Slovenia. From here, we descend towards Vače, deemed to be one of the richest prehistoric sites in Slovenia. At nearby Klenik, there is a scaled-up copy of an Iron Age bronze vessel – a situla. The museum in Litija is also worth seeing. Above Litija lies one of the oldest mines in Slovenia – Sitarjevec, with unique limonite stalactites.

The tenth trip includes Šmartno pri Litiji and Bogenšperk Castle, where a famous polymath, Janez Vajkard Valvasor, worked between 1672 and 1692. One can reach the castle from Šmartno and from Ivančna Gorica through the Temenica valley. A shorter trip can lead us also to Gradišče na Primskovem, where we can view the ruins of a once-mighty fort. Should we return to the Sava valley, passing Izlake and Medija Spa, we can set out for Medija Castle, where the remains of Valvasor's family are preserved.

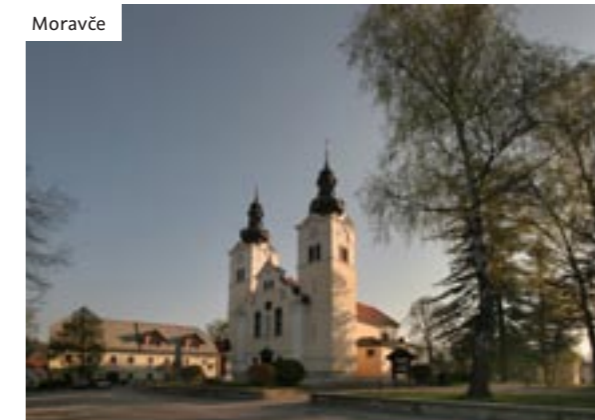
The eleventh trip takes us from Litija to Jablanica valley to discover the rich cultural heritage, taste exceptional home cooking, and make acquaintances with the kind local people. The next, and twelfth, trip takes us among the domestic charcoal-burning men in Dole pri Litiji. We set out for the Sopota valley, with rests in the homes of charcoal-burners. The thirteenth trip is dedicated solely to the Sava River. That is why it starts next to the confluence of three rivers – the Sava, the Ljubljanica and the Kamniška Bistrica. In the vicinity of Litija, we must also visit Pogonik Castle, which was once of exceptional strategic importance. We should also mention that Litija used to be an important river port. The fourteenth trip is also dedicated to the Sava valley where, among other destinations, we also stop at the Zasavska Sveta gora mountain. On the fifteenth trip, among other things, we climb Mt Kum, which is also called the Zasavje Triglav.

Events Throughout the Year

The Heart of Slovenia beats evenly throughout the entire year, since numerous events happen in all seasons, and in numerous places in the area. From the event calendar, we can see that the organizers have included events from cultural heritage and folklore, traditional fairs, gastronomic events, country festivals, theatre, literary, musical, artistic, dance events, cultural festivals, exhibitions, sports and recreational events. Some of these are organised by local societies, and some by professional public institutions. Some are of local, and some are of national importance. The unofficial centre of the area is undoubtedly Bogenšperk Castle, which is managed by the public organisation bearing the same name. We should also mention that they have prepared an important exhibition celebrating the 320th anniversary of the Janez Vajkard Valvasor's membership of the Royal Society. The exhibition entitled

'Slovene by Birth, European in Spirit: J.V. Valvasor from Bogenšperk' was seen in April and May 2008 on the premises of the Royal Society in London. The Technical Museum of Slovenia also took part in the preparation of the exhibition. The British visitors could, among other things, view Valvasor's work 'The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola', which was published in 1689; this year they will also celebrate the 320th anniversary of the publication.

At Bogenšperk Castle, it is especially lively in the spring, summer and autumn, when the castle is visited by numerous school groups from all over of Slovenia who, among other things, also view the museum collections. The Valvasor cultural days are prepared especially for school kids. Of course, Bogenšperk Castle is also a popular place to get married, with a special wedding ceremony, accompanied by the 'lords of the Castle'.



Moravče



Zagorje



Šmartno pri Litiji



Dol pri Ljubljani

I FEEL SLOVENIA

photo: Mateja Jurdovič Potočnik

Slovenian Easter eggs, pirhi, pisanice, pisanke, remenke or remenice, as they are called in various parts of Slovenia, are among the most beautifully decorated examples in Europe