

Sinfo

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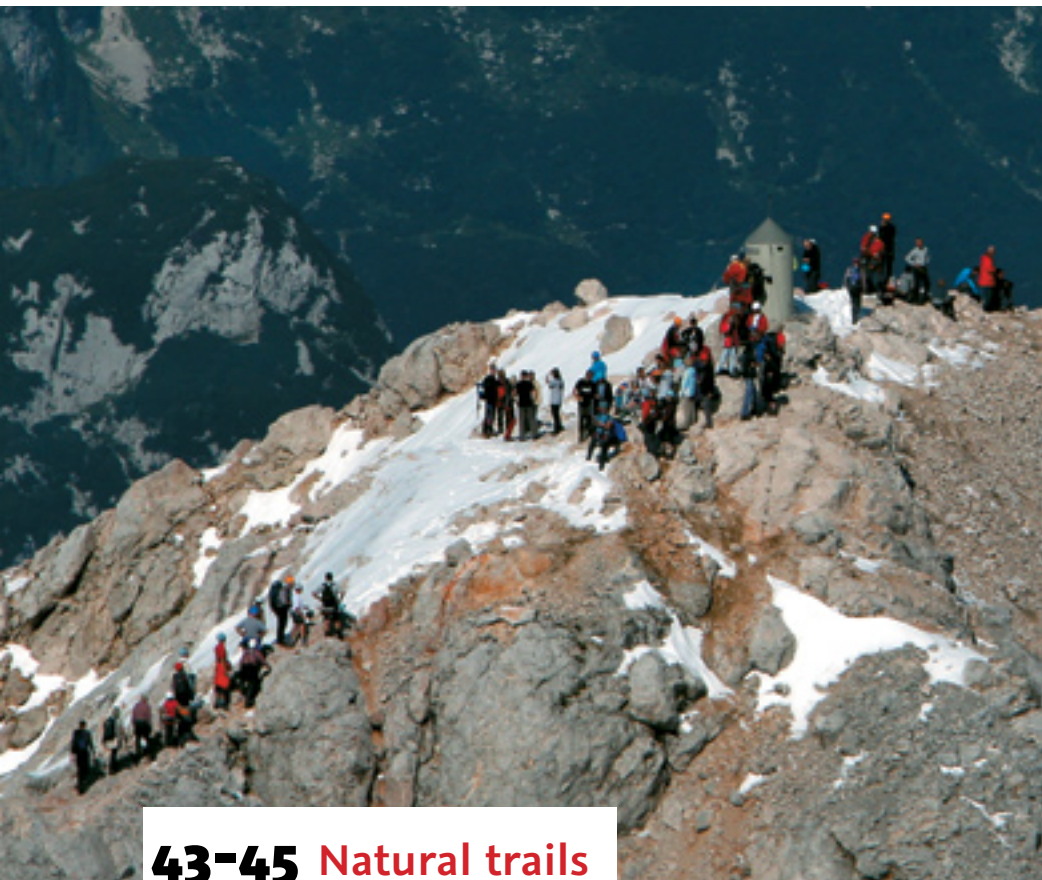
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June 09

SLOVENIA BIDDING FOR ITS FIRST HEADQUARTERS OF AN EUROPEAN AGENCY



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Veronika Stabej

Good relations...

...are important and valuable in every area of life. This is even more true when it comes to relations between different nations. Particularly if they border each other. The old saying “every neighbour is a mirror” holds true more than ever. And because of the people who have remained on one side or the other each time that history has decided to shift national borders, there are many of these mirrors. Although calling them “minorities”, which logically means “less than the majority”, may at first glance appear to assign them a reduced importance, it is precisely these people who enrich relations between nations and represent the driving force behind cross-border and regional interconnection.

Good relations between neighbours are also part of our national anthem – not in vain do we sing “...no more shall foes, but neighbours be!”

In this issue of Sinfo we devote quite a bit of space to good neighbourly relations and to the position of minorities. The ambassadors’ letters in this issue offer a view of Slovenian-Hungarian relations and the position of the minorities on either side of the border. An important guardian of minority rights is the Office for National Minorities, which was founded in 1959 as the Office for Minority Affairs and is this year celebrating its golden jubilee.

Good relations between individual countries are also reflected in mutual support. Slovenia is currently attempting to win the support of other EU Member States for its bid to host the European Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). If the bid is successful, this would be particularly significant for us because of Slovenia’s role in the realisation of the philosophy of efficient operation of the energy market. Not only that, but Slovenia is also point of intersection between the EU energy market and the energy market of South-East Europe.

The inhabitants of Goriška Brda could surely tell us a thing or two about good neighbourly relations. Goriška Brda is a magical world of gentle hills dotted with farms and covered with vineyards and orchards. The soil is unique and ideal for the cultivation of vines. Several of the area’s winemakers have vineyards on both sides of the border – on both Slovenian and Italian soil. The wines thus reflect the special characteristics of their environment, and above all they know no borders or hard feelings.

Sinfo – Slovenian information

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● Andrej Savelli

Croatia Pulls Out, Slovenia Committed to EU-Sponsored Talks

The EU-sponsored talks between Slovenia and Croatia collapsed on 18 June as Croatia turned down Commissioner Olli Rehn's latest proposal, which included some of the amendments proposed by Slovenia, for the way the countries could resolve their dispute and break the impasse in Croatia's EU accession talks. Slovenia regretted the decision, while Rehn said the countries must find a solution themselves. "We think this is bad and we remain committed to this process," Slovenian Foreign Minister Samuel Zbogar said after he came out of a meeting with the Enlargement Commissioner and Croatia's Foreign Minister in Brussels. However, Zbogar said Slovenia was willing to continue the process whenever Commissioner Rehn or anyone else might think it necessary, or see any chance of continuing the process. Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor said Slovenia sustained the process of talks throughout. "When Rehn decided to propose mediation, Slovenia accepted it, and Croatia didn't. When Rehn proposed arbitration, Slovenia proposed amendments, which Croatia did not wish to accept and in this way broke off the process." Pahor said if Croatia wanted to continue its accession talks with the EU now it should tackle the issue of documents which Slovenia deems to be prejudicial to the border dispute. The documents were the reason Slovenia blocked the accession talks in October.



"Until Croatia has found a way to deal with the prejudicial documents so they do not threaten Slovenia's vital interests, Slovenia will not change its position," PM Borut Pahor asserted on the sidelines of the EU summit.

Government Sets Vignettes Prices

The government set the prices of motorway toll stickers, confirming that the weekly sticker shall cost EUR 15. The price of the annual sticker has been set at EUR 95, up from the current EUR 55, while monthly vignettes shall cost EUR 30. Motorcycles will have weekly and annual vignettes at half the price, while a half-yearly sticker will cost EUR 25. The changes introducing monthly and weekly toll stickers in addition to annual vignettes and abolishing half-yearly vignettes, were passed by the National Assembly end of May, after the European Commission expressed criticism over the system. The commission had initiated proceedings against Slovenia and frozen EU funds for construction of Slovenian motorways, claiming the system of six-month and annual vignettes for EUR 35 and 55 respectively, introduced in July 2008, is discriminatory towards foreigners and that the prices are not proportional.

International conference on Roma education

On 25 and 26 May, as part of Slovenia's presidency of the Council of Europe, an international conference on Roma education was held at Brdo pri Kranju, entitled "Roma education: achievements, opportunities and challenges for the future". The aim of the conference was to underline the importance of education for the successful integration of Roma and nomadic communities in Europe. This was the concluding conference in a three-year Council of Europe project on the education of Roma. The conference offered a meeting place for the representatives of ministries of Council of Europe Member States dealing with issues of Roma education, experts from numerous international organisations, Roma organisations and non-governmental organisations. Conference participants addressed topics such as preschool education, recognising non-formal learning, recognising Roma culture, policies for ensuring access and high-quality education, and teacher training. The participants took the view that early inclusion in preschool education is extremely important for successful learning in all later periods. Cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organisations should promote the cooperation of Roma in all matters affecting their education. Recognising the history and culture of Roma and itinerant groups is indispensable in establishing the self-confidence of this minority, and this subject must become an essential component of national curricula. A knowledge of these issues will contribute to eradicating stereotypes and prejudices, and will be an important factor of integration for the members of this minority in society. Participants of the conference also touched on the fact that the Council of Europe project "Education of Roma children in Europe" is still very little known in many countries. It has also been insufficiently exploited in formulating appropriate policies for the more successful facilitating of equal access of Roma to education and thereby fulfilling the recommendation of the Council of Europe on Roma education.

The aim of the conference was to underline the importance of education for the successful integration of Roma and nomadic communities in Europe.



photo: Ministry of Education and Sport

Slovenia elects new Members of the European Parliament

Slovenian voters elected to the European Parliament two members each from the SDS and SD, and one each from the NSi, LDS and Zares parties. The SDS won 26.65 percent, the SD 18.45 and NSi 16.53 percent of the vote. In fourth and fifth place were the LDS with 11.50 and Zares with 9.77 percent. Romana Jordan Cizelj (SDS), Lojze Peterle (NSi) and Jelko Kacin (LDS) were all re-elected. The newly elected MEPs are Milan Zver (SDS), Zoran Thaler, Tanja Fajon (both SD) and Ivo Vajjgl (Zares). All the Slovenian MEPs except for Ms. Jordan Cizelj were elected through preferential voting.



New Slovenian members of the European Parliament.

Government sets up climate change office

The Government adopted a resolution establishing a climate change agency. The move is significant given the effect of climate change on everyday life. According to the environment minister, Karl Erjavec, Slovenia is paying close attention to combating climate change, and has various strategies and a climate change act in preparation. Establishing a climate change agency is important for horizontal integration and management of various policies relating to climate change. As Erjavec pointed out, the environmental ministry is not the only one with responsibility for climate change. Last year the EU adopted a climate change and energy package, which the minister said was extremely complex, and included a number of directives, which Slovenia will not only have to introduce to its own legal system, but also ensure it reaches all the environmental objectives within the directives. Erjavec said that climate change was already having a major impact on daily life. This could be seen in mid-June, which the eastern half of the country was affected by large hailstorms, which were attributed to climate change.



photo: STA

According to the environment minister, Karl Erjavec, Slovenia is paying close attention to combating climate change, and has various strategies and a climate change act in preparation.

Bled Strategic Forum

The numerous challenges the world is facing today are themselves greatly affected by the global economic crisis, which has raised profound questions about our current economic and financial systems and subjected existing geopolitical arrangements to new consideration. Now in its fourth year, the Bled Strategic Forum (30 and 31 August) will be addressing many of these interdependent economic and geostrategic issues. The underlying theme permeating this year's event will be relations between the Euro-Atlantic community and Russia. Just as in the past three years, guests at the Forum will include prominent politicians, leading members of the business community and representatives of international institutions and forums, the academic community, non-governmental organisations and the media. Over the course of two days, leaders will take part in five themed panels and various accompanying events. The central themes will be global governance and the need to reform it, the role of regional cooperation, institutional reform of the UN and the role of growing market economies as a response to the increasing interdependence of economic, security, social and environmental issues.

Europe's security structure is the special theme of this year's Forum. Participants will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian proposal for a new European security architecture and establish whether a new security arrangement is necessary, and how this could affect cooperation between the Euro-Atlantic community and Russia.

The panel on the economic crisis as a threat to security will deal with the possible consequences of the recession on security in society and in the international community. The panellists will discuss the risks attached to accompanying trends – increasing protectionism and deglobalisation – and expected changes to geopolitical arrangements.

The panel on energy security and the effects of the global economic crisis on it will discuss the elimination of the uncertainty that accompanies investments in projects to ensure the transit and storage of fuels and the development of new technologies and projects to increase energy efficiency.

The panel on the importance of regional cooperation initiatives will discuss challenges in the region stretching between the Baltic, the wider Black Sea area and the Caspian Sea. The key questions will be whether these initiatives can combine the approaches of Russia and the European Union and help countries improve development opportunities and increase their ability to eliminate destabilising factors.

The now traditional focus on the Western Balkans is represented by the panel devoted to the concrete challenges of the region in facing the consequences of the global economic crisis. Discussion will focus on the development opportunities of the countries of the Western Balkans this year and next year and on the potential impact of the crisis on the process of integrating the region into the EU.

Vesna Žarkovič, Government Communication Office
photo: European Communities, STA

Agency for Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER)

Slovenia is endeavouring to acquire its first headquarters of an European agency – the Agency for Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). This new energy agency is to focus on regulation of crossborder matters relating to the gas and electricity market, thereby supplementing and coordinating the work of national regulators. Electricity and natural gas are at the centre of Europe’s prosperity and EU Member States all agree that we need a competitive and efficient EU market in gas and electricity. A working single European energy market is a prerequisite for achieving ambitious goals in the area of energy and climate policy. The third legislative package on energy legislated the setting-up of the Agency for Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), to establish an independent regulatory mechanism at the EU level. ACER will be of key importance for the future development of the single energy market.

On 12 June, at the vote to decide the headquarters of ACER, the new European energy agency, Slovenia received the highest support from EU Member States, but it was not enough to secure victory in the first round. Given that no candidate received a sufficiently high majority of votes from all Member States, a decision was taken to defer the final decision to a later meeting, most likely at the end of June or in July. Slovakia and Romania are the other two countries that have applied for the headquarters. None of these three Member States are yet host countries of any of the approximately 35 European agencies, which are largely divided between the old EU Member States and three new members. All three countries have been lobbying for a number of months. Ljubljana and Bratislava are regarded as the most serious candidates. They are seen as being fairly evenly matched. Slovenia is not a member of any similar bloc, but it has lobbied intensively around the European capitals, for example in the countries of Scandinavia. It emphasises as its greatest advantage the role it has played in adopting legislation to liberalise the energy market, which is also the basis for the operations of ACER. It is common knowledge that, at the time, Slovakia opposed the agreement to liberalise the energy market.

Matej Lahovnik, Minister of the Economy:



We believe that we have a good chance. At the technical level, we are the best candidate, but the political dimensions of the process are, as everybody knows, a bit like shuffling a pack of cards. Different countries put forward their candidacy for various agencies and functions within other international organisations, but the general political context does also play its part.

I am in the process of convincing my fellow ministers that Slovenia is a beautiful country on the sunny side of the Alps, with a great deal of knowledge in the field of energy. The response on the technical level has, of course, been very good; everyone recognises that we possess the necessary knowledge and conditions that make Slovenia the right location for the headquarters of the Agency. This would be the first time in its history that Slovenia has become the host country of any European agency. It is very important for Slovenia to be entrusted with this Agency – among other things, because it is awaiting a number of major projects in the field of energy.

Since 2007 our work in the field of energy has been intense and extremely demanding. Particularly in the last year we have managed to make great progress on two most important legislative dossiers, the internal energy market package and the climate-energy package. It is at this point that we all need to focus on the work to be done for the benefit of future generations.

It goes without saying that electricity and natural gas are currently at the centre of the development of Europe’s prosperity. Slovenia believes that ACER, an independent regulatory mechanism at the EU level, is of key importance for the future development of the single energy market. For the implementation of its demanding tasks, a proper working environment will be necessary. It would be a great honour for Slovenia if it were to become the location of the Agency’s headquarters.

Janez Kopač, Acting Director of the Energy Directorate at the Ministry of the Economy:



This Agency in particular means a very great deal to Slovenia. It is not just any agency but one of extreme importance – and one which will only gain in importance in the years to come. ACER will be something comparable to the European Central Bank.

Mary Veronica Tovšak Pleterski, Deputy Ambassador to the EU:



Slovenia’s candidacy for the headquarters of the new European agency ACER is unique – especially given the country’s role in realising the philosophy of an efficiently working energy market on which ACER is based. One very specific factor is Slovenia’s motivation in this regard. We have shared this philosophy seriously and for many years, and not just since we began to talk about the Agency. Slovenia will give spirit and heart to the work of the Agency. It is worth remembering here that, during Slovenia’s Presidency in the first half of last year, the EU reached a key agreement to liberalise the energy market, for the efficient working of which ACER will be responsible. As is well known, Slovakia was at that time among those states that opposed the agreement. Of the other advantages of its candidacy, we should point out the fact that Slovenia is a bridge between the EU and South-Eastern Europe, is one of the safest countries in the EU, has one of the safest environments for foreign investors, is part of the eurozone and the Schengen Area, enjoys a very good transport position

and transport infrastructure, and offers a good quality of life.

The offer that Slovenia has made as part of its candidacy is also worthy of mention: privileges and immunity as part of the protocol; diplomatic status for senior officials (which is not part of the protocol); newly built premises that can be occupied immediately, with no rent payable in the first two years, to get the Agency up and running quickly. Slovenia also points out that it has, as yet, no European agencies. In a European Council decision adopted in 2003, Member States undertook to give new agencies to new Member States, and last year made an additional undertaking to give priority in allocation to Member States which as yet had no European agencies.

**Andreja Jerina,
State Secretary at the
Government Office for
Development and European
Affairs:**



There is a whole string of reasons that support Slovenia's candidacy as the location for the headquarters of the new European energy agency. Submission of this candidacy does not mean that Slovenia is withdrawing its candidacy for the headquarters of Galileo. We are convinced that this Agency will find, in Ljubljana, all the conditions necessary for its work and that Slovenia can be an excellent host, given its natural and economic features, transport links, and the fact that it lies within the Schengen Area and the euro-zone, which will make it considerably easier for people from the Agency to work and live there. Whether the headquarters are allocated to Slovenia depends on the number

of Member States that submit a candidacy. There is a whole string of reasons that support Slovenia's candidacy as the location for the headquarters of the new European energy agency, including the fact that it has, as yet, no European agency. A few years ago – specifically, in European Council decisions adopted in 2003 – Member States undertook to give new agencies to new Member States, and last year made an additional undertaking to give priority in allocation to Member States which as yet had no European agencies. Slovenia is a small and safe country with low levels of crime, open to all cultures, with a good education system, which is important for the officials that would come to work here, and has an extremely good quality of life. These are things that will attract people to the country.

Background

- At a session held in spring 2007, the European Council called on the Commission to propose further measures to develop the single energy market, including the 'establishment of an independent mechanism for cooperation between national regulators'.
- In September 2007 the Commission therefore submitted the third legislative package for the single energy market, which included the draft Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators.
- The second reading was completed on 6 April 2009. The Regulation will enter into force 20 days after its publication in the Official Journal of the EU.

Journal of the EU. Publication in the Official Journal is planned for June/July 2009.

• Unofficially it is expected that the Agency will begin work at the end of 2009/beginning of 2010, after selection of management and specialist staff has been completed. The decision on the location of the headquarters will most likely be adopted during Sweden's Presidency of the EU (autumn 2009).

Main tasks of ACER

- The Agency will supplement at the European level the regulatory tasks that are carried out at the national level by regulatory authorities.
- It will adopt binding decisions and will regulate the European gas and electricity market (all cross-border issues and network codes).
- The Agency's main tasks will include: (a) provision of a framework for cooperation between national regulators; (b) regulatory supervision of cooperation between transmission network operators; (c) an authorisation to adopt individual decisions; (d) a general advisory role.

Staff

- ACER will employ between 40 and 50 people (highly qualified staff recruited within the European Communities system).
- The Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities and the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Communities shall apply to Agency employees.
- Given the nature of the Agency's work, a large number of representatives of national regulatory authorities from other EU Member States will travel to Slovenia, which will constitute a major opportunity to promote Ljubljana and Slovenia as tourist destinations.

Financing

The annual costs of the Agency shall be covered by Community funds.

Slovenia's candidacy

- The Slovenian government endorsed the candidacy at its regular session of 12 February 2009 and first presented it to the Energy Council (TTE) in Brussels on 19 February 2009.
- Slovenia is committed to a principled interpretation of the 2003 and 2008 resolutions of the European Council stating that the headquarters of newly established EU agencies should be situated in new Member States, primarily those that have not yet been allocated a headquarters.

Arguments in favour

- During its Presidency of the EU, Slovenia played an extremely constructive role during very difficult negotiations on the new, third legislative package on the single energy market, which among other things established ACER. Slovenia was able to foster a political compromise on the most disputed proposals put forward by the Commission.
- Slovenia has the euro and is part of the Schengen Area. Slovenia is a safe country with low levels of crime and is easily acces-

sible from all parts of Europe. Slovenia is an economically well-developed country, is stable and enjoys a high quality of life.

- Slovenia is practically 'in line' to receive a headquarters. The new Member States of Poland, Hungary and Lithuania have already been allocated a European headquarters. Slovenia withdrew from its candidacy for FRONTEX and the European Institute for Gender Equality (along with 10 other Member States, it is continuing with its candidacy for the Galileo headquarters, which has currently not been established).
- The Slovenian regulator is extremely active internationally and is well-respected by other European regulators (the vice-president of the CEER is a Slovene). Slovenia takes part in numerous international regulatory forums (Madrid, Florence), and the city of Maribor has hosted the Energy Community gas forum.

- Slovenia is also the point of contact between the EU energy market and that of South-Eastern Europe, which the EU is attempting to bring into the fold through implementation of the EU energy acquis (Energy Community Treaty). Since Slovenia is particularly strongly connected with events on the energy market of South-Eastern Europe, as well as being engaged in various projects associated with it, the symbolic value of ACER headquarters is that much higher for Slovenia.





Text and photo: STA

Slovenian minority legislation is among the best in Europe

One of Slovenia's priorities for its chairmanship of the Council of Europe is policy and legal protection for minorities. Slovenian minority legislation is among the best in Europe. Discussions were held on 16 June at Brdo pri Kranju on minorities in Slovenia and Slovenians living outside the Republic of Slovenia. The panel discussion was prepared by the Government Office for National Minorities, to mark its 50th anniversary. The basic concept of the meeting was that conditions in this field have changed, which must be reflected in a change in how it is

regulated. One issue that requires a new approach to be found is the issue of the indigenesness of national minorities, since Slovenia now has – in addition to the indigenous Italian and Hungarian communities – 'new' minorities, which the Council of Europe has made specific mention of in its recommendations. Relations must also be re-evaluated with Slovenians abroad who no longer speak Slovenian. The international conference or panel, nevertheless, confirmed Slovenia's leading role in European legal protection for minorities.



BORUT PAHOR (Prime Minister):

I am starting from the basic finding that the position and role of the national minorities today is being defined by a new European culture, and new European values arising from integration, intercultural dialogue and respect for cultural diversity. Minority problems have been a unifying theme throughout the Council of Europe's 60-year history, and Slovenia still offers a kind of example in the field. This also means that the Slovenian state expects its neighbours to act in the same manner. Multiculturalism is a value that enriches us rather than threatening us, and minority community organisations must be seen as groups that are addressing the relevant issues. Governments should put conditions in place that allow them to express their plurality and subjectivity.

BOŠTJAN ŽEKŠ (Minister for Slovenians Abroad):

The Council and Europe are changing. We are slowly becoming aware that there

are more minorities than we previously considered, and that bilingualism is more common than we thought. The OSCE has created the post of high commissioner on national minorities, and the Council of Europe has started to increase the level to which it incorporates minority issues, which require further development, into its human rights activities.

STANE BALUH (Director of the Office for National Minorities):

I consider that our efforts in the field can serve as a useful example that now, during the CoE chairmanship, we can offer all CoE members as well as EU member states.

FRANCO JURI (President of the Italian Community in Slovenia):

I consider that Slovenia has some exemplary solutions in relations with minorities, though there are still some unresolved issues. First, the constitutional and legal position has to be put into

practice. Second, the lack of recognition for minorities living in Slovenia that do not have official minority status. This is almost a taboo subject, but the courage must be found to address it.

JOŽEK HORVAT MUC (President of the Roma Community Council):

The Roma Community Council has insufficient presence and influence; the parliament has not deliberated a report on the status of the Roma community, while the government has not yet adopted the government programme for the Roma community. I would say that the greatest obstacle to better results is the lack of trained and qualified staff from the Roma population, since at present there are only 15 Roma who have completed higher education studies.

Vesna Žarkovič
photo: Michele Drascek

Dr Ernest Petrič:

Every effort was worth making

Diplomat – ambassador to India, the U.S., the UN and Austria – long-time professor and doctor of international law, Dr Ernest Petrič has lectured at and been the director of the precursor to the present-day Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana, a minister in Kavčič's government, president of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, president of the International Law Commission (ILC) and now constitutional court judge in Ljubljana.

Dr Petrič, this is a fair number of different functions; which was your favourite?

It is best when one is young. If you are healthy and if the people around you are also healthy, if you are not burdened by more serious things, if you grow up free, if you are relaxed and self-confident, that is what I like best. All my experiences and functions were pleasant. I experienced and got to know a great number of things. I travelled extensively all over the world. All the experiences I gained are a wonderful basis for my present work as a constitutional court judge. Here I deal with asylum seekers and Roma people, and without my past experiences I would undoubtedly find it harder to reach decisions. In this way one matures through numerous experiences, and this maturity represents a quality which is worth as much as my expertise in international law. It is nice to be wise, interesting, educated, or put simply: a personality.

Those are important characteristics required of a diplomat.

That is true. Unfortunately they are not always present in diplomats. The generation of Slovenian diplomats with which I identify myself has unfortunately come to pass. This was undoubtedly a great generation which played an important role. Now it is the turn of our younger colleagues. I regret that so much time and effort is devoted to discussing whether diplomacy should be professional or not. Of course it must be professional. Diplomats should train at special institutions set aside for this purpose. We are one of the few countries which does not have a special diplomat training scheme, as it is somehow scattered across the different university faculties. In Vienna there is a diplomatic academy which produces professional diplomats. The course of study is recognised all over Europe, and it was only in Slovenia that graduates from this academy had problems obtaining recognition for their studies. Openness between universities is essential, as the university by definition means variety and diversity. Diplomats now come from all walks of life; there are even actors among them. A diplomat must be educated and cultured and must feel that he or she is a personality in the

true sense of the word. It is difficult to define this using criteria such as education and years of work experience alone. The personality of the diplomat – whether he or she has one or not – is what is most important.

At a recent closed meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), at which a straw poll of the candidates to succeed IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei was held, you did not gain support. Will you continue with your candidature or do you intend to step down?

I have not yet reached a decision about this, as quick decisions are not the best ones. The most votes, 20, were received by the Japanese ambassador to the IAEA, Yukiya Amano, with 11 by the South African ambassador to the agency, Abdul Samad Minty. These two candidates were already present in the first round of voting in March this year, when neither received the necessary two-thirds majority of the vote. This highlighted the divide between the Western member states of the agency which support Amano, and developing countries which back Minty. In an effort to overcome this divide, three candidates from the EU, including myself, posted their candidature.

The Belgian Jean-Pol Poncelet, former vice-president of the Belgian government and current vice-president of the French nuclear energy conglomerate Areva, and I did not receive a single vote. After all it was Slovenia that put me forward as a candidate, and it will be necessary to wait and see how things develop running up to the formal vote. I am surprised by the result of the vote. I expected the three European candidates to together receive between eight and ten votes.

Seeing as there were only four votes in support of the European candidates, all of them for Echavarri, I wonder who the EU supports. And above all I am disappointed that this divide, which our candidatures aimed to do away with, persists at the IAEA. The members of the IAEA remain divided and polarised, and this is extremely problematic considering that this is an important agency both for the future of nuclear energy and technologies as well as the dangers connected with them. The fu-

ture director general, whoever he will be, will have to enjoy broad support.

You ascribe great importance to the agency.

Because it is important! The peacetime use of nuclear energy is rapidly increasing; 60 new countries want to make use of this form of energy. It involves both great security risks as well as great potential for development. There is also the problem of the use of nuclear technologies in health and farming, not just for energy, although this agency – which is 50 years old – is traditionally still known as the International Atomic Energy Agency. But it has been covering other areas of nuclear technology for a long time now. All this demands true international cooperation, which is in our common interest, so it is a bad thing if the agency is internally divided. A Slovenian candidate could have represented reconciliation; we wanted to help overcome this division.

In the light of your vast international experience, how do you rate the reality of present-day international life?

That is a very broad question. Following the fall of the Berlin wall we have been faced with a new world, the totalitarian regime has crumbled and a time of optimism has dawned – new hope for peace. It seemed as though it would be easier to solve humanity's problems. The end of world division based on power blocs brought about new possibilities. But the world remains divided, there are many long-lasting differences between the rich and the poor, we are faced with terrorism, the world as a whole is still far from enjoying prosperity and many problems are still being solved too slowly. There is now also the struggle for natural and energy resources. The world is definitely in a better state than it used to be, there are more possibilities for solving problems, but unfortunately less progress than what we hoped for in the 1990s has been made. I expected more of a community spirit. I see European countries which on the outside appear beautiful, ordered and peaceful, but when I travel by plane, for example, or in certain public places where you are thoroughly searched, I realise how very much the world has changed since 11



September. When the Berlin wall fell, we did not of course expect any of this.

And where in all this are the real challenges for Slovenian foreign policy, and what are the achievable strategic goals?

Slovenian foreign policy is preparing a strategy for its operation which is by all means useful, not so much because of the new document as because of the clash of various arguments and new opinions which will surface in the discussion. Otherwise Slovenian politics is by definition stretched between global and local matters. The latter give us greater possibilities for success, as well as being of special economic interest. There are always problems between neighbours, but relations with Austria are nevertheless good and the same could be said for Italy. We have lived side by side with the Croats for 1,300 years and have never come into conflict. We are burdened with the problem of the border, which we have not yet solved. In foreign policy, the direct connection between the means you have at your disposal and the targets you set yourself is one of the key questions. You can have wonderful goals but be without the means needed to achieve them. Both sides are very strongly convinced that they are right, and in such situations there is very little room for compromise. It is like dialogue between deaf people. I was personally in favour of mediation, as it is more flexible than arbitration. But arbitration is also a good option if we succeed in agreeing upon it. In a way it is not good that the problem is being solved in the context of Croatia's

EU accession, as solving the dispute also defines Croatia's expectations in joining the EU. I think it is bad that many countries of South Eastern Europe which have not taken a deeper interest in the dispute now believe that accession is difficult and that they too will have to wait longer.

In the course of your outstanding diplomatic career you were always posted to difficult, exposed posts where you never enjoyed a comfortable shade. You were ambassador to India, the U.S. and in Vienna. What are your memories of this period like?

Wonderful. And again wonderful – above all because of the work, which was interesting everywhere. India is a fascinating country. It was also a wonderful time because that was when Slovenia was born. I was the Yugoslav ambassador to India at the time when Yugoslavia presided over the non-aligned movement. And India was its main partner. My work there was very important and full of responsibility. I learnt a lot at that time especially because I was working from the position of a country presiding over this movement, no matter what the movement was, and in relationship with a very important country, which India undoubtedly is. Then one day Minister Rupel called me and said: "At the Demos meeting we decided to make you our representative in Washington."

How did the U.S. welcome you when you came?

Our country had not yet received international recognition. Formally I was a pri-

vate individual in the U.S. Well, actually I had a similar status; officially I was a "representative of a foreign political entity". That is approximately how I was treated. I had no diplomatic rights, privileges, immunity, nothing. I arrived at the airport with my wife and youngest daughter and went to a hotel. Then, beginning with a co-worker who came from New York and other people who joined us a few months later, we began setting up our embassy in Washington. This was very difficult. Extremely difficult, but also exceptionally beautiful. Every effort was worth making, because I felt like a missionary establishing something new for this Slovenian country which we had finally acquired after a thousand years of fumbling around. I felt particularly lucky and privileged to be doing this. And in Washington, which in some ways is the centre of global power. The Americans gave me a good welcome – for two reasons. They wanted to be very well informed about what was happening in the Balkans. That is why informally I had very good access to the State Department, Senate and various other institutions. The other reason was that as ambassador to India, I had cooperated very well with the Americans. I had done them several favours. At the State Department they were aware of this cooperation. And then Vienna. This was also a new experience; it is close, even too close, to home. There were an awful lot of visits and various meetings.

And now you are a constitutional court judge. For a year you have been in the role of protector of human rights and the constitution. How do you feel about this transition from diplomacy to law?

Better than I expected. In 1994 I had the possibility of becoming a constitutional judge, but I turned down this offer because my work in Washington was not yet complete. We were finally becoming a player and things in the U.S. were getting more interesting. A year and a half ago I again received the same offer; several posts for constitutional judges were vacant. Some people believed that it would be good if there was an expert on international law among them. I was a little worried about how I would get on, but I soon found that this is one of the best-ordered institutions

in the country. The people that work here are very friendly. I realised that my expertise can be made use of and that I could be of help – in a different way than someone who was a high court judge until yesterday. I have never returned verdicts before, but the attraction of my work here is the combination of university teaching, different fields of law and my function as judge. One person sees this side, another one the other. The combination is interesting and enjoyable from a professional and an intellectual point of view, and when I realised this was the case, that my point of view and my contribution can also be of use, this gave me a feeling of self-confidence.

What is a constitutional court judge expected to strive for? What have you realised in this first year that you have been at this post?

A judge should always be guided by the highest values; his or her moral authority should by nature be greater than that of others. The Constitutional Court is the highest protector of constitutionality, legality, human rights and fundamental freedoms. But above all, the court must always be honest. Sometimes I find myself faced with extremely difficult decisions: the last one, for example, was in connection with the referendum for solicitors. I thought long and hard about how I would vote. I thought purely in terms of legal logic, with a vision of whom the law serves and what is in the forefront. Always the person. A concrete example is a person on trial who must have access to legal assistance. And I made the decision that I made. The court can never satisfy all parties. There is also the independence of the Constitutional Court and its general reputation, which are not always as good as they should be. Ten years ago the Constitutional Court was more respected than it is today. That is a shame. If the judiciary begins to have problems, if people lose confidence in the jurisdiction, then this is very bad for society – much worse than if people, for example, thought that MPs were no good.

How do you remember the beginning of your career as a minister in the executive council in the 1960s?

The young generation thought the period after the war was idyllic. We did not

know about the mass murders perpetrated by the communists at Kočevski Rog and Huda Jama; we knew that many people disappeared during the war, but we were not concerned about this. We felt that we were rebuilding our homeland, that we were building a new and more just world. We said no to Stalin, we drove Hitler out. Then slowly seeds of doubt began to grow. Some of us began realising that we were on the wrong path. The Czech Spring tried to bring about a thaw and a consequence of this was what then went on in Yugoslavia and Kavčič's government. For me this represented a new start in the right direction. I was fascinated by the practical attitude of Kavčič's government – this was when we planned the motorway network, began thinking about a nuclear power station, founded Ljubljanska Banka, a new republican computer centre, thought about a gas supply because we did not want to depend on Yugoslavia for our energy resources. This was fascinating. I liked Stane Kavčič. There then followed a campaign by 25 MPs and its failure, which meant the end of a more liberal attitude in Slovenia. I left the Slovenian political scene, or rather they expelled me. Luckily I was not burdened by anything unpleasant which they could accuse me of and thereby halt my future career. The year was 1972. With the help of friends in the West I left on a mission to Columbia. It was wonderful in this beautiful country. There then followed a mission to Iraq, where I worked at their Ministry of Science; then I returned home, wrote a book and received a prize for my research. Then I went to university in Ethiopia and in 1986, when the regime began to soften, I became dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

You are also the president of the International Law Commission (ILC), a helping body of the UN General Assembly whose aims are the codification and progressive development of international law. Leading a group of 34 global experts is one of the most prestigious functions in international law. After presiding over the International Atomic Energy Agency, this is the second time that as one of a rare number of Slovenians you have taken up a leading position in an international

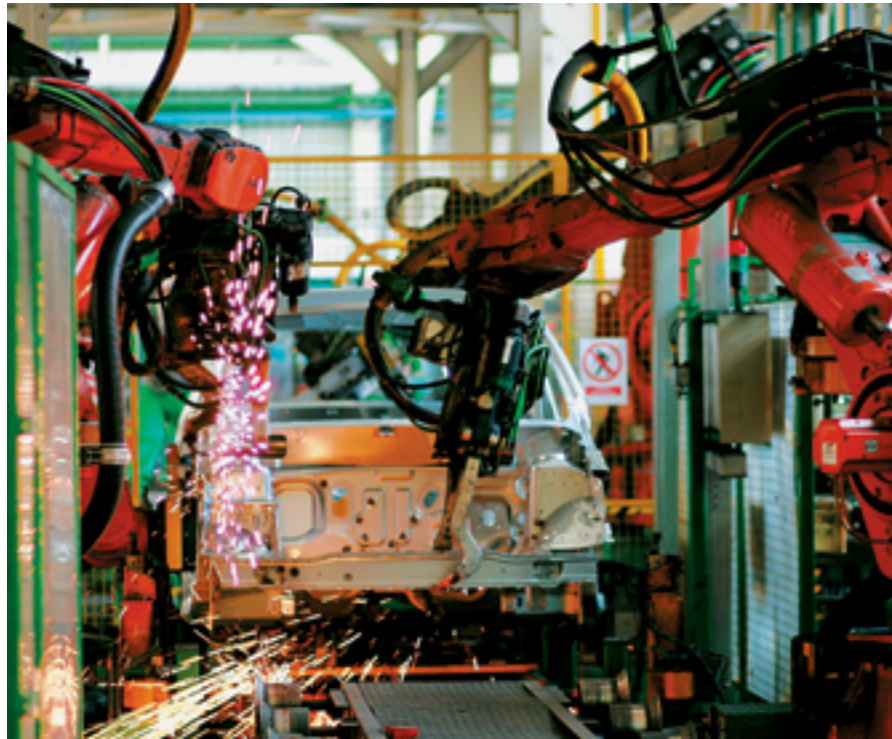
organisation. What is the nature of your work in this organisation?

I aim to continue working in this commission for as long as it is possible. It is intellectually extremely exciting work which unites 34 top legal experts. We all have a solid grounding in international law. Our main task is to ascertain what international law is in certain areas and develop it progressively. This is a long-term activity; we are trying to conceive international legal instruments which will maybe with time become conventions. Among other things, we are currently working on underground water resources which are located in more than one country. Whether this will become a convention I cannot yet say. This year we will decide if we will go ahead and include a discussion about how we will manage sources of crude oil. We are aware of the great sensitivity of this matter. A very interesting open question is also that of the protection and rights of people in the case of great natural disasters and other such situations which must be settled according to the new rules of international law.

Let us end on this note. Thank you for talking to us.



Vesna Bertoncelej Popit, DELO, photo: STA



Revoz will be placing a new model of car on the market, a two-seater cabriolet, which can be produced by the same machines currently used to produce Twingo and the Clio II.

A Government decree came into force at the start of June, according to which the Government will pay 85% of basic salary to employees whose companies have been forced to put them on stand-by (awaiting recall to work), due to a lack of orders. This should help slow down the growth in the number of registered unemployed, which went past 84,000 before the end of May, and by mid-June was already over 85,000.

According to Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (UMAD), economic conditions in Slovenia improved in May and June, but the Government remained wary of the estimates, since the Slovenian economy's significant export orientation – primarily focused on western European markets – means it is very dependent on economic conditions in Austria, France, Germany and Italy, as well as Croatia, Belgium and the Netherlands, and a number of other European countries.

At the Ljubljana Stock Exchange's 26th Financial and Stock Market Conference

held in Portorož in mid-May, the economist Dr Mojmir Mrak offered the assessment that the crisis was not deep enough to lead to major changes in the global financial architecture. If the EU and the United States were not prepared to take a different approach to the developing economic superpowers, Mrak stated, it would only lead to an attempt to revise the existing situation. It is very wrong, in his opinion, that global trade is growing more slowly than the global economy.

Dr Jože Mencinger assesses that the economic crisis has brought at least two positives; first, that European and Slovenian politicians have stopped repeated niceties about the Lisbon Strategy, second, that economic policies have abandoned parts of the Stability and Growth Pact that he considered pointless. Plans that the EU would only deal with services and financial holdings have not happened. Mencinger said it has been seen that workers in Europe are not prepared to work for just 200 euros a month, so making shirts, shoes and chairs cannot just be left to the 'Chinese'.

The largest companies in Slovenia last year by total revenues were the Petrol oil company, the Mercator retail group, the Novo Mesto car factory Revoz, which is a subsidiary of Renault, the oil trader OMV Slovenija from Koper, and the Merkur retail company from Naklo. The highest net profits were achieved last year by the pharmaceutical company, Krka, from Novo Mesto, and Telekom Slovenije, the Lek pharmaceutical company, Mobitel and the Slovenian energy holding company, Holding slovenske elektrarne, all based in Ljubljana. The highest added value per employee was achieved by TUŠ Nepremičnine (692,000 euros per employee, with 32 employees), which is a subsidiary of the Celje-based TUŠ retail company. The company with the highest number of employees last year, over 12,000, was Mercator, though this may well not be the case now. Many companies that recorded a profit throughout last years recorded a loss in the first quarter of this year.

Slovenia has over 107,000 micro enterprises generating annual revenues of less than 2 million euros, which represents 96% of the total number of enterprises in the country. However, according to estimates by the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in the past five months the number of companies has fallen by more than one thousand, with over 14,000 employees losing their jobs with small enterprises and entrepreneurs. Among 116 requests submitted to the Slovenian Government by micro enterprises, the first was a call for a small business ombudsman.

The Chamber of Property Trading reported that property trading halved, that property prices were falling and sales were taking longer to complete. They are in favour of the Government promoting property sales and establishing an apartment renting market. However, the public's purchasing power has fallen by 27% over the past four years, and average household borrowing is now eight times more than monthly income from work. Advertised prices for studio flats took five years to rise by 500 euros per square metre from 1998 to 2003 (€ 1500 to € 2000), while

over the following two years they rose to € 2500/m², € 3000/m² in 2005, and now cost circa € 3350/m².

The Government and energy companies in Slovenia and neighbouring countries have reached agreement on future cooperation in energy and building new overhead power lines between Slovenia and Italy and gas pipelines between Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary. Ljubljana is competing to become host of the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). Slovakia and Romania are also competing for this agency.

Before summer, Slovenia and Russia are set to sign an agreement on a southern European gas corridor that would cross Ukraine and the Black Sea and then pass through Greece, Serbia, Hungary and Slovenia. Slovenia has prepared a list of facilities it would like to include within the Russian clearing debt programme, which most countries have already agreed with Russia in recent years.

China presented its World EXPO 2010 in Ljubljana, which will be held in Shanghai and in which Slovenia will participate. The general secretary of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry,

Samo Hribar Milič, said that the World Expo was a great opportunity to increase awareness of Slovenia on the Chinese market. The Slovenian president, Danilo Türk, visited Jordan and agreed with King Abdullah II of Jordan, that progress in economic cooperation between the two countries was particularly significant in cooperation between the Jordanian port of Aqaba and the Port of Koper, as well as in energy and telecommunications, but more had to be done to increase cooperation in the field of tourism.

Patrick Pélata, Chief of Operating Officer of Renault, said that in future the Novo Mesto-based car maker Revoz would be placing a new model of car on the market, a two-seater cabriolet, which can be produced by the same machines currently used to produce Twingo and the Clio II. However, experts stated that car sales in Slovenia continued to fall, and in May 24% fewer new cars were registered than for the same period last year, while the year-on-year fall in April was as much as 37%. In Germany, however, sales increased, which is positive for Slovenian suppliers of car parts.

Although some economists forecast that

inflation in Slovenia would start to fall due to the crisis and that deflation might set in, these fears were not realised, and inflation remained at 0.6% in May. The increase in oil prices may also contribute to an increase in inflation in coming months.

According to data from an interest group of software producers, their members lost 36 million euros in Slovenia due to software piracy, and if one takes into account new jobs not created due to reduced revenues, and which could have contributed to faster economic growth the loss of earnings is even higher.

The Urbana transport payment card is being tested in the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, which is intended to replace monthly bus passes, as well as enabling payment for car parking and travel on the funicular to Ljubljana Castle. A 90-metre building is planned for Ljubljana's BTC City retail park, to be built by spring 2011, which will be the tallest building in Slovenia. The business building, which has already been dubbed the Crystal Palace, will have 22 storeys.

Director of BTC, Jože Mermal, anticipated that around half the premises in the building will be sold in the next two years, while the other half will be leased.





photo: personal archive

Darja Bavdaž Kuret, Slovenian Ambassador to Hungary

Relations between Slovenia and Hungary are based on a friendly and neighbourly partnership, demonstrated by regular political dialogue at all levels and widespread contacts and cooperation between the countries in many areas. This forms a sound platform for my work in Budapest, however, relations between the two countries, excellent as they may be, cannot be considered statically, because in a world of rapid change they are influenced by increasing ever more varied factors. This means I have two guiding principles for my tasks as the Slovenian ambassador to Hungary: taking care to maintain the level of bilateral relations achieved to date, and constantly seeking out new opportunities, even outside the bilateral context. I consider that it is particularly important that our countries make the best use of all the opportunities for collaboration within the EU and Nato, and other international – global and regional – forums, which brings new content into mutual cooperation and gives it greater dimension.

There are two key connecting elements within relations between Slovenia and Hungary – our minorities and being neighbours. In my view, the potential that the two elements offer has not yet been fully utilised. Both offer a great deal: being neighbours facilitates favourable economic links on the basis of cross-border and regional cooperation, while the minorities offer added value, enriching reciprocal relations in a very special manner. We would like to continue open dialogue with our Hungarian partners on all issues, both theoretical, and those linked to tangible projects, for which there is a good institutional and legal framework in place. An intergovernmental agreement was signed in 1992, and recognises special rights for the Slovenian ethnic minority in Hungary and the Hungarian national community in Slovenia, and established a mixed commission to monitor implementation of the agreement. We want to place development opportunities for the two minorities at the forefront of cooperation that encompass the wider region, which should be plentiful in a border area between three EU member states (Austria, Hungary and Slovenia).

Economic cooperation is definitely one of the most important areas, and one which the embassy in Budapest will continue to pay considerable attention to in order to strengthen contacts between competent institutions and economic entities in both countries. Hungary is one of Slovenia's largest business partners, ranking sixth overall; trade with Hungary represents 3.4% of Slovenian trade. Numerous Slovenian companies are present on the Hungarian market, including the Port of Koper, Krka, Gorenje, Trimco, Aero, Erol, Elan, Kompas, JUB, and Iskra avto-elektrika. The volume of trade is over € 200 million. Slovenian investments are not high, but are directed towards strengthening the competitive advantage of the Port of Koper and primarily relate to logistics and warehousing capacity.

In addition to traditional trade, opportunities to link transport and energy infrastructure are increasingly current. Some of the most important projects in this field include the South Stream gas pipeline, Pan-European Corridor V, which is extremely important for the Port of Koper and the development of logistics and goods centres, the Danube Cooperation Process, and more effective realisation of economic potential. We can expect that trade will be affected by the economic crisis, but – together with a business club in Budapest – the embassy and companies from Slovenia will continue to look for new opportunities. We will take care of experience and cases of best practice in promoting economic cooperation and use all the tools available to diplomats to strengthen that cooperation. The central and south-eastern European region is very close to us in many elements, and both countries realise numerous strategic interests in the region as well as economic.

Finally I would make mention of an area that can be described as last, but not least – culture, education and science. Cooperation in these areas is inextricably connected with the other areas and gives sense to them. Successful economic cooperation is inconceivable today without cooperation on science, and scientific cooperation cannot take place with working together on education. In Slovenia we have sincerely welcomed the EU decision to locate the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) in Budapest. Slovenia contributed to the decision as it held the EU Presidency at the time, and was aware of the opportunities a new agency in a neighbouring country could bring for Slovenian scientists. Efforts must be made in the field of culture to ensure greater exploitation of the geographic closeness and open wide the doors of a rich cultural heritage of the two countries.

I would like to close my letter with the idea that I have arrived in Budapest at a very exciting and very important time for both our countries. Slovenia has just successfully completed one of its most demanding tasks since independence – the six-month presidency of the European Union and launched new challenges on the international scene, such as the current chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, while Hungary is preparing for its own EU presidency in 2011. For 'new' EU members, the presidency is a kind of test of maturity, which makes it very important for our two countries to display solidarity on the presidency project. Hungary supported Slovenia during its presidency with various forms of practical assistance (seconding experts, hosting Slovenian diplomats in the buildings of Hungarian diplomatic facilities, where Slovenia did not have its own infrastructure), and Slovenia is now sharing its experience with Hungary and assisting in preparations to take on the demanding task. We wish them every success.

Dr József Czukor, State Secretary responsible for bilateral relations with European countries in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



photo: personal archive

Dear Slovenian Colleagues, Readers of SINFO,

The Hungarian-Slovenian political, economical and cultural relations have developed positively along the common values and mutual interests since Slovenia's reaching of independence. The common values, our good neighbourhood, membership in the EU, mutual belonging to the NATO as well as the historical and cultural heritage reaching back to a common past give us a good base to maintain the reliable partnership and the privileged neighbourly relations in the upcoming period. As former Hungarian Ambassador to Ljubljana, I regard the Hungarian-Slovenian relations as excellent and intensive. Hungary is highly interested in maintaining the reliable partnership and privileged neighbourly relations. With the aim of deepening the already established co-operation we continue the intense high-level political dialogue. The first joint government session in October 2007 in Lendava and Szegothárd (Monastir) is regarded as a cornerstone in our dialogue. We plan the second joint government session in autumn this year. The main objectives of the session will be the cross-border co-operation and better interconnection of infrastructural networks of both of our countries. The next significant event which will take place on 1st of July, 2009 is PM Borut Pahor's visit to Budapest. Moreover, President Dr. László Sólyom will visit Slovenia on the 8th and 9th of October, 2009.

This year Europe is celebrating the demolition of the Iron Curtain, that led to the democratic change of the political regimes and the independence of some countries in Central and Eastern Europe. A joint research in the diplomatic and public archives, historian's conferences, publishing studies and shooting documentary films can point out the interaction of the Hungarian and Slovenian revolutionary events. As my personal initiative, I will further promote the researches for both Governments, which I believe will be a worthy commemoration of the events in Hungary and Slovenia during the establishment of the Slovenian independence and the Hungarian-Slovenian diplomatic relations.

We are concerned with Hungary's and Slovenia's co-operation in European affairs. The preparation of Hungary for presiding the European Council in 2011 is well underway. The necessary coordination framework has been adapted. The majority of the Presidency staff has been selected and their training launched. We thank Slovenia for sharing her presidency experience.

The issue of the national minorities has a great importance in our bilateral relationship. We appreciate the constitutional rights granted for the Hungarian community in the Republic of Slovenia and continue to provide all the rights for the Slovenian community granted for minority self-governments in the Republic of Hungary. The objectives and requests made by both communities are understandable and legally correct. But the demands for increasing financial support in the midst of recession requires cautious approach from both minority communities and governments. Despite of the crisis, the progress of business investments in the respective regions can help the living of both the national communities. Our business relations has developed successfully in the last couple of years. Business cooperation shows accelerated growth in bilateral trade economic relations. Companies from both sides have interests in closer co-operation and investment projects. Hungarian Telecom is working on a strategic partnership with Telekom Slovenije and Hungarian oil company MOL invited PETROL in the MOL-INA-Slovnaft strategic co-operation. Hungary is interested in the co-operation in the field of energy security. The recent gas crisis had shown that the missing links in the infrastructure in Central-, and South-Eastern Europe are undermining the creation of unified internal energy-market in Europe. Hungary has the interest to integrate the three separate gas markets and strengthen the interconnection of electric power markets of Europe.

As State Secretary responsible for bilateral relations with European countries in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I shall continue to further develop Hungary's and Slovenia's relationship.



THE PHENOMENON OF THE APT AND NOVO MESTO

Jože Osterman, photo: Boštjan Pucelj

Compared to the established mode of work of most other theatres, Slovenia's youngest professional theatre, the Anton Podbevšek Theatre (APT) in Novo Mesto, founded in 2005, actually prefers what might be described as commando tactics. Named after an "anarchist" poet from the early 20th century, Anton Podbevšek, a native of Novo Mesto and the author of a provocative collection of poetry entitled *The Man with the Bombs*, which systematically derailed the traditional artistic practice of the day, the APT constantly and consistently lives up to its name. Led since the very beginning by the controversial director Matjaž Berger, responsible for a number of surprising productions, notably at the Slovenian Youth Theatre, but at the same time the man who transformed official state celebrations in the 1990s into an artistic event and drove political discourse out of the spotlight of public attention, the young team of the APT shakes up its environment in the same way that Podbevšek did, but at the same time with a sufficient degree of elegance and refinement. It has managed to turn the theatre into a magnificent laboratory of theatre and film, in which a number of projects have been created that exploit the convergence of these two media almost to the full. This is joined by theoretical/educational modules in which "Socratic" schools of philosophy have formed. These have been accepted with enthusiasm, particularly by young people. Given the difficulty and demanding nature of the material, this is almost unbelievable. If we add to this the fact that the theatre and its activities enjoy the committed support of the Municipality of Novo Mesto, and that support is also provided by the pharmaceutical giant Krka, perhaps Slovenia's most successful company, we see before us the surprising social picture of an apparently provincial town that, through the establishment of new artistic practices, has turned on its head the generally accepted view that in Slovenia social elites can only appear in the capital city.

If truth be told, this is not really surprising: over the last thirty years, Novo Mesto has gained a generation of people in the

economic, political and cultural fields who today are making a decisive contribution to leading the country. The theatre is merely the last stage in a series of institutions that have appeared as the result of an awareness that the time has come for the town to fulfil its potentials in the sphere of cultural institutions too. Alongside the renowned Miran Jarc Library, with its long tradition, and the rapidly developing museum, which is rightly considered one of the finest regional institutions of its type, the founding of a centre which passes from reproduction to creation is a logical step.

In Slovenian theatrical circles the opinion prevails that the work of the APT is a concentrated exploration that is not particularly compatible with the traditional conception of the theatre. The difficulties that the theatre experiences as a result of this are perhaps reflected in fewer invitations to take its productions elsewhere and fewer opportunities to take part in traditional theatre festivals, but the APT accepts that. Even as it is, the attention of the public and the willingness of the best theatrical artists to work in this theatre are extremely high. In just over three years the theatre has premiered twelve plays, all of which have touched on current social topics that have been "processed" in Novo Mesto in a completely new way through the use of theatrical technology. If we take just this year's premieres – a dramatisation of Henry James's novel *The Portrait of a Lady* and Dušan Jovanovič's actorless project *Confessions*, both of which experiment with the new technical possibilities of expression provided by film, video and theatre – we can clearly see that the exploration continues. Other interesting activities include the introduction of so-called soirées, evening lectures where the issue of the artistic avant-garde has been addressed by theorists such as Dr Rastko Močnik and Dr Lev Kreft, and, in general, the work of the so-called APT Academy, which is systematically broadening the horizons of young social sciences and theatre enthusiasts. If Podbevšek was the man with the bombs, the APT is evidently a theatre with missiles!



MYSTERIOUS KLUŽE

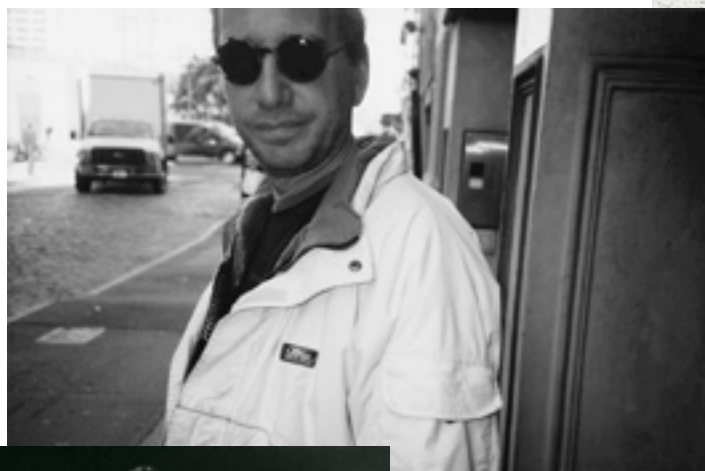
Jože Osterman, photo: Nada Žgank

Kluže is one of the best known tourist attractions in the Posočje region, with an attractive auditorium and exhibition spaces which host temporary exhibitions alongside four permanent exhibitions presenting the history of northern Posočje, in particular the Bovec area. Above all, Kluže – like the First World War museum in Kobarid, just over 40 kilometres to the south – has opened itself to the history of the Soča (Isonzo) Front, which in this valley undoubtedly represents an event that has left a permanent mark on the area. In view of the fact that quite a number of the descendants of people who were affected or marked by the Soča Front are still alive today, and given that interest in this horrible yet awe-inspiring period of history is growing, events at Kluže represent an interesting combination of historical facts and modern cultural events, and attract an increasing number of visitors and spectators every year.

The first fortification was built above the deep gorge of the river Koritnica in the 15th century and prevented the plundering expeditions of the Ottoman Turks into Carinthia. In 1613 a stone fortress was built. This met its end in 1797 when the Austrian garrison holding out against the army of the French general Bernadotte was defeated and the fortress was razed to the ground. In 1882 the Austrians rebuilt it in its present form. After the First World War the fortress was abandoned for a considerable period and the hand of time did its destructive work. Restoration began in 1987. The present state of the fortress is encouraging, and with the renovation the fortress has gained a new lease of life through cultural events and exhibitions, which have placed it on the tourist map of Slovenia. Today The interesting permanent exhibition "The Soldier Joined the Farmer", subtitled "The Soča Front" presents the countryside along the river Soča, which in the early 20th century was crisscrossed by

military trenches and military communications of all types, and full of thousands of soldiers with enormous quantities of military hardware. The account of the armies that clashed in this part of Europe, their different national and cultural composition, and their battles, deaths and also joys, all of which has left a unique stamp on the area, is well worth a visit and some quiet reflection. In the Bovec area, historical memory has also contributed to the founding of a society of enthusiasts of the legacy of the Soča Front, the 1313 Society, which stages reconstructions of various events of the war and conjures up for spectators the atmosphere of the front from almost a century ago.

Out of these historical frameworks comes the second, contemporary part of artistic activity at Kluže, most evident in the annual festival at which visitors can enjoy contemporary achievements in, above all, the dramatic arts, and where children too come into their own. In just a few years the festival has developed into a highly enjoyable event that in July and August attracts great attention from all who come to the Bovec area during the summer season. The well-known director Marjan Bevk, who lives in nearby Čezsoča, is the spirit of the event. The festival will open this July with a concert by Jararaja and will continue in August with six theatrical pieces. Particularly worthy of attention are Racine's *Phèdre* and the poetic musical drama *I too sometimes write in jazz* performed by guest artists from Italy. We should also mention that from the end of May the fortress is hosting the exhibition "Napoleon's Eagle over the Alps", which in honour of the 200th anniversary of the Illyrian Provinces recalls the clash between the Austrian and French armies in 1797 that had such a fateful effect on the fortress itself.



LJUBLJANA JAZZ FESTIVAL IS 50 YEARS OLD

Polona Prešeren, photo: archive CD

Ljubljana Jazz Festival will take place at several venues throughout the city at the end of June: Križanke, Klub CD and the outdoor Gala Hala Summer Stage at Metelkova. This year the festival celebrates its 50th birthday. Alongside the concerts are numerous accompanying events to enrich the festival experience. Visitors will be able to see an exhibition of jazz photographs and posters from previous years, as well as film showings with a jazz theme. Klub CD will serve as the festival cafe, where musicians, journalists, guests and visitors will be able to mingle and chat.

The festival starts with an exhibition by Han Bennink and a concert by Han Bennink and

Guus Janssen. The festival's finale will be provided by John Zorn, one of the greatest musicians and composers of the last 30 years, who is appearing at Ljubljana Jazz Festival for the first time. Zorn will take this opportunity to prepare a special three-part festival evening in Križanke. In addition to numerous musicians – from 19 countries and all continents, with the exception of Australia – there will also be presentations by record companies. The festival will present a rich variety of events for the early summer days and nights.

More information on the festival programme: www.ljubljanajazz.si

LJUBLJANA TO BE WORLD BOOK CAPITAL



Jože Osterman

The national history of Slovenia – like that of many other central European nations – is closely connected to culture and, in particular, to literature. Many consider the two greatest sons of the nation to be Primož Trubar, the writer of the first book in the Slovenian language, and the poet France Prešeren, both of whom worked in the field of literature and books. At one time the national love of books was demonstrated in purely empirical terms by positive figures in the spheres of publishing and libraries, and in the 1970s Slovenia was the world record holder in terms of both the number of newly published titles per inhabitant and the number of books read per inhabitant. Unfortunately these times have past and Slovenia no longer appears at the top of either of these categories.

Nevertheless, a general love of literature has undoubtedly remained. Writers still enjoy great prestige and the publication of a good book often attracts not inconsiderable attention from the media. For this reason all Slovenians were undoubtedly proud of the decision of the special UNICEF committee to designate Ljubljana the World Book Capital, beginning in April 2010. Ljubljana was chosen in the face of stiff competition from Vienna, Lisbon, Riga, St Petersburg, Wellington and Guadalajara, all of them famous capitals of culture, having convinced the committee with a truly well prepared programme.

Ljubljana set about preparing the programme very democratically, inviting the participation of the broadest cross-section of cultural figures. A call for proposals was published last autumn. This was of an informative nature and will be the basis for the invitation to tender for the final programme. The response was excellent, with 209 proposals submitted. An organising committee was appointed, including representatives of the book industry and book associations, experts, public institutions, the Ministry of Culture and the Slovenian Book Agency. The patronage of the project was assumed by the President of the Republic, Dr Danilo Türk.

The main elements of the programme have already been designed. A new fortnightly cultural publication, projects designed to spread reading culture and raise awareness of the importance of books, a world conference on the theme of the book as a pillar of human development, a literary festival featuring authors from every continent, and the new Trubar House of Literature: all very promising projects. Through them, Ljubljana will also gain a number of permanent elements that in the future will become a strong support for books and readers.

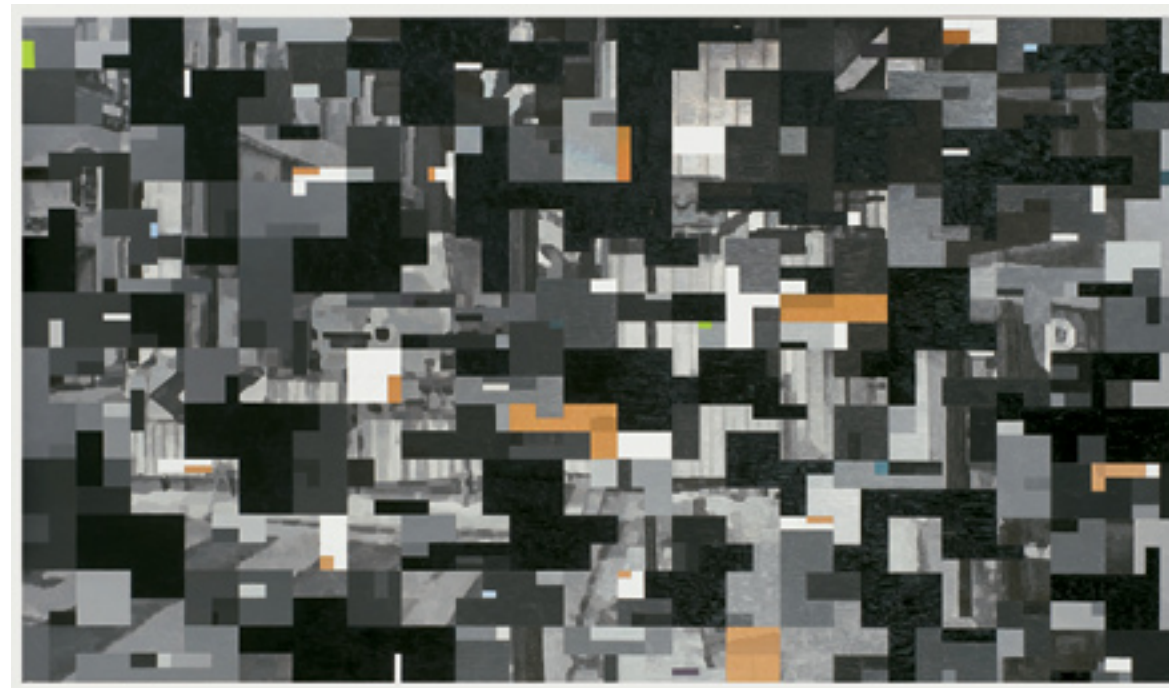


THIS YEAR'S BALLET DAYS ON THE STREETS OF LJUBLJANA

Polona Prešeren, photo: SNG opera and ballet archives

Last year's Ballet Days at the Slovenian National Theatre Opera and Ballet were a pleasant surprise for audiences and received a very positive response. This event has been organised again this year for lovers of this artistic form. The main event was the premiere of the ballet *Swan Lake, the Ideal of a Romantic Ballet – This Time ...* According to Prešeren – and where else but in Prešeren Square in the centre of Ljubljana. This ancient legend of the search for an unrequited love, for beauty and for perfection, set to Tchaikovsky's famous score, has been combined with the tragic life story of Slovenia's most famous poet, France Prešeren. This famous ballet, given a modern touch and a spectacularly designed set, is full of symbols – presented on a stage set in Prešeren Square from which the Slovenian poet gazes yearnfully towards the window of his unrequited love, Julija Primic. The ballet features some of Slovenia's finest dancers, including Bojana Nenadović Otrin, Rita Pollacchi, Ana Klačnja, Regina Križaj, Sanja Nešković Peršin, Lukas Zuschlag and Peter Đorčevski, as well as a number of foreign ballet stars – Tomislav Petranović, soloist with the Portuguese National Ballet, and Alen Bottaini, principal dancer with the Bavarian State Ballet. A roundtable discussion on issues relating to what ballet dancers can do after their active careers come to an end also took place as part of the 2nd Ballet Days. The interesting promenade exhibition of photographs entitled 'Elegance in Movement' at Cankarjeva Ulica also attracted a great deal of attention. These black-and-white photographs, which present the unique story of the perfection and wave-like intertwining of bodies in the movement of dancers and Arab horses, have adorned the displays of some of the more interesting bars, offices and shops in the town.





DIRECTIONS – THE SKY ABOVE LJUBLJANA

Text and photo: Barbara Jakše Jeršič

From 23 June to 19 July Cankarjev Dom will be hosting an exhibition of photographs by Stane Jeršič and Barbara Jakše. Involved in photography since 1989, their reputation both in Slovenia and internationally has been consolidated by solo exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam in Rotterdam, the Melkweg Centre in Amsterdam, Fotogalerie Wien in Vienna, the Prinz Gallery in Kyoto, the Photofusion Photography Centre in London, the Lodz Art Centre, the Museum of Modern Art and the City Art Museum in Ljubljana, and elsewhere. Their photographs have also been sold to public and private collections, among them the world's largest collection of prints and photographs at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. In 2004 they presented their book-and-exhibition project Identity of Space at the City Art Museum Ljubljana and the book reached the final selection at the Rencontres d'Arles photography festival.

In their new photographic project, Directions between worlds can stand for combination or alienation. Small or big is merely a matter of perception and, lost in the images we see, we seek the true direction. The Directions series of photographs combines double images shot at an oblique angle. On one side is a tract of landscape or urban area; on the other, a detail found in it. In both photographs, the selected larger area or small detail is in focus while the surrounding area remains blurred. The pairs of photographs talk about the microcosm within the macrocosm, about the little elements that the eye, and with it the camera, seeks in the wholeness of the selected area, about details, in which, to paraphrase Aby Warburg, we find God or the Devil.

'OUR RIGHTS' AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE IN STRASBOURG

Alenka Ivančič, photo: Tina Ramujkić

Between 22 June and 16 July, Slovenia presented itself for the second time during its six-month Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at the headquarters of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. This time with an exhibition entitled 'Our Rights', devoted to children's rights, in line with the Slovenian Presidency's priority task. The exhibition of illustrations on children's rights, as interpreted by Matjaž Schmidt, is supplemented with photographs of selected artworks by children from the art workshop on the topic of children's rights. This took place on 4 June at the premises of the Art Centre for Children and Young People at Pionirski Dom Centre for Youth Culture in Ljubljana. Children that attend the Pionirski Dom Art Centre and children from the Tone Čufar Primary School in Ljubljana took part in workshops. In addition to presenting children's rights as seen by adults through the eyes of an artist, the exhibition also aimed to present children's rights as understood and interpreted by children themselves. The exhibition was opened by Slovenian foreign minister Samuel Žbogar.



MIHA ŠTRUKELJ'S 'INTERFERENCE IN PROCESS' AT THE BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Andrej Savelli, photo: personal archives

Miha Štrukelj is exhibiting his project 'x=0/y=0 Interference in Process' at the Biennale di Venezia, one of the world's most important contemporary art events.

The project is conceived as a total artwork based on four thematic and formal levels: a painting, a wall drawing, a drawing and a Lego picture. The exhibition is a summation of Štrukelj's concept of the painting process, which is based on a deconstruction of the pictorial surface with the aid of a grid that serves as a structural and conceptual basis within which the painting is deconstructed and reconstituted as a form of disillusioned subjective gaze. Thematically, Štrukelj's painting originates from a fascination with images as manipulated by the media, and expands to take in the iconography of anonymous urban topography and the isolated, silent presence of the human form within it. This approach is reflected throughout the series of works on show, with the exception of the Lego picture, where the artist has chosen a natural landscape as the basic motif – a rarity in his work.

According to Štrukelj, the theme of this year's Biennale, 'Making Worlds', is closely connected with the work he has been developing in recent years. He therefore merely had to make a few adjustments in order to install it in the gallery which will serve as the Slovenian Pavilion for the period of the Biennale.

Slovenia has another representative at the Biennale di Venezia: Marjetica Potrč, who was invited by the Biennale curator Daniel Birnbaum, to present her selected drawings from the period 2005-2008 at the main exhibition in the Arsenale. This is already her fourth appearance at the Biennale.

Tadej Golob, photo: Rafael Marn/ Ad Pirum

YOUNG CREATIVES GATHER AT THE MAGDALENA FESTIVAL

Andrej Savelli

Young creatives under the age of 30 from all around the world, who had entered their work in 11 competition categories, gathered at the 11th Magdalena International Festival of Creative Communication in Maribor from 21 and 23 May. There were 393 entries from 12 countries this year, with the highest number coming from Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. For the period of the festival, Maribor became a centre of modern art and creativity, with numerous exhibitions, workshops, lectures and evening events taking place around the city.

The festival started in 1999 as a critique of and alternative to those advertising festivals that were not open to young creatives. Today, the profession, as well as the media at home and abroad, regard Magdalena as being among the most important events of its type in Europe. The festival is intended to present, reward and promote original ideas and creative solutions from young people in various areas of communication. It aims to attract as many young creatives from all over the world to attend lectures and take part in workshops given by world-renowned professionals. At the same time, it offers an opportunity for studios, agencies and other companies, as well as individuals working in the field of communications, to identify special talent and find potential new collaborators among the festival participants.

Top prize at this year's festival went to Serbian designer Ajna Zatrić. She received the 'Magdalena' award for her 'Urban calendar for the city of Sarajevo' project. The professional jury, chaired by leading British designer Ian Willingham, also gave a further 11 'Golden Bra' awards.



WINE FROM THE EARTH

We sat in the shade in the stone courtyard in front of a small family restaurant with a wonderful view of vineyards all around. I decided to hazard a guess, saying: 'It's probably a bit quiet at the moment, what with there being not much work to do with the vines.' I guessed wrong. 'Where you talking about?' smiled Jean Michel, creator of wines from the tourist farm of Kabaj. 'Right now, this is basically the busiest time. The vines are being prepared for the next year, which is why we only have a few cherry trees, which the guests can pick from. We just don't have time for them.'



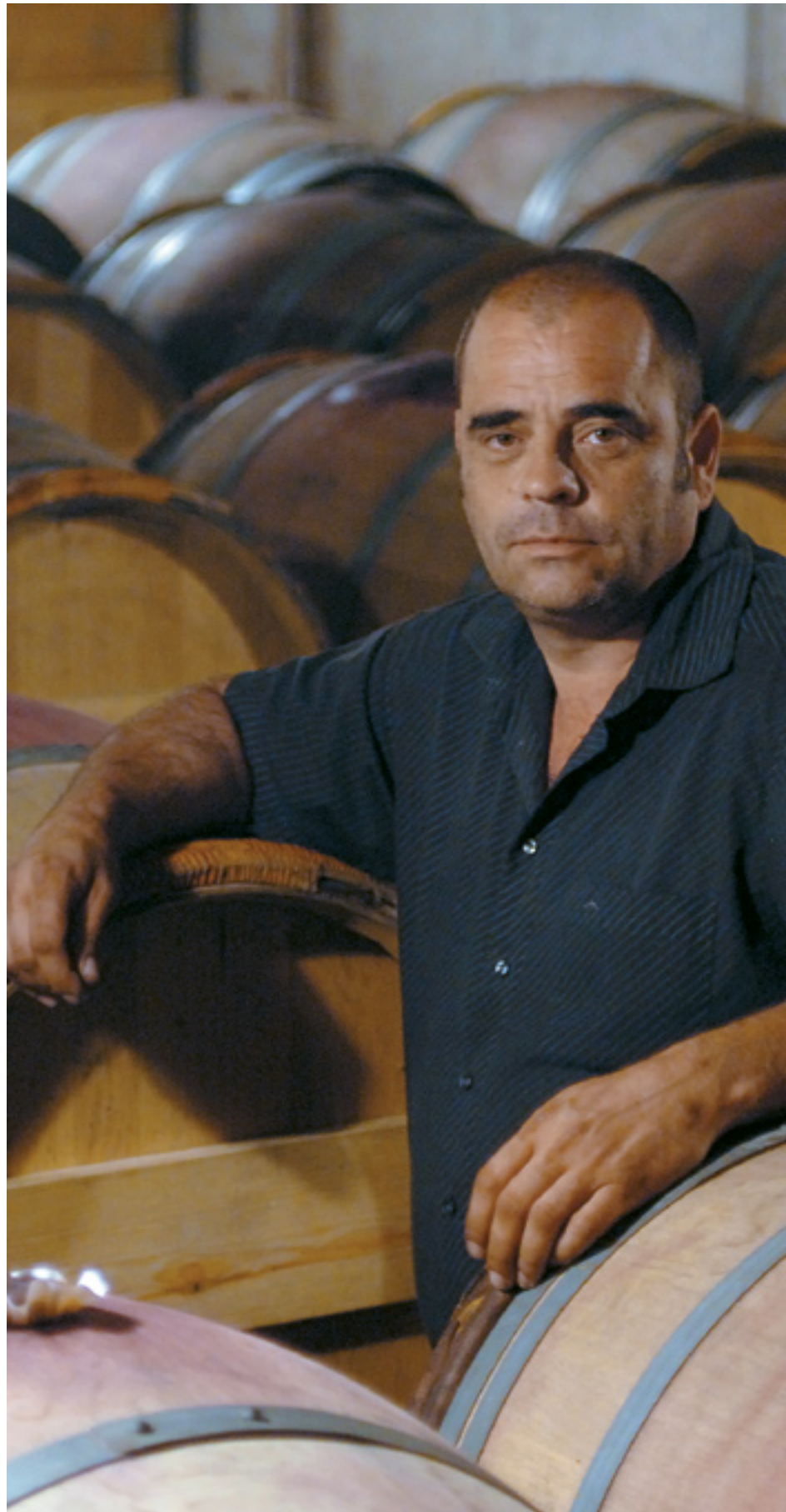
Above Nova Gorica, north of the town which lies on the border between Slovenia and Italy, rises the 609-metre-high elevation of Sabotin. Below it one can see, even from a long way off, the stone inscription 'Tito'. The locals say that Sabotin is full of poisonous vipers, some of which are so old they have grown legs. Along the southern side of Sabotin, below the snakes and the monument to the Marshal, runs the fastest route to the most westerly part of Slovenia, which from the hills has a view of the Po Valley. The contrast could not be greater. The road is still enclosed by high wire fencing, designed to prevent 'tourists' from Eastern Europe from deserting to the 'other side', and the landscape that opens up when the fencing ends is magical. Hill after hill, vineyard after vineyard, cherry trees and peach trees ...

We are in Goriška Brda, with Dobrovo as its centre.

It is a tiny village and contains only the bare essentials – a shop, post office, fire station, church and cemetery, as well as a large wine cellar to which the surrounding farms and cooperatives take their grapes, which the experts then turn into wine. Until 1993 they included husband and wife Jean Michel and Katja Morel from the nearby hamlet of scattered houses that goes by the name of Šlovrenc. At that time they only produced between 500 and 1,000 litres of wine, for their own needs. In 1993, on their homestead at Kabaj, on the farm owned by Katja's parents, they created a small cellar. And although they have continued to expand it, it is already too small.

'If we hadn't decided to do it when we did,' explained 'Žan', as the locals round there call him, 'who knows whether it would have been done at all. We wouldn't decide to do it now. When you're still young and stupid, that's when you do it.'

Jean Michel is not a Slovenian name, although its owner is (at least partly) Slovenian. He was born in Paris to a Slovenian father and a French mother, was educated



in France, travelled all over the world with his father, who was an architect, trained as a sommelier, worked at large farms and vineyards, and got an offer from California, where they had just started to grow their own wine in large quantities and needed professionals, but Jean chose nearby Italy instead. 'So I still haven't been to America,' says the 43-year-old, adding with a characteristic, (although in his case adopted) Brda stubbornness and pride: 'And I don't know if I'll ever go. Let them come here, if they want something from me.'

Kabaj Morel brandname.

But before he began, with his wife and a small team, to grow his own wine, which is today marketed under the Kabaj Morel brandname, Jean Michel had to decide between two homelands. 'In France I could have taken over the running of a farm which had no heirs, but my wife didn't want to, so we stayed here.' They got hold of a cement mixer and began building. The mixer and a pile of sand are still there. 'If a mixer enters the house, you'll never get rid of it,' he says.

They already had a few vines, as well as a fair amount of fruit, from which Brda used to make a living. Now, as fruit arrives in Slovenia from everywhere and at ridiculous prices – prices at which Brda simply cannot produce – it is no longer done. 'Same thing with wine,' says Jean Michel. 'They say: "Your wine is expensive". Yes, it is, but it can't be made any cheaper. There is no 'hyper-production' here. We don't harvest wine using machines. We tackle every vine by hand. The vines have to be cleared and cared for. The yield is very small – perhaps a few kilos per vine, even less.'

The dominant varieties now are domestic, indigenous and old Brda varieties. Tokaj, which can no longer be marketed under that name since it has been registered and protected by Hungary, and is now called Sauvignon in Brda, as well as Rebula, whose reputation first had to be rehabilitated. In the past this was a sorely abused grape variety, producing wine that gave you a headache. 'It was the same with



Laški Rizling,' explains Jean Michel. 'But both Rebula and Laški Rizling are great varieties, suitable for mixing as well as for stand-alone drinking. The same thing happened to Malvasia, which is not indigenous to Brda but is a fine variety and one that we will help to preserve. We will no longer make Chardonnay, which is a fine variety but can be found all over the world. When I go to a Slovenian restaurant, I certainly won't order Chardonnay, which I would do in Burgundy, where it originates from. Foreigners who come here do the same. They seek out Rebula, Teran, things that no longer exist.' And if they're looking for things that no longer exist, as well as things that cannot be found anywhere else, Kabaj farm is the right place.

The wine develops on its own in the kvevrer.

Jean Michel and his team make wine in kvevrers, which are large clay vessels buried in the earth.

There are only 25 similar producers in the world and they are now starting their own association, which will keep an eye on the quality and authenticity of this method of winemaking.

A kvevrer can hold between 1,500 and 4,000 litres. Whole grapes are placed in the vessels. They then burst during fermentation, creating an emulsion. This emulsion lies in the barrel for a year, without being touched by anyone. Sulphur (a minimum amount) is not added to the wine until it is poured from kvevrer to bottle.

Wine made this way has a basic taste. 'It goes from the vineyard back to the earth,' is Jean Michel's colourful description. 'From earth to the earth. With natural fermentation, its own bacteria, its own fungi. The wine develops on its own in the kvevrer. You really have to be careful here, selecting the grapes, which must be healthy and ripe, carefully ... This takes quite a bit of work, but the wine is so much better for it.'

Not all the grapes from the Kabaj farm's

12 hectares go into the clay vessels – only grapes from the high-lying and oldest vineyards. This year they have produced wines from 65-year-old Tokaj and Rebula vines. ‘These vines are so old, but we haven’t got rid of them, even though some of the vines are missing. It makes you smile in the cellar because the wine makes itself from the vines.’ Grapes from younger vines go into 225-litre oak barrels.

Jean Michel searched for his kvevrers in Georgia. He travels there regularly and is thrilled with the country. The journey by road to Istanbul and from there by boat to Trieste takes three weeks, but even the gentle pace was no guarantee that all the items would arrive at Brda in one piece. In the first consignment, five of the fourteen vessels were broken. They are now waiting for a new consignment of twelve large and twenty smaller 200-litre kvevrers.

Most of the wine is still being bought up by Slovenians, and primarily by restaurants familiar with the product. It can also be bought in Bordeaux, in the heart of Burgundy, at a restaurant at which the world’s leading winemakers gather at least once a year. ‘They love us there,’ says Jean, destroying the myth of the arrogant and self-absorbed Frenchman, ‘because we offer something different.’

‘I’d like to see more people making wine the way we do.’

‘Not by forcing them to do it that way but by convincing them to do so because it’s worth it. If someone bought a kvevrer and didn’t know the first thing about how to start making wine, they’d dig such a hole for themselves that they’d never be able to get out of. It’s all about love of wine, not about turning a profit. For me it’s also the wine I make, the most important part of my life, but I first have to be satisfied with it myself. I can’t imagine someone coming up to me and saying that they’d done some research and found that this or that would be the flavour of the market this

year and ordering me what wine to make. On that day I’d hammer two nails into the door of the cellar, close it, seal it tight and never open it again.’

I arrived at the Kabaj farm with a photographer at nine in the morning. ‘We’ll finish at ten,’ I predicted, ‘and be back

in Ljubljana by midday.’ At midday, Jean Michel, who loves cooking and cooks brilliantly, something which the guests who stop or spend the night there soon discover, sliced some ham and poured a fresh glass of wine. If a vine can wait, I thought, so can an editor.



Ana Mrzlikar, photo: archive

G-1 sole manufacturer of LPG equipment in Slovenia

At the 29th PODIM international business conference in Maribor at the end of March, the G-1 company from Celje came first in the competition category for start-up companies. They were presented with an award for the technology built into the vehicle, which they developed alone and also patented. The system is the only one in the world that allows the regulation of the injection of LPG in real time, enabling the most efficient combustion, and the highest quality installation with a seven-year guarantee. The patented system brings about improvements both in the functioning of the system and with ease of installation.

Simon Štrancar, director and co-founder of G-1 d.o.o.: ‘LPG technology has actually been in use for a very long time. We have changed the way the regulation of LPG injection is viewed and have developed an innovative way to regulate injection, which means easier installation

and the best possible functioning of the engine with regulation of LPG injection taking place in real time. It is precisely this type of injection regulation that we have patented.’

Systems for conversion to LPG have been in use since the middle of the previous century and technology has since made enormous progress, which means that nowadays almost all engines can be converted to run on LPG. This is where G-1, which was founded in 2006, has found a market niche. It was in 2006 that a group of experts in LPG, auto-electrics, and alternative energy sources joined forces to form a team to develop their own system to overcome the shortcomings of competing systems.

The team tested the system extensively on different vehicles and all tests confirmed the flawless functioning of the basic concept. In 2008, the company was given a

capital injection and was formally registered. A production facility was constructed and certificates R67-01 and R110-01Z were successfully acquired, these being necessary for sales abroad. The company has gradually built up an international sales network. A successful presentation of the company at the international LPG fair in Istanbul has also been carried out.

LPG: cheaper and greener fuel

The cost of LPG (Liquefied petroleum gas) in Slovenia is currently less than 50% of the price of 95 octane unleaded petrol. G-1 has calculated that a driver can recover the cost of an LPG investment in less than 30,000 km, even without bearing in mind the resulting added value of the vehicle.

G-1: The key advantages of this equipment for running vehicles on LPG are reliability and solid workmanship, savings realised during use, simplicity of installation and later maintenance.



depending on the number of cylinders. All material is equipped with safety certificates in compliance with EU regulations. Installation is carried out by mechanics certified by the manufacturer who have undergone specialised training to attain proficiency in installing and servicing this technology. LPG as an alternative fuel for personal and goods vehicles has many advantages. These are being successfully enjoyed by millions of drivers all over Europe, but especially in the Netherlands, Germany and Italy.

Simon Štrancar: “Some people only see the saving they will make, while others have broader awareness and also think of causing less pollution. But considering that old vehicles that are converted to run on gas can be sold for considerably more and are easier to sell, the saving is considerably greater than it first appears. The cost of the equipment is soon covered and the system is also more attractive for people that are not on the road that often.”

What next?

Simon Štrancar: “Our company’s business plan is extremely important for the building up of the company. It allows us to carry out analysis and to find out where we are sticking to plans, where we must make changes, and where we are running late. It also spurs us on to develop new technologies, although we are a little late in entering the foreign market. We are currently already in the testing phase of developing a diesel system, and also developing other components and new technologies for the use of alternative fuels.”

The Slovenia-wide competition for start-up companies is organised by the “Tovarna podjetov” together with its main partners, the Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments (JAPTI) and the Ministry of the Economy. It is a step up from regional business competitions, which are organised by various technological parks, “incubators” or regional business centres. The expert commission was impressed by how seriously the work was begun and the potential shown by the highly professional team of founders and partners of G-1.

Ecologically minded users are also increasingly favouring LPG because liquid petroleum gas is energy efficient and is an environmentally friendly form of energy. As LPG use decreases emissions of harmful gases into the environment, it is considered to be a green fuel. Studies have shown that in converting a modern vehicle to LPG, greenhouse gas emissions are decreased, as are other harmful emissions. In LPG combustion, emissions of harmful substances are up to 50% lower than in traditional petrol engines, and this means they are also well below the limits of the strictest EU regulations governing exhaust gases.

engines, there would be an outcry. LPG is currently the only technology that allows a realistic decrease in emissions of all harmful gases, including CO₂. We can use it immediately and in future can develop other technologies in parallel. Electric power is unfortunately not yet a solution. In Europe, only 16% of electricity is produced from renewable resources, and in the US this figure is 8.8%. And nobody asks about the recycling of batteries after they have come to the end of their service life.”

Products and services

The company manufactures kits for converting vehicles to run on LPG. Professional installation in the vehicle is carried out by certified mechanics all over Slovenia and the rest of the world. LPG systems differ

Simon Štrancar: “We hope that in future more attention will be paid to the harmfulness of particulate matter (PM) and other toxic exhausts – not just CO₂ emissions. The latter is also important but real problems are unfortunately sidelined. If people were more aware of the toxicity of diesel

Polona Prešeren, photo: Tomo Jeseničnik





A winding road, running partly through Italian territory, leads to Goriška Brda, the far south-western corner of Slovenia. This is where the fabulous Goriška Brda awaits us: a little piece of land squeezed against the border with Italy and bounded by the Soča, but with great wines. The gentle Brda hills with their farmhouses and their slopes planted with vineyards and orchards give you the impression that you have arrived in another world, almost like something from a fairy tale. Goriška Brda is about halfway between Ljubljana and Venice.

This little piece of Slovenia truly is something special. At every season of the year it offers something unique and intoxicating. Most visitors fall in love with it at first sight. Even the climate in Brda is special, shielded so carefully in the north by Mount Sabotin, while the gentle hills gradually descend towards the Friulian Plain. The Brda hills are home to six thousand inhabitants. On clear days the Dolomites, the Alps, the peaks of the Kanin range, the Friulian lowlands, the Piran headland and the sea are all visible from Brda. In spring Brda is filled with fruit blossoms. Summer is the time of succulent fruits. Autumn is a feast of colour. In winter, Brda and its inhabitants rest. That is the time for a drop of wine.



The largest settlement and centre of Brda is Dobrova, where the cellars of the Renaissance castle conceal a well-stocked vinoteka or wine shop. A place where visitors can fortify themselves with cheese and cured meats and invigorate their soul with Brda's finest wines. The friendly locals offer visitors a warm welcome at any time of year. The wine here truly is a "precious drop" and the food is simple and excellent. It is hard to say which is more intoxicating: the wine or the food. Both are wonderful.

Everything revolves around wine

Winemaking is Brda's greatest tradition, since the climatic conditions here are ideal for growing vines. The low Brda hills are open towards the Friulian Plain, which brings the warm sea air, and are protected from the effects of the colder mountain climate by the Julian Alps and the Trnovo Plateau. The soil, too, a mix of marl

and sandstone, is ideal for vines, which have grown in Brda since Ancient Roman times. Brda is home to autochthonous grapes such as Ribolla, and the special microclimatic conditions give a particular nobility to Sauvignon, Pinot, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, the mainstays of the area's wine production.

The wines of Goriška Brda are becoming a fixture on the wine lists of the finest restaurants in London, New York, Paris and Berlin and do extremely well on the international wine market. Notable labels include Movia, Marjan Simčič, Ščurek, Edi Simčič and Klinec. The last of these organises an annual festival of wine in poetry in Medana in the last week of August. The winemakers of Brda know how important it is to create a wine with an international style and prove to wine lovers that they can rely on them. They also believe that a wine must show all the characteristics of its environment.

Movia

Movia is a house with a long and successful tradition. Today it is headed by Aleš Kristančič. The Kristančič family have been producing premium wines on this estate since 1820. Today Movia makes some of the world's finest wines and the Movia name is present all over the world. The wines are sold under two labels: Movia, for wines produced from mature vineyards, and Vila Marija for wines made with grapes from young vines. Aleš Kristančič believes it is right to be bold: "I am not a winemaker who believes that what we had centuries ago was better than what we have today. People develop and you have to use your head for your own development."

Vina Simčič

The Simčič vineyards lie on both the Slovenian and Italian sides of Brda (called Collio on the Italian side). The Simčič family believe in their wine and produce it exclusively from the fruit of their own vineyards. They are committed to growing and processing grapes in the most environmentally friendly manner possible. Every decision in vineyard and cellar is the result of careful thought: nothing is automatic. You will find their wines in some of the best restaurants in Europe. They are particularly popular in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Italy and the United States.



Delicious Fruits

Fruit growing has a strong tradition in Brda. The industrious hands of the inhabitants and the favourable weather conditions ensure good harvests of cherries, peaches, apricots, olives and figs. Fruit growing helped the people of Brda survive the difficult times after the Second World War, when the new national border also represented an important geographical demarcation and, as it were, cut Brda off from the world. The roads that led from Goriška Brda to the markets where they sold their produce were interrupted. As a result, many people switched from winemaking to fruit growing and transported their fruit by bicycle to the railway station and then on to Ljubljana by train. When times improved, they returned to winemaking, which today emphatically occupies first place once again.

Cherries

In this season everything in Brda revolves around cherries. These delicious little fruit even have their own festival in Brda. The Cherry Festival is the area's biggest and most successful cultural/tourism event, and every year attracts over 30,000 visitors from all over Slovenia, Italy and Austria. The Cherry Festival means more than just the hedonistic enjoyment of delicious cherries: it also includes traditional elements of local culture, cultural events, entertainment and commercial activities.

Brda cuisine

The cuisine of Brda is very diverse. Goriška Brda faces the Adriatic Sea on one side and the Julian Alps and the Dolomites on the other. As a result, the cuisine of Goriška Brda incorporates ingredients typical of the cuisine of the Primorska (Littoral) region and the Mediterranean: herbs, plenty of vegetables, olive oil, prosciutto, vegetable soups and minestrone. The most notable influence of mountain cuisine, meanwhile, is polenta. This means that your plate, or tondo, to use the local name, will be filled with dishes such as fish with white polenta and toč, a special kind of goulash served with prosciutto (a version made with beans is also very popular). Toč or točanje is a dish into which bread or polenta is dipped. Frtaja is also very popular. This is a kind of omelette prepared with local Brda herbs or with sausage. All these dishes must of course be accompanied by a glass of good Brda wine.

Fuje

Ingredients:
500 g stale white bread
100 g sugar
150 g raisins
grated lemon or orange peel
1 sachet vanilla sugar
1 egg
50–100 g bacon
green onion slices

Soak the bread in the stock in which an Easter ham or other piece of meat has previously been boiled. Drain and squeeze the soaked bread. Cut the bacon into small pieces and fry it. Chop the onion and fry in the bacon fat. Add the soaked bread and mix all the ingredients well. Make thumb-sized rolls from the mixture, roll them in flour and boil in the stock in which the ham was cooked. When they float to the surface, fish them out with a slotted spoon, arrange on a plate and serve with boiled ham or boiled shoulder of pork.

Gnocchi with sausage toč

Ingredients:
3 tbsp (olive) oil
1 sausage
1 onion
salt and pepper
1 tbsp flour
water
50 ml wine

Cut the sausage into pieces. Fry the onion in the oil until golden, add the flour and the pieces of sausage. Stir a little and add the wine. When the wine has boiled off, add water. The toč must cook for at least 30 minutes. Serve with gnocchi.





Pištunj (Puréeed Potato Dish)

Ingredients:
500 g potatoes
500 g string beans
500 g courgettes
100 g bacon or crackling

Peel potatoes, wash, dice and boil.
Cook string beans until soft.
Peel courgettes, dice and boil until soft.
Mix all ingredients together and mix well.
Season this purée-like mixture with cracklings or fried bacon.



Yellow or white polenta

1 l water
400 g yellow or white corn flour
1 tbsp olive oil
salt

Pour a tablespoon of olive oil salted boiling water (alternatively, use butter)
Reduce the heat; add (yellow or white) corn flour and stir continuously.
Cook the polenta for 30 minutes, stirring continuously. If it gets too thick, add some milk or warm water.
When it is done, spoon onto a wooden tray and cut with a string
Slices of cold polenta can be fried in fat, olive oil, butter, minced lard or prosciutto fat.

38,000 kilometres and speechless



Text and photo: Metod Močnik

At the beginning of June, elections to the European Parliament were held. A total of 375 million Europeans elected 736 members to the parliament in Brussels. Slovenia has seven MEPs. There are two million of us. We inhabit 20,000 square kilometres. Half of this is forest. According to official statistics, in 2005 the public road network in Slovenia covered 38,425.1 kilometres, of which national roads extended 6,393.1 kilometres and municipal roads covered 32,032.0 kilometres. We also have a little over 660 kilometres of motorways. This is so you know who we are, where we live and where we (don't) go. By bike. We have everything the big folks have.

Quartet of professionals racing for pink

In the month of May, there could have been no cycling enthusiast following one of the three biggest three-week stage races in the world, the Italian Giro d'Italia, who missed the Slovenian cyclists. Tadej Valjavec, Jani Brajkovič, Jure Golčer and Gorazd Štangelj were in fact the 11th biggest team in terms of national affiliation. For a country with two million total population we are especially proud that here too, it seems that Slovenia is a big cycling country. This quartet had its job to do in the big teams of Astana, LPR,

Liquigas and Ag2r, and they all had their big moment in the main role, like Tadej Valjavec. Or in the supporting role of assistants, like Jani Brajkovič alongside the most famous cyclist of our time, Lance Armstrong. Lance has yet to cycle a single kilometre in Slovenia. But he knows he was close. The second stage of the Giro d'Italia heads to Trieste, finishing just a few kilometres from the border.

The road as a shrine

Tadej Valjavec saw the Giro through to the end in the kind of outstanding company that is regarded as holy among cyclists. The kind of cycling saints, of course, who do not yet have wayside chapels built in their name. But they do have their own roads. For Tadej Valjavec the nicest stretch for cycling runs from his home village of Besnica pri Kranju, and through the hamlet of Jamnik, which is famed for having one of the best viewing points in Gorenjska, at the Church of Sts. Primož and Felicijan. The road continues to the heroic Dražgoše pod Jelovico, down to Železniki, up through Sorica, a village on the sunny side of the Alps on the Soriška plateau, and down to Bohinj, the Alpine jewel with its crystal lake. From there Tadej turns towards Pokljuka, where he has used his savings to fix up the magnificent tourist facility called Villa Triglav. From there to Bled, which embodies the concept of Slovenian tourism, and then back home is not far. This cycling route could actually be named after Tadej Valjavec. This would be a fine monument to him.

SPORTS

Vršič

In Slovenia the roads wind from the sea to high mountain peaks. From zero to over 2,000 metres. This provided the subtext for this year's race around Slovenia (Po Sloveniji), the country's biggest stage race, featuring riders from the Pro Tour class. Virtually every year the course runs over Slovenia's most famous mountain pass of Vršič (1,611 m). It was built by Russian prisoners during the First World War. In engineering terms this road in the Alps is a veritable masterpiece, and for cyclists it has views to match. On the first Saturday of September every year the road from Kranjska gora to Vršič has been tested for over 30 years now by more than 1,000 recreational cyclists. The 12 kilometre ascent, climbing 800 metres, is a well-known Slovenian cycling challenge, and the quickest riders do it in 33 minutes. But anyone taking an hour or more still gets congratulated. Out of respect for all cyclists, Tadej Valjavec will not say what his best time is on this road of Alpine explorer Kugy. Unofficially, however, he is reported to have clocked in at less than 29 minutes. (* The Minister of Transport advises: Do not try to beat this time in the opposite direction)

Rainbow girl

But that is just one of the roads in the Alps. Twelve kilometres on the clock. And in Slovenia, as we have found out, there is just one cyclist deliberately attempting to ride every road in the country. Every single one. Slovenia is a country of wide and narrow roads, paved highways or muddy MTB tracks. Some of these tracks are even quite famous. The beautifully idyllic village of Ledine, high up between Idrija and Žiri, is the home of Tanja Žakelj. This young

girl is the world champion in Olympic cross-country cycling among the juniors. She won the rainbow jersey, emblem of the best in the world, in the youth section. Last year she repeated this among the juniors. Slovenia in fact boasts a handful of girls who are among the best in the world at this Olympic discipline. Blaža Klemenčič rode in the Olympic Games last year. Nina Homovec is now among the ten best in the world championship races. All three of them come from idyllic villages. Places where they have a wide variety of possibilities with all kinds of cycling terrain right at their doorstep. These are the roads and trails that are not included in the earlier statistics.

Masters of gravitation

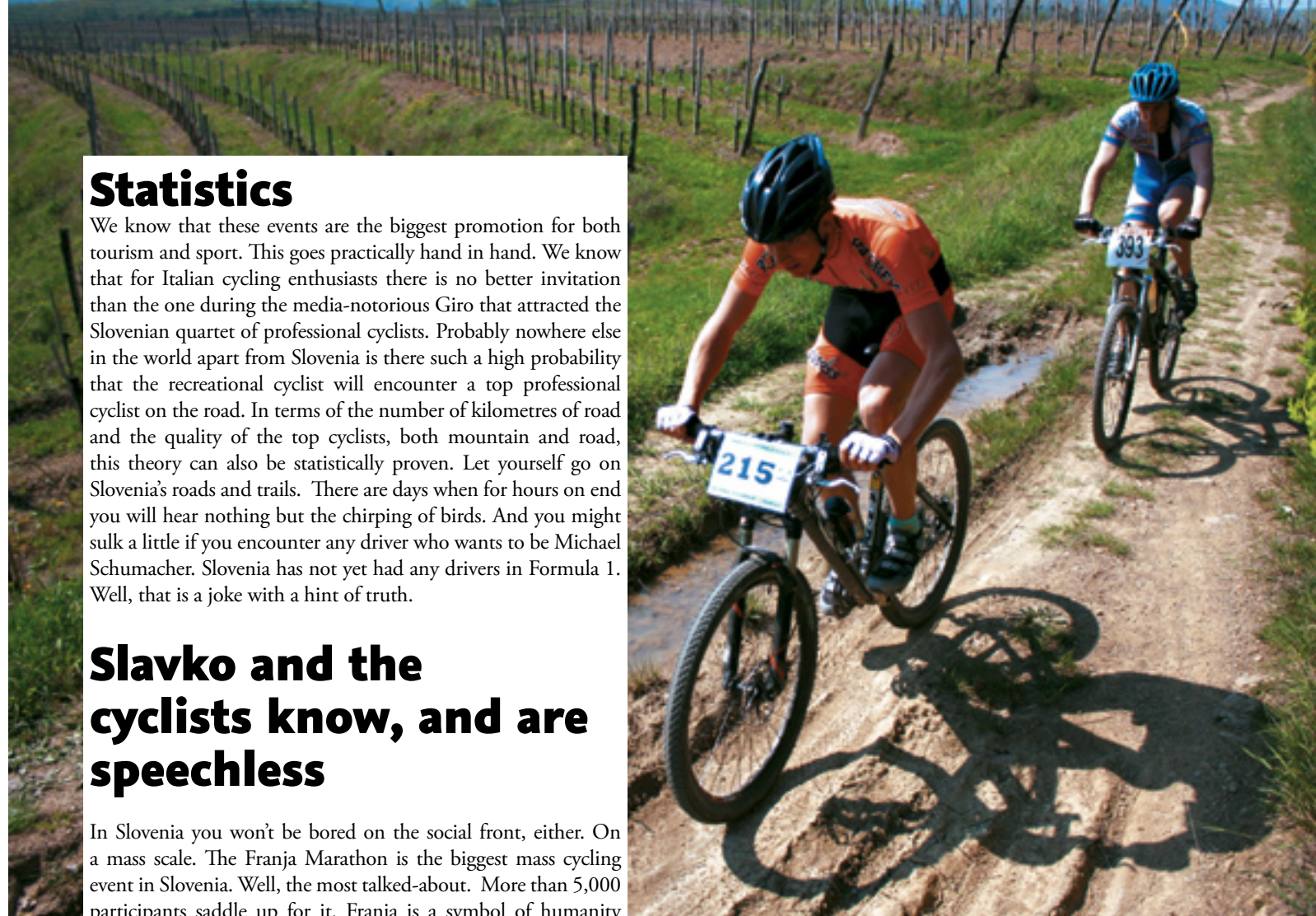
In Slovenia quite a few winter sports centres boast infrastructure for mountain bikers who are sworn adherents to the gravity-related adrenalin rush. In June, Slovenia was in fact the destination in Europe most besieged by mountain bikers of this kind. On the European map, idyllic Kranjska gora was most heavily surrounded by downhillers. In the middle of June it hosted the European downhill championship, a test of daring, skill and speed. Ajdovščina, the little town in the wine-growing Primorska region, hosted the European championship in 4Xcross-country. Meanwhile Maribor, with its nearby Pohorje range, is a traditional host of world cup races in these two mountain biking disciplines. Riders tear down into the valley on the very slopes where in winter, skiers battle it out for the Golden Fox prize, while in summer the odd fox, with real fur, might wander across the downhill trail. In Slovenia we really do have everything the big folks have.

Statistics

We know that these events are the biggest promotion for both tourism and sport. This goes practically hand in hand. We know that for Italian cycling enthusiasts there is no better invitation than the one during the media-notorious Giro that attracted the Slovenian quartet of professional cyclists. Probably nowhere else in the world apart from Slovenia is there such a high probability that the recreational cyclist will encounter a top professional cyclist on the road. In terms of the number of kilometres of road and the quality of the top cyclists, both mountain and road, this theory can also be statistically proven. Let yourself go on Slovenia's roads and trails. There are days when for hours on end you will hear nothing but the chirping of birds. And you might sulk a little if you encounter any driver who wants to be Michael Schumacher. Slovenia has not yet had any drivers in Formula 1. Well, that is a joke with a hint of truth.

Slavko and the cyclists know, and are speechless

In Slovenia you won't be bored on the social front, either. On a mass scale. The Franja Marathon is the biggest mass cycling event in Slovenia. Well, the most talked-about. More than 5,000 participants saddle up for it. Franja is a symbol of humanity during the Second World War. But 'Franja' is far from being the only one. The Alps Marathon in Kamnik and then along idyllic Alpine roads around the Alps. A full circle through neighbouring Carinthia. Then there is the Juriš na Vršič (Rush to Vršič) from Kranjska gora, the Poli Marathon in Ptuj, our oldest city, and the Marathon around Pohorje. The calendar of the Cycling Association of Slovenia (Kolesarska zveza Slovenije), which is headed by a woman, Milena Černilogar Radež, includes more than 150 events. There is practically no event without participants from the areas beyond Trieste and Tarvisio in Italy or Klagenfurt in Austria. Perhaps the invitations are also helped. The attractions for cyclists can also be put into the words expressed a while ago in respect of the wonderful region of Gorenjska by the Slovenian ambassador or popular folk music, Slavko Avsenik, the man who shaped the Avseniki group: "It is not hard to describe the beauty of this land. Whoever sees it will be speechless."





Woman Scientist of the Year Dr. Bojana Žvan

“You have to focus on ideas you can finish”

Ana Mrzlikar, photo: Mateja Jordovič Potočnik



Dr. Bojana Žvan, chair of the Clinical Department for Vascular Neurology and Intensive Neurological Therapy at the Ljubljana University Clinical Centre was this year selected from among 10 nominated women scientists by readers of the magazine Jana as the WOMAN SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR. She studies cerebral and vascular diseases, one of the more prominent health, medical and social problems of today.

You were chosen as woman scientist of the year by readers voting. What do you think persuaded them to vote for you?

There are essential criteria for the nomination, and I found myself among very strong competition. There were scientists in the running who have spent their lives exclusively in this field. In the expert selection we, the candidates, had absolutely no influence on the selection, except of course through our past work. As for the final result, I was probably helped here by the fact that I am deeply committed to preventive care for cerebrovascular diseases, and I am also working in that direction. I appear a great deal in the media, I convince people and inform them about prevention, about how urgent it is, how quickly we need to react in order to treat an ischaemic stroke with thrombolysis, I make people aware of new methods of treatment and how important surgical intervention is, where we can enlarge the vein and insert a stent, as in the heart. In this way I am expanding knowledge about early diagnosis and treatment of patients at risk. I am a fighter, and my motto is that for any patient who has had a previous ischaemic attack, meaning all the signs of a stroke, which pass in less than 24 hours – this is a warning stroke – we should diagnose that patient within 24 hours and offer them appropriate treatment.

The people who voted for me also probably know me from my other field of work, in migraines. I also speak a great deal about this, I appear in public, I raise people's awareness about the causes and consequences, and recognising the right diagnosis and treatment.

What research work convinced the committee to place you among the ten nominees?

I treat primarily cerebrovascular diseases; one of the most prominent research projects was without doubt when we studied the effectiveness of a new technique, carotid angio-

plasty with the installing of a stent brought in from abroad; in fact in 2001, in Houston in the USA I took part in the implementation and organisation of this new method, which involves dilation of the neck veins by installing vein stents in patients who have already suffered a minor stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA), and in those who have not yet suffered one. For the latter it is purely preventive. At the same time a colleague – an intervention neuroradiologist – went to study the technical implementation of this new method abroad, so that in 2002 in Slovenia we also started treating people at risk of stroke through carotid angioplasty with the insertion of a vascular stent. We have gradually become highly successful, so that today we can boast excellent results that compare with the best centres of this kind in the world. Other research relates to ultrasound diagnosis of the veins in the neck and regression of fatty deposits within them with treatment using certain medications, and another project deals with investigating cerebral function before and after insertion of a stent. We are researching to what degree cerebral function is impaired after constriction by 90% or more of the main vein in the neck, which supplies 2/3 of the brain and how cerebral function improves after insertion of the stent ... of course there is considerable research work still to do.

What does it mean personally for you to be “woman scientist of the year”? New impetus and recognition for your past work?

It seems very welcome to me that someone has actually thought to notice women scientists, since people generally do not even consider that women could be scientists, because we are still considered to be more “tied to the home”. Yet since I move in these circles, I see that a great many women are involved in science, and they also deserve recognition. So it seems fine to me that there is a selection each year and that new names of women in science will keep appearing. I welcome the

Jana magazine campaign enthusiastically and the support from the pharmaceutical company Krka. It enables women to show their scientific minds and to work properly in their fields.

Is it hard to be a woman scientist nowadays?

I think that nowadays more and more women are scientists. One reason for this is certainly that men have become less traditional and more understanding, and are enabling their partners to be scientists. Nevertheless it is difficult because at the same time women have families, and usually keep the home functioning, and it is a fact that they are involved in household work... In addition to my regular work there is also a duty roster, the need to write, read and learn, to prepare lectures, give interviews like this one ... (laughs). Occasionally this is arduous, and a woman who opts for it must be sufficiently tough and sufficiently persevering.

I believe that there are many more intelligent women in the world, but many have not succeeded in focusing their brain power in such a way as to establish or fulfil themselves, or rather not all of them face the same criteria or conditions. In short, when you decide on this, you have to persevere, open your mind to ideas from colleagues, and you have to have a good team that works for each other. I can boast that our team is small but good.

Your favourite quote, with which you also began your speech of thanks at the post-selection event, is: “The broader the mind, the more it suffers because of its boundaries” (Edmond Thiaudiere). What does this quote tell you?

It tells me about everything that in fact surrounds scientific work. The point is, we can have a great many ideas, we might want to realise a great deal, yet reality is different, so the benefit of this is just what you can actually realise and see through to the end. You have to focus on ideas that you can finish, that lead you to something. A broad mind is important so you can use it in the possibilities that you have.

Unfortunately we are not America, where science might bear such fruit as it does there. I am talking about the finance directed towards it. In Slovenia we are very limited in that field. Nevertheless I must say that in the



people

lar neurology. We have achieved a great deal, both at home and abroad. I am talking about articles we have published in relevant magazines in the area of strokes and migraines. In professional terms we are truly on a par in the area of inserting vascular stents, where we have real results that compare with the best centres in Europe.

In cooperation with the association of cardiologists we have also done a great deal in preventive work, in other words to reduce the factors of risk: increasing blood pressure, reducing cholesterol, reducing obesity, raising awareness to reduce smoking, to live in a healthy way, to eat properly, to exercise... Statistics show that in Slovenia we have already reduced the incidence of cardiovascular diseases by 20%, but we are not seeing the same thing for cerebrovascular diseases.

At the same time as reducing cardiovascular diseases, there has been an increase in people's age, and for this reason we have relatively similar results to those we had, except that the age structure of patients has changed – the patients are in fact older.

In stroke prevention we are somewhere near the top of the eastern European countries, but sadly still way down on the list of most advanced Western countries.

Your work also involves education. What do you teach?

For 10 years I was a lecturer at the Health College of the University of Ljubljana for graduate nurses. Now within the Medical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana I teach an undergraduate course in cerebrovascular diseases, as well as teaching research in the field of cerebrovascular diseases at the post-graduate level. I also conduct practicals for students and I do a lot of mentoring for the neurology specialisation. Two years ago, in cooperation between the Section for Cerebrovascular Diseases at the Slovenian Health Society and the Neurological Clinic, with organisation provided by the MŽB Society, we started the Neurosonology school. Our school handles all those who want to learn about neurosonology investigation, and who once they have finished all their courses, colloquia, practical and theoretical exams wish to obtain a diploma to perform neurosonology. The school is set up like other European schools of this kind. I also collaborate in planning the guidelines for neurosonological investigation of the carotid artery.

and I am proud to say that we exceeded the number of points by a factor of 2.5. The fact remains, however, that we are a small team, just a handful of people, 10 physicians in all for the entire vascular department and neurological intensive therapy, which is the only institution in Slovenia that covers the entire territory of Slovenia serving the most seriously affected neurological patients. Since it is the only one, it is in itself a tertiary institution, and a considerable section of the rest of the department must be involved with the secondary health level. The saddest thing for me is that the Ljubljana Clinical Centre, in addition to being a top tertiary institution, is also a secondary and care-providing hospital for the entire Ljubljana region, and sometimes owing to this we lack space to take on new and complicated cases where patients need help that they can obtain only in such an institution. For this very reason I launched a campaign of outpatient work for TIA patients whom previously we declined, and now we are trying to attend to them as in the Express study, in other words within 24 hours to provide a complete diagnosis and immediately provide appropriate therapy and in that way reduce the risk of stroke.

How would you compare Slovenian achievements in neurology with those in Europe? Are we on a par with European neurologists? In which fields are we outstanding?

I can only talk about my narrow field, vascu-

lar neurology. We have achieved a great deal, both at home and abroad. I am talking about articles we have published in relevant magazines in the area of strokes and migraines. In professional terms we are truly on a par in the area of inserting vascular stents, where we have real results that compare with the best centres in Europe.

As the chair of the Clinical Department for Vascular Neurology and Intensive Neurological Therapy at the Ljubljana University Clinical Centre, you are striving for it to be a top institution and for top neurological care to be accessible as broadly as possible across Slovenia.

In all respects I am working to see that the Neurological Clinic is a top institution. I must admit with pride that just recently we received a Decision from the Slovenian Ministry of Health, something we have been awaiting for over a year, that we are an established clinical department within the Clinical Centre. This is a kind of certificate confirming that our Vascular Clinical Department fulfils the conditions of being a clinic, and specifically that we can undertake top expert, scientific research and teaching work, for which we can also use tertiary means that are intended precisely for this at the University Clinical Centre. These are three criteria that a department must meet to become a clinical department. In every field it must achieve a certain number of points

CULTURAL TRAILS



Wine and oil making in Prlekija

Wine and pumpkin-seed oil as elixirs of life

Jože Prešeren, photo: Tomo Jeseničnik, Darinka Mladenovič

Every region of Slovenia has its own special features that simultaneously distinguish it from and connect it with other regions. Some have an old industrial tradition and modern economic development, others are notable for agriculture based on modern principles, and others again simply for the many curiosities of their dialects. Among these special regions of Slovenia is Prlekija, which some consider to be part of Štajerska, while others claim that it is part of Pomurje. For their part, the inhabitants of this region, the Prleki, say that they are something special and invite us to visit this special land of theirs to enjoy its beauties and, above all, savour the good things it has to offer.

Prlekija is part of north-eastern Slovenia and lies between two rivers, the Drava and the Mura. The centre of the region is the town of Ljutomer. Prlekija is a land of gentle hills and beautiful plains which in the past provided ideal conditions for the development of agriculture, and in fact the area is one of the most fertile parts of Slovenia. Conditions here are ideal for the cultivation of numerous agricultural crops, from vines to fruit and vegetables, and the overwhelming impression is that everything here is in the right place: the sunny, south-facing slopes are all planted with vines, below them extend the orchards, and fields and meadows fill the valleys. The north-facing slopes are covered with forest.

Long famous throughout Europe

According to one legend that still circulates in Prlekija, even Napoleon was enthusiastic about the wine of Prlekija, after he conquered this area. This period is said to have given origin to the name of Prlekija's famous wine Šipon (a corruption of the French *si bon*). Be that as it may, evidence of the winemaking tradition in these parts is also provided by archaeological digs, and a variety of wine vessels dating from the time of the Roman Empire have been found here: from amphorae to pitchers, chalices and glasses. Today, the winemaking

tradition is continued by numerous private winemakers. Four "wine routes" lead tourists to the winemakers of Prlekija, inviting visitors to stop and sample the local wines and cuisine. This, of course, forms part of the area's tourist industry, which in Prlekija is not only seasonal but, thanks to a number of thermal spas, is active throughout the year. Wine tourism represents an additional attraction for visitors to the spas.

The wines of Prlekija were once exported as far as the imperial court in Vienna. Today, thanks to a good marketing strategy, doors are opening for these products in Brussels, London and New York. Prlekija is also famous for breeding excellent trotting horses, and the town of Ljutomer can boast of being the home of the second oldest harness-racing club in Europe. Even now, the local hippodrome hosts at least nine harness races every year. And since we are talking about Ljutomer, we should mention the town's most famous son, the linguist Fran Miklošič, who in the 19th century was such an eminent scholar that he was appointed rector of Vienna University. The local people are naturally also proud of many other people from the area who have earned themselves a permanent place in the cultural history of Slovenia, among them the film maker Karol Grossmann, the composer Slavko Osterc, the poet Cvetko Golar, the inventor and factory-owner Johann Puch and many others who have made a name for themselves at home and abroad.

Let's go to Jeruzalem!

Many visitors wonder why there is a place called Jeruzalem in Slovenia, and the name may in fact be one of the reasons why it is one of the most visited places in Prlekija. Jeruzalem is a vineyard settlement in the middle of the Jeruzalemske Gorice Nature Park and most tourists get here by following the Jeruzalem Wine Route. The nicest way to experience this route is on foot, if you have time, but you can also follow it by bicycle or by car. In Jeruzalem itself, everyone feels at home – perhaps because of the good wine, perhaps because of the food, and perhaps also because of the powerful energy lines that some people claim run through the area. Visitors are well catered for

here: a hotel, several agritourism farms, and wineries where visitors can taste the local wines and have something to eat. And where does Jeruzalem in Prlekija gets its name from? One story, which is perhaps not far from the truth, tells of how in the 13th century the local seigneur Frederick of Ptuj granted the hills in this area to the Order of the Teutonic Knights, who built a number of towers containing sacred images. In one of these towers they placed an image of Our Lady of Sorrows, which the crusaders were said to have brought directly from the Holy Land, from Jerusalem itself. The painting still hangs on the high altar of the local church, and from it the place got its name: Jeruzalem. Whatever the origin of the name, the place is well worth a visit – because of the wine route that brings us here, the fine wines, the holy name, the wonderful views and the little pilgrim church that has led some to call the place “heavenly”.

Prlekija cuisine – pumpkin-seed oil is a must

Prlekija is also a land with a rich cuisine. Its numerous gostilne and agritourism farms take pride in serving up local specialities. One of these is meat from the tünka (lard barrel), and another is prleška gibanica, a layer cake that is quite different from the better-known prekmurska gibanica, a speciality of the Prekmurje region. Naturally, though, every family has its own special way of preparing prleška gibanica. One particular feature of the cuisine of Prlekija, rather as in neighbouring Prekmurje and elsewhere in Štajerska, is the use of pumpkin-seed oil. It is mainly used in salads and in the preparation of certain other dishes. Owing to the growing popularity of pumpkin-seed oil, which was originally mainly popular in the north-east of the country, rather as in Austrian Styria, while in recent times it has been making inroads into the cuisine of other regions of Slovenia, quite a number of new oil mills have opened in Prlekija, where pumpkin-seed oil is produced alongside other oils. The best known mills in the area are Oljarna Kocbek in Sveti Jurij ob Ščavnici, founded in 1929, and the Središče mill in Središče ob Dravi, while the Emil Sušec mill in Boreci pri Križevcih and the oil mill of Zalika and Marijan Zanjkovič in Gibina enjoy a growing reputation.

Gorazd Kocbek of Oljarna Kocbek, where they produce the purest oils using natural processes, says that pumpkin-seed oil is now being used more and more not only in salads but for other purposes too, for example as a condiment or seasoning for other dishes. “Pumpkin-seed oil is one of the few oils to contain omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential for the normal functioning of the human body. It is also rich in delta-7 sterols which help prevent enlargement of the prostate,” he explains, emphasising the healthy qualities of pumpkin-seed oil. He also claims that the unsaturated fatty acids in the oil have a positive effect on the metabolism of cholesterol, while the high vitamin and mineral content helps water secretion and has a positive effect on the nervous system. “Pumpkin-seed oil also protects us from free radicals and prevents premature ageing, circulation disorders, arteriosclerotic changes and other problems. The oil is easy to digest, does not irritate the mucous membrane of the stomach and is therefore particularly suitable for people with gastric disorders.”

Pumpkin-seed oil can be produced by the traditional or hot pressing method but Oljarna Kocbek is the only oil mill to also use cold pressing. Gorazd Kocbek: “With traditional or hot pressing, you first have to grind the pumpkin seeds, then mix them and roast them and then finally press them. Oil produced this way has a characteristic dark colour. It is dense and has an intense aroma. With cold pressing, the process is different, because the seeds are not processed first. Whole seeds are poured into a special press and the oil is squeezed out. Despite the friction and the pressure, the temperature must not exceed 40°C, for only in this way does the oil conserve all the nutrients contained in pumpkin seeds, and of course its characteristic aroma. As a result of this process the oil is lighter, slightly reddish and has almost no smell, while the flavour is the same as the flavour of pumpkin seeds.” Oil produced in this way can be taken cold, as a preventive medicine, used as a condiment for various dishes and salads, or used in the preparation of various hot dishes, sauces and even desserts. Oljarna Kocbek also produces a hand-made dark chocolate with pumpkin seeds and pumpkin-seed oil, sold under the name Strast (Passion). This chocolate has attracted considerable attention, especially as a new way of using pumpkin-seed oil.



We should also point out that a new type of pumpkin-seed oil, “extra virgin pumpkin-seed oil” is primarily the fruit of Slovenian know-how and, owing to its special qualities, commands a relatively high price. This oil is particularly popular with passionate gourmets. As well as the dark chocolate mentioned above, they enjoy other dishes containing pumpkin-seed oil such as cheese spread with herbs and pumpkin-seed oil, cream of cauliflower soup with pumpkin-seed oil, leaf salad with a potato and pumpkin-seed oil dressing and, to end a meal, a wonderful dessert: vanilla ice cream with pumpkin-seed oil. Pumpkin-seed oil is also a very valuable foodstuff from the point of view of healthy eating and physiology, since it contains many of the essential fatty acids and a large amount of vitamin E and selenium. It is useful for preventing very common health problems and helps in the treatment of various conditions. Popular medicine has long known the healing power of pumpkin-seed oil, while more recently much of this knowledge has been confirmed by mainstream medical research.

Some people claim that in order to live well two important elixirs are necessary: wine and pumpkin-seed oil. In Prlekija they are well aware of this and know how to use both.



THE SLOVENIANS AND THEIR MOUNTAINS

Albert Kos, photo: Darinka Mladenovič

In response to the question, where they are going to spend their holidays, Slovenians usually reply: “In the mountains and by the sea”, which is for many a set holiday pattern. Slovenia has both, although in truth much less coast than neighbouring Croatia, so in contrast it offers abundant opportunities for spending an almost obligatory part of one’s holidays in the mountains.

The Alpine character of Slovenia

Slovenia is indeed a highly contoured land. Only a fifth of its territory could be described as plains, while the rest is hill country, rising ever higher towards the north-west, until in the extremities close to the borders with Austria and Italy it becomes high mountain terrain, with peaks reaching over 2000 metres high. This area comprises three high-mountain groups, the most extensive and highest of which are the Julian Alps and their highest peak of Triglav (2864 m), while not far behind in height are the much less extensive Kamniško-Savinjske Alps and their highest mountain of

Grintovec (2558 m), followed by the third group, the Karavanke, which comprise a long high-mountain ridge along which runs the national border with Austria. Only the Kamniško-Savinjske Alps are almost entirely within Slovenian territory, with just a short section touching the Austrian border, while the Karavanke range is shared about evenly between Slovenia and Austria, and a distinct dividing line, with the mountain pass of Predel, divides the Julian Alps into a smaller western section, the main body of which is in Italy, and a larger eastern section, which is in effect entirely within Slovenian national territory.

With these three groups, which form part of the Eastern Alps – although their peaks no longer rise above 3,000 metres and they are therefore markedly lower than many peaks and ranges in the Central Alps – the Alpine chain ends and merges into the Pannonian Plain in the east and the Dinaric Alps in the south. Yet despite the more modest heights, Slovenia’s Alps retain completely a high-mountain character, for which reason alongside France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany and Austria, Slovenia is ranked equally as an Alpine country.

Early human relationship with the mountains

In the past, the high Alpine areas were not attractive for any dense settlement. Settlements remained packed into the valleys, and only in places did hamlets and individual farms appear at higher elevations, where the conditions for survival, especially in winter, were tough and inhospitable. For a long time, therefore, people had no special desire or reason to climb into the mountains, apart from hunters and herders, who sought profit higher in the mountains, and since the earliest times knew countless ascents and access routes into the high mountains, but were not drawn to the peaks. The mountains were, on the other hand, rooted primarily in the mythological consciousness of the inhabitants, in witness of which is the name of the highest peak, Triglav [“Three-head”], whose three-headed summit represented in the folk tradition a three-headed pagan deity.

The founders of modern Slovenian mountaineering

The last decade of the 19th century and the period up until the First World War

were marked primarily by two mountain-hikers who are regarded as the founders of modern mountaineering in Slovenia, Dr. Julius Kugy and Dr. Henrik Tuma. They were contemporaries and in a way competitors in reaching numerous hitherto inaccessible mountain peaks. The former, who was an ethnic German merchant in Trieste, but partly of Slovenian origin, was guided in the mountains by Slovenian guides from Trenta, who knew from experience many secrets of the mountains, and he wrote a series of books in German about his ascents and mountain experiences with them, emphasising his aesthetic and emotional response to the mountains and the discovery of their secrets. The latter, a lawyer and Slovenian politician, was the opposite, for such ascents meant to him primarily the development and consolidation of a sporting spirit, wherein he also demonstrated a scientific interest, since he was the founder of Slovenian Alpine nomenclature. In the Kamniško-Savinjske Alps, similar pioneering work was done by Johannes Frischauf, a professor at the University of Graz. Both dimensions of mountaineering, the aesthetic and experiential approach of Kugy and the recreational and sporting one of Tuma, have driven people in their masses into the mountains up to the present day.

Beginnings of organised mountaineering in Slovenia

An important mark was left on Slovenian mountaineering from the last decade of the 19th century up until the First World War by the ethnic struggle between the Slovenian and German-speaking inhabitants of Slovenia, a struggle that was carried into the mountains. With the beginnings of tourism, the first people to go in large numbers into the mountains were Germanic people from the Slovenian cities, who organised themselves into an ethnic German mountaineering society and set up their own huts in the Slovenian mountains, arranging a number of mountain trails which they marked in German. The Slovenians felt deprived, since they had the feeling that their mountains were being appropriated by the Germans, who were trying to give them a German character. For this reason they founded the Slovenian Mountaineering Society in 1893, with the aim of shoring up the German influence in the mountains. A leading role here was played by Jakob Aljaž, parish priest in the village of Dovje, before the entrance to the Vrata valley, which is the closest starting point for an ascent of Triglav. He promoted and organised the construction of a Slovenian mountain hut at the end of that valley below the Triglav



north face, as well as the construction of a hut at Kredarica, just 400 metres below the summit of Triglav, which was one up on the more distant and lower-lying German hut. In subsequent decades the Kredarica hut was enlarged several times, and at a height of 2515 m it is still today the highest of the numerous Slovenian mountain huts, and it also houses a permanent meteorological station. The priest Aljaž also wanted to mark Triglav symbolically as a Slovenian peak, and so that the Germans could not stop him, he bought the plot of land on the very summit, where he had his famous tower, Aljažev stolp, erected. This was a cramped shelter from storms for earlier climbers, and to the present day it is the recognisable sign of the highest Slovenian mountain.

Visiting the mountains today

For several decades now, the Slovenian mountains have recorded increasingly high numbers of visitors, something aided by the 'manageable' nature of the Slovenian mountains, the relative simplicity and short time required to reach their peaks, and this in turn is enhanced by the frequency of the serviced mountain huts and the even more extensive network of mountain trails. Each visitor can choose for himself the difficulty and effort required for ascents, since the trails are for the most part well marked and maintained, and where necessary they are also secured with cables and pitons. Each year Triglav records the greatest number of visitors, from all sides and all routes, and particularly at the peak of the summer mountaineering season it experiences proper crowds, while the huts surrounding it are often overloaded, and there is frequently little room at the summit by Aljažev stolp for everyone who wants to rest a little there and enjoy the view. Yet the majority of the other peaks are not left on their

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own, and especially at the weekend it is a rare thing to be able to stand on a summit without the company of others, so today there is less of the romantic high-mountain solitude than ever before, although of course there are fewer visitors in the more remote and less accessible areas. However there have been increasing numbers, especially in recent times, of hikers who avoid the marked and well-trodden trails, and prefer to seek out unmarked routes and terrain without trails, and information on this can be found in a number of more recent mountain guidebooks. Nevertheless there has been a noticeable trend of far less multi-day mountain expeditions with intervening overnights in mountain huts, but significantly more single-day trips into the mountains, meaning an early morning start from the highest possible point accessible by car, and often involving a whole-day hike to the chosen peak and then down and returning home – all on the same day. This kind of 'express' mountaineering is enabled by their increasingly easy access, the modern pace of life with its continuous lack of time, and for many also an individualism, which seeks to avoid the overly collectivist atmosphere of spending the night in mountain huts.

The fame of Slovenia's mountains abroad

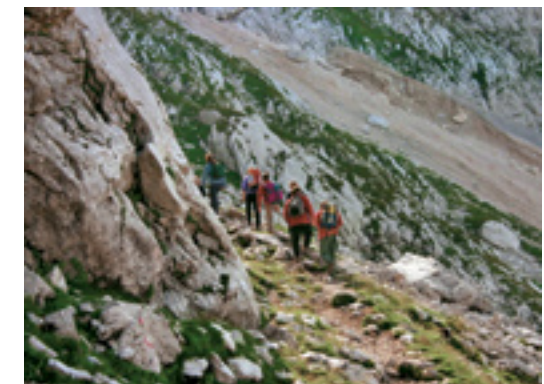
It is pleasing to note that those visiting the Slovenian mountains include increasing numbers of foreigners, those who come for the first time and those who have been returning here for a long time. The fame of the Slovenian mountains stretches far across Europe, and not just among the neighbouring Germans. An enchantment at the beauty of the Julian Alps was expressed by the famous British physicist Humphry Davy, who spent three holidays at the beginning of the 19th century in the village of Podkoren near Kranjska gora, and zealous work in popularising the Slovenian mountains abroad was performed by the Scotswoman Fanny S. Copeland, the Reader in English at Ljubljana University between the wars, and herself an enthusiastic mountain walker and Alpinist. Although in comparison with the Alpine ranges of Switzerland, Austria and elsewhere the Slovenian Alps seem miniature, they actually have everything offered



by the bigger ones, and in abundance, except that it is in a more condensed yet perhaps even more attractive form. It is easier to find ones way around them than in the bigger high-mountain expanses, so hikers do not need guides, and can roam around alone, although for the less experienced such guides are recommended.

Accidents in the mountains

An inevitable consequence of people visiting the mountains is the sadly quite frequent accidents along mountain trails, either because visitors set out improperly and inadequately equipped, or they overestimate their own psycho-physical abilities, while of course there is no shortage of random accidental occurrences where people fall or slip, and occasionally the rescuers find them, alive or dead, several hundred metres further down. A major contributor to such accidents is the sudden changes of weather conditions, which surprise many people along the trail. Mountain rescuing has a long, almost hundred-year, tradition in Slovenia, and is well organised. The highly trained mountain rescuers always respond unstintingly to calls for help, voluntarily and without payment. Where the weather conditions allow, rescuers are also offered helicopter transport by the Slovenian Police and Armed Forces, and this reduces the time needed for rescuing and transport to hospital, and saves many lives. The number of such accidents is still far from negligible, and sadly many are the product of recklessness. This also applies to numerous foreigners, who are not familiar with conditions in the mountains and who think the path from the valley to the peak will be easy, and then find themselves in difficulty.



Protection of the mountains

An additional problem caused by mass visits to the Slovenian mountains is ecological in nature, and there are certain areas accessible by mountain roads that are overloaded with traffic, with the accompanying noise, litter and other intolerable encroachments on nature. The vulnerability of the high mountains, especially its flora and fauna, and the threat of over-aggressive human encroachment on them was something recognised by a number of people right at the beginning of the previous century, when the first initiatives were launched for establishing Triglav National Park in the core area of the valley of the Triglav lakes, while today the protected area covers almost the entire Slovenian section of the Julian Alps.

The mountains are indeed a vital asset for the Slovenians, so human encroachment on them must be extremely limited and regulated by law, if their unchanged appearance and their wealth, not forgetting their reserves of clean drinking water, are to be preserved for future generations.



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**



Extreme kayaking on the Soča river
Photo: J. Skok