

# Sinfo

JULY 2010

BUSINESS • CULTURE • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • SPORTS

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Darijan Košir  
Director

**A STORY ENDS, A NEW DAY DAWNS**

**A**T A REFERENDUM IN JUNE THE CITIZENS OF Slovenia gave their support to the arbitration agreement signed by Slovenian prime minister Borut Pahor and the Croatian government, setting out a method for resolving the border issue between the two neighbouring countries. The referendum was close and the difference between supporters and opponents of the agreement was just 3% or a little over 20,000 votes, but nevertheless: the positive outcome of the vote means that the two countries, in the presence of a third party (the arbitration tribunal) can start to resolve a dispute which has soured relations between the two countries in the 19 years since independence and on account of which a not inconsiderable section of Slovenian political opinion has even been prepared to block Croatia's bid to join the EU. The dispute could, in short, have even become a 'security situation', to use Pahor's words, or so poisoned relations between the two nations that it would have been difficult for them ever to be normalised.

ON 6 JUNE 2010 SLOVENIA FREED ITSELF OF ONE MORE PIECE OF BAGGAGE FROM THE PAST



From this point of view the unpleasant story of the border issue between the two countries, unresolved for almost 20 years, has now ended. A new day has dawned and although it has not yet brought a solution to the problem, it has allowed the process of resolving it to begin. No one knows what the tribunal will decide. As with every compromise, neither side will be entirely satisfied with its decision. Neither does anyone know how any decision will be put into practice or what consequences it might have. But this does not change the fact that with the help of a third party we have decided to resolve the dispute, and that there is no way back.

This also means – and this is the essential thing – that on 6 June 2010 Slovenia freed itself of one more piece of baggage from the past and can now devote itself with all its energy to something that is essential for the present generations and those to come: the key tasks of addressing the current economic crisis and designing measures for a more modern and more competitive Slovenian economy and society in the future.



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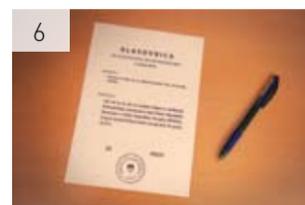
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Cover photo Japti



## SUCCESS OF THE REFERENDUM ON THE ARBITRATION AGREEMENT

Mateja Malnar Štembal  
Photo STA

ON 6 JUNE SLOVENIAN VOTERS CONFIRMED IN A REFERENDUM THE ARBITRATION agreement on the border with Croatia. According to unofficial provisional and partial results from the State Electoral Commission, 51.5% voted yes and 48.5% voted no. Turnout was 42.3%.

Following confirmation of the agreement, Prime Minister Borut Pahor stated that this was a great victory for Slovenia, which, by confirming the agreement, has chosen to establish a fair border with Croatia and to open a new chapter in bilateral relations. The confirmation of the agreement was also welcomed by President Danilo Türk, who stated that Slovenia has taken an important step forward in resolving the border dispute with Croatia and confirmed the commitment to arbitration as 'a good way – in our situation the best way – to resolve the dispute peacefully.' Opponents of the agreement expressed considerable disappointment at the outcome of the referendum. Janez Janša, the president of the opposition SDS, expressed the opinion that Slovenia has lost out and announced that the SDS will not vote in favour of ratification of Croatia's entry to the EU until the judgement of the arbitration tribunal is known.

**'Great victory for Slovenia, which, by confirming the agreement, has chosen to establish a fair border with Croatia and to open a new chapter in bilateral relations.'**

Following this confirmation in the referendum, the agreement already ratified by the National Assembly is now confirmed. The date of commencement of the work of the arbitration tribunal depends on when Croatia completes negotiations with the EU and, subsequently, signs an accession agreement, since this is the date on which the procedural time limits contained in the agreement start to run.

Important work awaits the country in the preparation of arguments and proofs, both with regard to the more detailed definition of the subject of dispute and with regard to the border itself.

## EU-Western Balkans ministerial conference

SLOVENIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SAMUEL Žbogar was among the participants at the EU-Western Balkans ministerial conference held in Sarajevo at the beginning of June. In his words, the conference was an indicator of a new and

increased interest in the Western Balkans on the part of the EU and a confirmation of the EU's commitment to the region. He considers it right that the EU should dictate the pace at which conditions in the Western Balkans are addressed,

because the region is part of Europe and the countries of the Western Balkans are future EU Member States.

Slovenia will continue to assist the countries of the Western Balkans in the process of EU integration on a country-

by-country basis. The minister is also of the opinion that official Ljubljana will be able to be more active now that it has resolved a long-standing problem with Croatia that has affected its position and image within the EU.

Mr Žbogar announced that Slovenia will offer help with Serbia's request for EU membership, the start of negotiations with Macedonia and in relations between Serbia and Kosovo. At the conference the minister also highlighted the start of the process of visa liberalisation for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania.



## Slovenia officially invited to join the OECD

PRIME MINISTER BORUT PAHOR VISITED Paris at the end of May to receive an official invitation for Slovenia to join the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. This completes Slovenia's incorporation into international political, economic and financial institutions. Slovenia applied to join the OECD in 1996.

The official invitation was followed at the beginning of June by the signing of an agreement between Slovenia and the OECD by OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and Slovenian Minister for Development and European Affairs Mitja Gaspari.

After signing the agreement, Pahor

stated that Slovenia will participate as an active member and will use the information and advice of this important club of countries. In the prime minister's words, by joining the OECD Slovenia has taken an important step towards integration into that part of the developed world to which it wishes to belong.

At the signing, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría underlined the fact that, from the OECD point of view, the process of Slovenia's accession to the organisation has gone extremely smoothly. He considers the accession of Slovenia to be an important step on the journey towards making the organisation a meeting point for dialogue on global issues.

Mitja Gaspari, who led the negotiations for accession to the OECD, underlined the fact that with accession a new process begins: the sustained, active work of Slovenia as a member of the OECD. Slovenia desires fruitful collaboration with OECD experts, continued Gaspari, so that with their help we can draw up effective strategies for post-crisis development, introduce the necessary structural changes and in this way formulate a modern economic and social model. This will be based on sustainable growth, knowledge, innovations and responsibility towards the environment and people.





# VOTERS CONFIRM ARBITRATION

Alenka Čebular Photo STA

**W**HILE THE RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM ARE STILL unofficial (with 42.28 percent voter turnout, 51.48 voted in favour and 48.52 percent against), and will only be confirmed on 29 June, for the moment we can say reliably that voters have confirmed the arbitration agreement. This result certainly indicates primarily the fact that citizens have had enough of scoring political points at the expense of unsettled relations with neighbouring Croatia, and they want the nearly 20-year border dispute between the two countries to be finally over.

“Slovenia has decided to open a new chapter in its relations with Croatia”, said Prime Minister Borut Pahor, commenting on the first unofficial results, and he assessed this as a great victory for Slovenia. “This is an agreement that is highly favourable for Slovenia, and acceptable for Croatia. Both nations will be able to live along a border that will be ultimately established by a court of arbitration.”

The decision by voters was also hailed by Slovenian President Dr. Danilo Türk, who pointed out that the support for arbitration confirmed in this way was “a good, and in our case the best, way for a peaceful settlement of the dispute.”

**‘The arbitration agreement means that Slovenia and Croatia are committed to seeking help in finding a final solution to the border issue through a third party, i.e. a court of arbitration set up for this purpose.’**

The arbitration agreement means that Slovenia and Croatia are committed to seeking help in finding a final solution to the border issue through a third party, i.e. a court of arbitration set up for this purpose. The agreement was signed by the two prime ministers on 4 November 2009 in Stockholm in the presence of the Swedish prime minister, who then held the European Union Presidency. In this way the two countries took a major step forward in resolving the almost 20-year-old border dispute, and at the time Slovenian Prime Minister Pahor commented on the signing with the words “What a fantastic day!”

## What the arbitration agreement provides

The arbitration agreement does not determine where the border runs, but just the procedure for formulating the final solution to the border issue. The agreement sets out the tasks of the court of arbitration, the procedure for appointing arbitrators, the rules by which the court will take decisions, and the deciding date for determining the border, i.e. 25 June 1991.

Why is that date so important? That is the date of Slovenia’s independence (and Croatia a day later), and places the entire situation back at the starting point. As explicitly provided in Article 5 of the Arbitration Agreement, the court of arbitration may not take account of any unilateral document or action of any party adopted or executed after that date. This serves to annul all actions or documents that are contentious for one or the other side, since the arbitrators will not take them into account in determining the border.

**In the arbitration agreement, Slovenia and Croatia explicitly set out the tasks of the court. The judges or arbitrators must therefore determine:**

- the course of the border between Slovenia and Croatia on land and sea,
- Slovenian access to the open sea,
- the regime for the use of relevant marine areas.

In this way the two countries also defined the core of the dispute, which the court of arbitration will resolve both under the principles and rules of international law and on the basis of “justice and the principle of good-neighbourly relations to achieve a fair and just decision, taking into account all relevant circumstances” (Article 4 of the Arbitration Agreement). The ruling of the court of arbitration will be binding on Slovenia and Croatia, and its enforcement will signify a final resolving of the dispute.



## Arbitration agreement continues the Drnovšek – Račan concept

Resolving the border issue between Slovenia and Croatia has in fact been dragging on ever since the two countries declared independence. An expert working group for the border issue was set up in 1992, and between 1993 and 1994 it identified 53 discrepancies on land greater than 50 metres, while the sea border was never actually determined.

The first serious attempt at an agreement on the border came in 2001 with the Drnovšek – Račan agreement. Former prime ministers Janez Drnovšek and Ivica Račan were the first politicians, ten years after Slovenia and Croatia gained independence, possessed of sufficient political wisdom and vision to be able to reach an appropriate compromise regarding the border issue. Yet the time had clearly not come for such decisions, with the agreement only being initialled by both sides, and no one signed it. A year later, Croatia officially pulled out of that agreement.

After a break in negotiations of several years, and numerous border incidents (particularly in the Bay of Piran and the area of the River Mura), on 10 June 2005 what was called the Brioni Declaration was issued, on Brioni, »



international court in The Hague. This attempt also failed, and the fact is that then for the first time the Slovenian Government (and more broadly, Slovenia's political establishment) faced the possibility of arbitration in resolving the border dispute.

### Commissioner Rehn's proposals laid the path to arbitration

What was termed the Rehn process was in fact triggered by a block on Croatian negotiations with the EU on the part of Slovenia in December 2008, owing to prejudicial border demarcations in Croatian documents submitted in its negotiations with the EU. Thus the Slovenian-Croatian border dispute suddenly involved the European Commission.

Barely a month after Slovenia indicated reservations over 11 chapters, the then Enlargement Commissioner Rehn presented to Slovenia, and then to Croatia, the first proposal for resolving the border issue and the impasse in Croatian negotiations with the EU. He proposed mediation, which both governments in fact supported in principle, although they

were not in accord over what the mandate of such mediation should be. In April 2009 Rehn set out a new proposal that already included a five-member arbitration court. Croatia accepted the proposal, while Slovenia suggested several amendments. The proposal thus amended was not

acceptable to the Croatians, so they rejected it and withdrew from the process of negotiation with European Commission mediation. The Commission itself then withdrew, with a statement from Commissioner Rehn to the effect that the two countries should find a solution on their own.

### Period of quiet diplomacy and informal talks

By the beginning of July 2009 it was apparent that one more attempt at negotiations on the border issue had broken down.

regarding the avoidance of incidents, and the purpose of this was not to settle the border issue between the two countries, but to ensure adherence to the state of affairs as at 25 June 1991, with the aim of avoiding incidents.

At this point, however, it gradually became clear that an agreement would not be reached without third-party mediation. So in 2007 Slovenia proposed to the Croatian side that they should settle the border issue at the Court of Conciliation and Arbitration of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but Croatia rejected this possibility.

This was followed by the Bled meeting (August 2007) between the then Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša and his Croatian counterpart Ivo Sanader, at which the two announced that they intended to take the dispute to the international court in The Hague. A year later the then Slovenian Government adopted its basis for negotiation and a proposed special agreement on the transfer of the Slovenian-Croatian border dispute to the

**'Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor: "This is a new page not just in relations between our two countries, but also in terms of a message that will encourage all countries in the region".'**

The arbitration referendum was followed by the whole of world. In addition to the aforementioned representatives of Croatia and the EU, satisfaction at the accepted arbitration agreement was conveyed to the Slovenian Prime Minister by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, OECD Secretary-General Gurria, French Prime Minister François Fillon, British Minister for Europe David Lidington, Italian Foreign Minister Frattini, Austrian Foreign Minister Spindelegger, German Foreign Minister Westerwelle, Andrei Nesterenko on behalf of the Russian Foreign Ministry and others.

But then there was an unexpected turnaround: in Croatia, Prime Minister Sanader stepped down. On the day that the new Croatian Prime Minister, Jadranka Kosor, took up her post, Slovenia invited Croatia back to the negotiating table. The Slovenian parliamentary parties also at that time supported continued negotiations. At the first bilateral meeting at the end of July 2009 the two sides agreed under what conditions Croatian negotiations with the EU could continue, and they committed themselves to resolving the border issue. This was followed by weeks of quiet diplomacy and formal and informal meetings between the two prime ministers, and on 4 November 2009 they signed the arbitration agreement in Stockholm.

### Positive international responses

One of the first to hail confirmation of the arbitration agreement was of course Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor: "This is a new page not just in relations between our two countries, but also in terms of a message that will

encourage all countries in the region". Croatian President Josipović also took the view that support for the arbitration agreement between Slovenia and Croatia in the Slovenian referendum was a victory for Slovenia, Croatia and Europe. The Croatian President's office also reported that the referendum result would clearly promote an "upward trend" in friendly relations between the two countries.

Satisfaction with the referendum result was also expressed by President of the European Commission Barroso: "I warmly welcome the support given by the Slovenians in the referendum for the arbitration agreement," and he also pointed out that resolving this bilateral issue was "an important signal for the region and for relations between Slovenia and Croatia."

Prime Minister Borut Pahor was also called by the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, who congratulated him on the referendum result. Van Rompuy takes the view that this is an exceptionally important decision, which will have positive consequences not just for Slovenia and Croatia, but for the entire region and for the European Union's enlargement process. He highlighted the important fact that Slovenian voters had opted for peace and stability in the region. The positive result of the referendum was also welcomed by the President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, and by the Spanish Presidency of the EU.

**The arbitration agreement does not determine where the border runs, but just the procedure for formulating the final solution to the border issue.**





# THE SLOVENIAN PAVILION AT EXPO 2010, SHANGHAI, CHINA

Polona Jerina Photo Japti

**M**ORE THAN 190 COUNTRIES AND AROUND 50 international organisations are taking part in this year's EXPO 2010 in Shanghai, the economic centre of the growing Chinese economy. Among them is Slovenia, with its own pavilion and the theme of the Open Book. The chosen theme and overall concept of the Slovenian presentation tie in with the selection of Ljubljana as this year's UNESCO World Book Capital.

## Better city, better life

The main theme of the Expo is 'Better City, Better Life', chosen to draw attention to the growing problem of life in an increasingly urbanised world and point to ways of improving quality of life in our cities. The aim of the Expo is to strengthen international relations, celebrate the diversity of cultures, promote development, increase awareness of the importance of the environment, show improvements in quality of life in cities and point to opportunities for the future.

## Over 70 million visitors

The Expo runs for six months, from 1 May to 31 October, with over 70 million visitors expected during this time. The Slovenian pavilion expects to see around 1.5 to 2 million visitors. The Expo site covers an area of six square kilometres between the Nanpu and Lupu bridges on the banks of the Huangpu River. The Slovenian pavilion is located in Zone C, near the pavilions of Argentina, Egypt, the USA, and South Africa.

## The Slovenian pavilion

The exterior of the Slovenian pavilion symbolises a stack of books on shelves, which at dusk turns into a modern city of lights. On entering the pavilion, visitors are greeted by a colourful interior. The changing colours give the pavilion a special character and attractiveness. By the entrance visitors can pick up a copy of an essay entitled *The Time of the End of Time* by Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek. The graphic at the entrance directs visitors towards



basic information about Slovenia and its position in Europe and the EU. The journey continues through seven 'books'. The floor design features images of open books, while the upright edges of the seven books are decorated with the Slovenian alphabet, to draw attention to our specific form of writing. Book-shaped 'birds' hang from the ceiling. These too are printed with the Slovenian alphabet and round off the overall concept of the open book. Visitors pass through seven books, some of which have display cabinets containing exhibits while others have video screens. All the books are additionally equipped with floor graphics showing images of the Slovenian countryside, brief text descriptions and a video presentation. Soft Slovenian music accompanies visitors on their way through the pavilion, conjuring up the atmosphere of the Slovenian countryside. Leaflets containing facts about Slovenia are available at the exit, along with a stamp with the logo of the Slovenian pavilion, for visitors to stamp their souvenir Expo passport.

**'The main theme of the Expo is 'Better City, Better Life', chosen to draw attention to the growing problem of life in an increasingly urbanised world and point to ways of improving quality of life in our cities'**

## The Time of the End of Time

The number eight is a lucky number in China and in fact the Slovenian pavilion features eight stations or books.

The introductory book differs from the other seven and is situated at the pavilion entrance. It symbolises the book by Slavoj Žižek. Visitors can take away their own copy of his essay *The Time of the*

*End of Time*, written especially for Slovenia's appearance at EXPO 2010.

Inside the pavilion, the first book contains a replica of the famous green table lamp designed by the architect Jože Plečnik, complemented by a replica of the Abecedarium, as an important document of

Slovenian history. The accompanying video presentation offers visitors a virtual stroll through Ljubljana, featuring Plečnik and his works and covering the history of the city up to the present day.

The second book is dedicated to the modern period, so the accompanying video is modern in concept, featuring numerous

modern Slovenian artists, designers, actors, etc. The exhibits here relate to the work of two prominent Slovenian designers, Lara Bohinc and Nika Zupanc: the 'Lolita' table lamp by Nika Zupanc and two pieces of gold jewellery by Lara Bohinc.

The third book presents Slovenian tourism via a DVD presentation featuring all the country's natural and other attractions and all the regions of Slovenia. It is complemented by a video presentation focusing on Planica and a number of other historic achievements by Slovenians.

The fourth book is dedicated to water and water transport and features a model of the Seaway Greenline 33 Hybrid motor yacht along with three components of this innovative craft. The accompanying video presentation focuses on water in Slovenia: rivers, lakes, the sea and watercraft.

The fifth book draws visitors' attention to Slovenia's unique Karst region. A display case contains two replicas of the proteus or 'human fish' in a cave environment, while a video reveals the beauties and specific features of the karst landscape.

The sixth book is dedicated to living and features a DVD presentation of Slovenian company Riko and their new 'democratic house' concept. The video presentation shows both modern

architectural solutions in the Slovenian environment and the historical characteristics of the Slovenian countryside and regions.

The seventh and last book is dedicated to the Slovenian space pioneer Herman Potočnik Noordung and features four works: The Problem of Space Travel (Noordung), Culturalisation of the Universe (Turšič), Post-Gravitational Art (Živadinov, Zupančič) and Zero Gravity. The video presentation offers information about Herman Potočnik Noordung and the age he lived in and looks at his ideas for space stations.

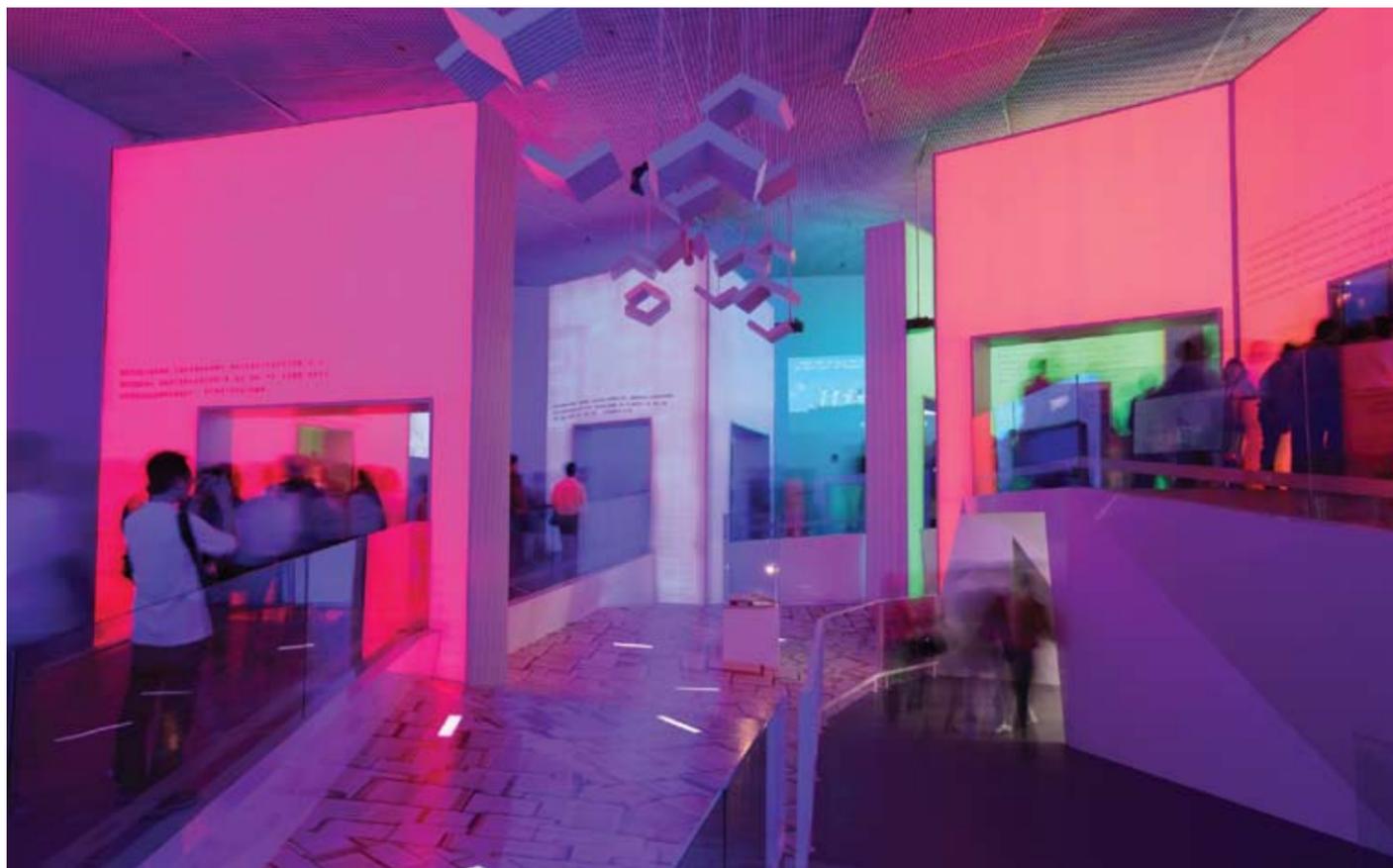
The journey through the pavilion is almost over. All that remains is Volume XV of the beautiful historical collection Iconotheca Valvasoriana, containing the famous print Adam and Eve.

Chinese-speaking pavilion staff are on hand to provide visitors with additional information about Slovenia or the pavilion.

**'The exterior of the Slovenian pavilion symbolises a stack of books on shelves, which at dusk turns into a modern city of lights. On entering the pavilion, visitors are greeted by a colourful interior. The changing colours give the pavilion a special character and attractiveness.'**

**Accompanying events**

Accompanying events add variety to a visit to EXPO 2010. The visit by a group of kurents from Slovenia (members of the Kurent Society in Ptuj) was proof of how features specific to individual countries can attract numerous visitors and draw in passers-by.



Slavoj Žižek's lecture to a packed hall demonstrated that accompanying events are an excellent way of promoting our country and are positively received by visitors.

News, photographs, stories from the pavilion, a description of the pavilion concept, events and more are available on the [www.expo2010.si](http://www.expo2010.si) website, where you can also take a virtual stroll through the Slovenian pavilion and experience Shanghai from home!

The Slovenian pavilion received over 320,000 visitors in the first month. As the Expo continues, we will host many more performances of different kinds and receive several official delegations. On Slovenia's EXPO 2010 Pavilion Day, the Slovenian pavilion will be visited by Slovenian prime minister Borut Pahor.

**Quotations from visitors:**

'How come so many people speak Slovenian if you have only been independent since 1991?'

'Can the human fish turn into a human being?'

**Matej Andraž Vogrinčič:** 'The thing I liked best was the food and the way that the Chinese workers didn't greet me with a hello but by asking me if I had eaten. And if I said no, they would immediately bring me – I have no idea from where – a tasty meal: three vegetable dishes, a piece of meat or fish, and egg boiled in soy sauce and tea, and of course rice.'

**Saša Lavrič, Slovenia's Commissioner General for EXPO 2010:** 'I am delighted that our pavilion has been so well received. We are currently among the best received pavilions at EXPO 2010, which I consider to be an extraordinary success and a confirmation that Slovenia's decision to take part in EXPO 2010 was the right one. I hope that visitor numbers and the positive reception of the Slovenian pavilion will remain at this level right through to the end of EXPO 2010.'

"Theory is sacred, we need it more than ever."

# SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

One of the most famous world thinkers

Slavoj Žižek Photo STA

VISITORS ARE LEAVING THE Slovenian pavilion at EXPO 2010 in Shanghai with an original souvenir: a small red book entitled *Living in the End of Times*, written by one of the most famous world thinkers, Slavoj Žižek. On May 24, Žižek gave a lecture at Shanghai University. For the purpose of this article, the author compiled parts of his interview with Johathan Derbyshire that was originally published on [www.newstatesman.com](http://www.newstatesman.com) in October 2009.

**What relationship, if any, do you think your work has to the mainstream, normative, liberal political philosophy done in English and American universities?**

I noticed something – maybe I'm just generalizing this; I don't know to what extent this is a rule – I noticed how many of the people who consider themselves to be more radical than the liberal standard, the left-liberal standard, most of them do not work in political philosophy properly but, as it were, hide themselves as literary critics or philosophers. It's as if it's an excess which requires you to change genre. Another tendency of these "radicals" is moralization connected with legalization. It's a certain pose in which they want to deliver the message that they are really more radical. But this excess of radicality only concretely articulates itself in some kind of a general moralistic outrage – "what are we doing to immigrants?!" I think they often tend to be a little bit hypocritical. I always read the liberal anti-communists, liberal leftists – they're interesting, one can learn from them. I read a wonderful essay by Orwell from 1938. There he has a wonderful analysis of

the typical leftist liberal. He says they ask for change, but they do it in a hypocritical way: they ask for change but it's almost as if to make sure that no real change will happen.

**Don't you suspect a little bit that there's something of this in today's typical radical liberal – in today's anti-immigrant campaign for instance?**

The standard idea is to say, like my friend Alain Badiou in France, "those who are here are from here." That is to say, no check for roots, open to all of them. Legalize everything. The problem is that they know very well that this radical opening will never happen. So it's very easy to have a radical position which costs you nothing

“SO IT'S VERY EASY TO HAVE A RADICAL POSITION WHICH COSTS YOU NOTHING AND FOR THE PRICE OF NOTHING IT GIVES YOU SOME KIND OF MORAL SUPERIORITY.”

and for the price of nothing it gives you some kind of moral superiority. It also enables them to avoid the truly difficult questions. For example, my conflict with my radical leftist friends is when they want total openness and so on. I say to them, are you aware that anti-immigrant is mostly a spontaneous, lower working-class attitude? They talk as if some big imperialist power centre decides to be against immigrants. No! If anything, capital is more liberal about immigrants. So, I think this is not a good thing – I think of all these theorists, like Giddens and Held, who are left-wing, but left within the establishment ...

**Would you say that thinkers of that sort, establishment leftists if you like, are insufficiently materialist?**

Exactly, exactly. Apart from their very general anti-capitalist thunder – this is my biggest reproach to them. Despite the financial crisis, we do not have a serious leftist attempt to deal with what, in old Marxist terms, we called the critique of political economy. It's obvious to me that Marx has to be repeated, but repeated not as he was. Isn't it clear today that with all the problems of natural resources, intellectual property and so on, that the whole notion of exploitation, if it has any meaning at all, should be radically redefined? I don't see enough work of this sort. I think it's

either some kind of an abstract, moralistic politics where you focus on groups which are obviously under-privileged – other races, gays and so on – and then you can explode in all your moralistic rage. Or, another thing that I really hate is a leftist who tries to be a communist – did you notice how the standard academic left likes nothing more

than an attempted revolution going on, but far away from where you are? Today it's Venezuela, which is why I like to be critical from time to time of Chavez. It's a very comfortable position: you can do all the dirty work, you struggle for your career, compromises in your country in the West, but your heart is somewhere far away but it in no way affects what you are doing. This is another thing which I think is a fake.

So, if anything was proven by this financial crisis, it is that apart from left-radical Keynesians like Paul Krugman, with whom I'm sympathetic, I don't see any serious counter-proposal by the left.

**So we have lost the political economy in Marx?**

There are some marginal good signs – Moishe Postone is one of the few people who really asks the question, what to do with Marx's political economy today? Then there are of course some economists and so on – David Harvey, for example, but the question is not properly addressed and that's very sad. If you read the predominant cultural left, you'd have thought that Marx's *Capital* is some kind of treatise on commodity fetishism and other cultural phenomena. Sorry, but Marx meant it as a critical theory of society, giving a diagnosis and so on. I think things today call for analysis. Let me

give me your analysis – don't be afraid, I will be short:

I claim that we have two opponents: pro-capitalist liberals and old Marxists, as far as they still exist. They claim that it's the same capitalism going on. This is obviously not true – in China and other places, something new is emerging. Then you have all these, I call them, ironically, "post-theorists" – like Giddens, for example. I claim that their work is, unfortunately, a journalistic patchwork. Many leftists say: we know what is wrong – capitalism, imperialism. We just don't know how to mobilise people; the problem is political. But I think we don't know what's going on.

This is typical theoretical arrogance. We don't know what is going on. This is the point of my book: terrific new things are emerging. What's going on in China today is something very ominous. Here I disagree with liberals who say, wait for another ten years and we'll have another Tiananmen in China. I doubt it. Something genuinely new is emerging today in the guise of what are ridiculously called "Asian values", authoritarian capitalism. A capitalism which, we can see now, is doing better in the crisis than the West. A capitalism that is more dynamic and efficient than our Western, liberal capitalism, but precisely as such functions perfectly with an authoritarian state. My pessimism is



that this is the future. This is what I think we should watch. This is why I wrote that piece about Berlusconi, which many people thought was crazy – Berlusconi's still democratically elected, after all. But I see signs of this new authoritarianism. There's a kind of total devaluation of politics. Of course, this new post-democratic capitalism will take different forms. There will be Asian values, more traditionally authoritarian; in Russia, it's emerging; in Italy, it's emerging in its own way. This is the fear. We who pretend in some way to be more radical, where we should make a pact with honest liberals is precisely along this axis: we should all be aware of what was precious in the liberal democratic legacy. What, for example, Hannah Arendt noticed in the US during the Vietnam War. What fascinated her was the level of public debate – people in town meetings debating. This is disappearing.

**Arendt thought political participation was an intrinsic good, didn't she?**

The problem I have with her is that she dismissed the economy as the space of truth, so to speak. For her, the economy was just utilitarian stuff. The authentic big politics doesn't happen there for her. But we need what Marx called a political economy. You know the basic Marxist insight that politics is not just politics – politics is in the economy. We should rehabilitate this. Isn't this becoming clear? And here's somewhere else where I don't agree with many leftists: you know this Toni Negri mantra – "Empire", nation states no longer matter and so on. It's crazy. If there is a lesson from so-called postmodern, post-68 capitalism, it's that the regulatory role of the state is getting stronger. So much for this stupid story, the state disappearing, etc. Not true! More and more if you want to have a company today, you have to be so deeply entwined with the state apparatus.

This is was the point of my big fight with Simon Critchley. I think it's too easy to play this moralistic game – state power is corrupted, so let's withdraw into this role of ethical critic of power. Here, I'm an old Hegelian. I hate the position of "beautiful soul", which is: "I remain outside, in a safe place; I don't want to dirty my hands." In



“ THEY ASK FOR CHANGE BUT IT'S ALMOST AS IF TO MAKE SURE THAT NO REAL CHANGE WILL HAPPEN. ”

this ironic sense, I am a Leninist. Lenin wasn't afraid to dirty his hands. That's what I miss in today's left. When you get power, if you can, grab it, even if it is a desperate situation. Do whatever is possible. This is why I supported – ok, my support doesn't mean anything, but as a public gesture – Obama. I think the battle that he is fighting now for healthcare is extremely important, because it concerns the very core of the ruling ideology. The real core of the anti-Obama campaign is freedom of choice. And the lesson,

if he wins, is how freedom of choice is something beautiful, but works only against a very thick background of regulations, ethical presuppositions, economic conditions and so on. This is the problem. As I like to emphasise here in the States, there are freedoms of choice which I am glad to renounce. I like to do a parallel between healthcare and water and electricity. Yes, you can say I don't have a choice in choosing my water provider. It's imposed by where I live. But, my god, I gladly renounce this choice. I prefer to

have some basic choices made by society – water, electricity and some elementary healthcare. This precisely opens up the choice, opens up the freedom for other choices. Another important thing, and here I agree with that great British sceptic, John Gray (I don't agree with his conclusions), who says today we are forced to live "as if" we are free. We are all the time bombarded with choices – and he's not making the old, boring Marxist point that these are inessential choices. No, the point is rather that you are obliged to choose without even having the background qualification to make the choice.

My position isn't that we should sit down and wait for some big revolution to come. We have to engage wherever we can.

If Obama wins his battle over healthcare, if some kind of a blow will be made against this freedom of choice ideology, it will be a great victory worth having fought for.

**Those short-term gains shouldn't be underestimated?**

No. That was Critchley's misunderstanding of me: as if I wanted to sit down and dream of a big revolution. All I'm saying is that one should distinguish between short-term battles worth fighting and short-term battles where your protest is of the kind that those in power like. There was a little bit of that in the marches against the Iraq war. Everyone was satisfied. Those who organised the protests knew they wouldn't change anything. Blair liked the protests – he or Bush said, you see, this is what we want in Iraq: a society in which people will be able to protest like we do. So, one should be very careful when doing something which appears as a protest measure. How does it really function? And it's not difficult. If you look closely, you always know what you are doing.

**NS: You're talking about the ideological function of protest.**

SZ: More than ever, the battle to be won is ideological. I don't mean in any obscure, pseudo-Marxist sense – it's a very spontaneous ideology. But isn't it interesting that the most influential public intellectual in political matters is Noam Chomsky, who knows practically nothing about political theory. I met a guy who recently had lunch with Chomsky and he told me that Chomsky said something very sad: Chomsky said that today we don't need theory. Power is cynical and all we need to do is tell people, empirically, what is going on. Here, I violently disagree. I don't think you just have to tell the truth in this factual sense. Truth in the sense of facts – facts are facts and they are precious, but they can work this way or that. A nice example here: there is a new generation of Israeli historians who are much more open about Jewish violence against Arabs before independence. And people say, "my god, they are telling the truth!" But this truth was easily appropriated by Zionists, who say, "you see, that's how you fight wars – we had to do it." If you don't change

the ideological background, facts alone don't do the job.

**That's an argument for theory in the critical sense then?**

Yes, sorry: I'm an old fashioned continental European! Theory is sacred, we need it more than ever.

**I want to ask you finally about what you follow in what Alain Badiou calls the "Communist Hypothesis". You say that the great barrier to the realization of that hypothesis is the problem of agency. Do you see a new revolutionary agent actor on the horizon?**

No, no. But let me clearly define to you the limits of my communism. My problem with Badiou is that he totally dismisses the economy as a site of political struggle. The only real question for me is very simple: was Fukuyama right or not? That is to say, do we have today antagonisms which, in the long term, can be resolved or at least coped with within the liberal-democratic, capitalist frame. This is the question. The way I see it, unfortunately, is that all the problems that we have – ecological catastrophe, problems of intellectual property and so on – can be solved within the liberal-capitalist framework. This era is slowly coming to an end. The problem for me is that if we don't want to end up in some kind of neo-authoritarian society in which we'll have all our private freedoms (you can have sex with animals and so on) but in which the social space will be depoliticized and much more authoritarian – here we should make a pact with liberals. Only a more fundamental questioning of our society can save us. It's clear that we are approaching some kind of apocalyptic zero-point. So, no, I don't see any immediate agent. I see tendencies of proletarianization. By proletarianization I mean people being reduced almost to a kind of Cartesian zero-level – you are a free agent but deprived of substance. Then it's a question of coalitions, how to do it. My unconditional insight is that we will be pushed into a situation where we will have to make a choice: either we do something or we are slowly approaching a society I'm not sure I'd like to live in. ●



## LIMITED TRADE WITH ASIA, WITH IMPORTS MUCH GREATER THAN EXPORTS

No non-European countries among the top 20 destinations for Slovenian exports last year, with the exception of the USA (in 16th place). Among the top 20 countries from which Slovenia imported most last year, the USA is in 12th place and China is in 13th.

Vesna Bertonec Popit, Delo Photo STA

ACCORDING TO FIGURES FROM BUSINESS intelligence website GVIN, the biggest companies in Slovenia last year in terms of total revenue were Ljubljana-based oil supplier Petrol, the country's largest retailer Mercator and car manufacturer Revoz of Novo Mesto, a very successful subsidiary of French carmaker Renault. The companies that posted the highest net profits last year were the Novo Mesto pharmaceuticals company Krka, Knauf Insulation of Škofja Loka and Ljubljana-based power provider Holding Slovenske Elektrarne (HSE). The companies with the largest numbers of employees were Poslovni sistem Mercator and national railway operator Slovenske Železnice, while the largest added value per employee was recorded by HSE.

Revoz was Slovenia's biggest exporter last year, as it has been for the last several years, ahead of Velenje-based domestic appliances group Gorenje, currently preparing for a capital increase, and Krka. These three companies also recorded the highest exports to the European Union last year. The economic crisis, however, had serious consequences for the Slovenian economy last year.

As a result, the majority of those companies classified among the biggest and most successful companies in 2009 recorded both lower revenue and lower net profit, while a fifth of the top 300 companies in terms of revenue operated with a loss, which was most frequently a consequence of the decline in revenue. Last year companies devoted considerable attention to managing costs. Most of them also cut back on workforce. Only a handful of companies took on new employees last year. Nevertheless,

Slovenia's unemployment rate is among the lowest in the European Union. Unemployment has increased significantly, particularly in some of the new EU Member States, which have contributed greatly to the faster economic growth of the European Union since accession. The rise in unemployment is partly due to the fact that the global economic and financial crisis has badly affected all these countries.

In the first quarter of this year, however, many Slovenian companies have operated much more successfully and returned a profit, which raises the hope that the 2010 financial year will end more successfully than last year, despite the fact that companies are being very cautious with regards to taking on new employees and also with regard to investment, since it is now a lot more difficult to obtain bank loans. Quite a number of companies have postponed planned investments until the climate is more favourable, while many companies have decided to fund investments exclusively from their own resources. It is on the other hand true that only very few Slovenian companies can currently afford this, since most of the business enterprise sector is significantly indebted

**'Over 40% of Slovenian exports to China are electrical appliances and equipment and appliances for the recording or reproduction of images or sound.'**

and is attempting to convert short-term loans into long-term loans so that their repayment falls due in potentially more favourable times. In view of the forecasts that economic growth in Slovenia and Europe will be rather modest in the coming years, this could, however, be a case of reckoning without one's host.

The crisis has confirmed that it is not good for the economy to be too oriented to just one market, even if, like the EU market, this is large and consists of several countries. Precisely because of

this orientation and its high export dependence, Slovenia has felt the crisis much more than it would have done had it distributed, in particular, its exports in a regionally more even manner. This has also been pointed out by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, which has found that the effects of the crisis have been felt less by the Arab nations and, in particular, in Asia. In spite of the crisis, Slovenia has not increased its efforts to seek new markets and new customers for its goods, with the result that last year it recorded 70% of its exports and almost 80% of its imports in the European Union. These countries have always accounted for the largest share of Slovenia's foreign trade, even when it was part of the former Yugoslavia. Among the top 20 countries to which Slovenia exported most last year, with the exception of the USA (in 16th place) there are no non-European countries. Among the top 20 countries from which Slovenia imported most last year, the USA is in 12th place and China is in 13th. Slovenia accounts for just over 2% of imports to these two countries last year, which is a modest share, particularly if we take into account the fact that Slovenian companies have a range of commercial and business units in Asian countries.

According to figures from the Slovenian embassy in China, there are, for example, around 30 of these in China, while in past years the interest of Slovenian companies in other Asian countries, particularly India, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam, has increased.

As well as easy access to other Asian markets, Slovenian companies in these countries have taken advantage above all of the cheaper workforce and also some lower taxes than in Europe, notably environmental taxes. Nevertheless, trade with all Asian countries is extremely unbalanced, with Slovenian exports significantly smaller than imports. Asia is therefore a major supplier for the Slovenian economy but a fairly poor customer. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia has warned that the Chinese economy, which is vying for the position of number one global exporter, can compete with the Slovenian economy in all sectors. This position is not entirely shared by companies, which believe that they can be competitive even in China with very technically demanding products. Over 40% of Slovenian exports to China are electrical appliances and equipment and appliances for the recording or reproduction of images or sound. On the other hand, Europe is very afraid of Chinese competition. With the relocation of manufacturing plants to Asia, particularly to China, it has completely abandoned some activities and also neglected the corresponding know-how and capacities.

Last year the Slovenian economy generated slightly over €200 million of exports in Asian countries while meeting almost €600



Dimitrij Piciga  
Director of the Slovenian  
Tourist Organisation



The Port of Koper

million of its import needs in these markets. The highest figures were generated by Slovenia's trade with China. According to figures from Slovenia's national statistics office, exports to China were worth slightly over €70 million in 2008 and €68 million in the first 11 months of last year. At the same time, the value of Slovenian imports from China was €445 million the year before last and €324 million in the first 11 months of last year. In Japan, Slovenia recorded €16 million of exports and €59 million of imports last year. Total exports to other Asian countries amounted to €207 million and total imports were €578 million. Slovenian exports to South

**'Last year the Slovenian economy generated slightly over €200 million of exports in Asian countries while meeting almost €600 million of its import needs in these markets.'**

Korea were worth €18 million, while South Korean imports to Slovenia amounted to €138 million. A better balance is evident in Slovenian trade with India, Vietnam and, to a lesser extent, Indonesia. In 2008 Slovenia exported €17 million worth of goods to India, while imports from India were worth twice as much. Exports to Vietnam worth €3 million were balanced by €3.7 million worth of imports. Exports to Indonesia in 2008 amounted to €2.5 million, while imports were worth €26 million.

Trade does not, of course, account for the whole of the exchange between Slovenia and China, which is currently hosting the Expo 2010 international exhibition (from May to the end of October). Slovenia, one of the countries participating at the Expo, was visited last year by a delegation from the China Investment Promotion Agency (CIPA). China has among other things expressed interest in investing in the Port of Koper, Maribor Airport, and the telecommunications and automotive industries. As part of the agreement concluded by the tourist boards of Slovenia and Croatia on cooperation in more distant markets, a joint presence in the Chinese and Indian markets is also expected. According to Slovenian Tourist Board director Dimitrij Piciga, overseas visitors currently account for between 7% and 8% of tourists. This share is expected to increase to 15% by 2020. Croatia and Slovenia have devoted €47,000 of European funds to a joint presence in Beijing and Shanghai. The common thread of the presentation is a group of destinations: Dubrovnik – Zagreb – Ljubljana – Bled. Slovenia and Croatia held a business tourism fair in Beijing and Shanghai in May, and in view of the fact that the number of Chinese tourists is expected to increase from the current 60 million per year to 100 million per year by 2020 (according to figures from the Chinese Tourism Academy), the two countries expect their tourism products to be attractive enough for those Chinese tourists who choose to visit Europe.



# DR SVJETLAN BERKOVIĆ

## New chapter in Croatian-Slovenian relations

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE EDITORS OF SINFO MAGAZINE FOR the opportunity to share some thoughts with you about the positive outcome of the Slovenian national referendum on ratification of the Arbitration Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

The “yes” vote in Sunday’s referendum was a very important event, not only for Slovenia and Croatia, but also for the European Union and the international community. This outcome is in the best interests of our two countries as good neighbours and partners in the region and Europe as a whole.

The signing of the Arbitration Agreement on 4 November 2009 signalled a new chapter in Croatian-Slovenian relations. It was a sign of political courage and showed the two countries’ determination to resolve the open border issue, which has remained unsettled for so long. Furthermore, it brought new hope to our neighbours in South Eastern Europe.

The mutual trust between our two governments was the key to achieving a breakthrough in the bilateral border dispute, and the positive experience from this is now being passed on to the entire region in a bid to promote regional stability.

In this regard, I would like to emphasise that Croatia and Slovenia are two neighbouring countries linked by common cultural, historical, political and economic ties, as well as common interests to ensure stability, security and welfare in the region of Central and South Eastern Europe. It has become a cliché to say that Croatians and Slovenians have so many commonalities, but they are worth remembering, as they represent a strong foundation for future cooperation between Croatia and Slovenia. Croatians and Slovenians have never had a serious conflict, which is extremely rare in Europe. On the contrary, the history of Croatian-Slovenian relations is a history of solidarity and deep mutual understanding.

Slovenia and Croatia share the same values of democracy, respect

for human rights and the rule of law. Both countries are members of the NATO Alliance and attach great importance to their future cooperation within the framework of the European Union. Croatia and Slovenia traditionally enjoy very close cross-border cooperation, including a dynamic economic partnership that supports thousands of jobs in each country. In 2008, total trade between the two countries exceeded \$2.8 billion.

The Croatian coast attracts one million Slovenian tourists every summer, and beautiful Slovenian mountains attract tens of thousands of Croatian tourists every winter. These intensive people-to-people contacts, as well as our dynamic bilateral cooperation in the fields of education and culture, constitute a strong foundation for future relations between Croatia and Slovenia.

It is encouraging that the Croatian and Slovenian business communities have joined forces and agreed to develop their cooperation further. This has taken place through Croatian-Slovenian

business forums that include a number of leading Slovenian and Croatian companies, as well as through the renewal of the work of the Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation. It is my sincere hope that we will witness an additional boost in both commerce and investment in the years to come.

It is also important to say that, thanks to the finalisation of the Arbitration Agreement ratification process, all other remaining bilateral open issues between our two countries can now also be resolved in a peaceful atmosphere, in the spirit of tolerance and mutual interest.

In this sense, I would like to conclude my letter with the following message to the readers of Sinfo magazine: with the ratification of the Arbitration Agreement, the winners are both of our countries, and there are no losers. I consider it

a major historic achievement that will have an amazing positive impact on our future relations and cooperation.

**Dr Svjetlan Berković - Ambassador of Croatia to Slovenia**



# ROBERT KRMEJLJ

## The two countries will be able to make up for numerous cooperation opportunities

I NA LEGISLATIVE REFERENDUM ON 6 JUNE, CITIZENS OF SLOVENIA gave final approval to an arbitration agreement on the unresolved border issue between Slovenia and Croatia. This signalled their agreement that the issue, which for many years has hampered relations between the two countries, should be resolved by a third party, that is, an international court of arbitration, which will make a decision in line with the agreed guideline, set out in an agreement, regarding the method of finding a just solution to the border issue. Resolving the border question must on the one hand take account of historical circumstances, while at the same time it must be – in line with good neighbourly relations and in the European spirit – focused on the future. Only such a solution will enable the two neighbouring and friendly countries to avoid feeling deprived or adversely affected following the arbitration ruling. It is important for Slovenia that the arbitration tribunal decides in favour of it being able to maintain direct contact between its territorial waters and international waters, in accordance with the situation on 25 June 1991, when Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence.

While both countries can on the one hand now prepare for the arbitration process, at the same time they will be able to devote themselves more easily to the further successful resolving of other open questions in a more positive atmosphere. We have an excellent opportunity to use this period to resolve the remaining issues that have been debated by a mixed commission formed especially under an agreement between the Slovenian and Croatian prime ministers.

Thanks to the agreement with Slovenia, which has now finally been confirmed in both countries following the successful referendum in Slovenia, Croatia has strengthened its political position as a country successfully negotiating for EU membership. Together we have managed to achieve a compromise solution in line with good neighbourly relations and in mutual understanding and respect. Such a manner of resolving open questions is also the best signpost and model for resolving the problems facing other countries in the region, which have each at their own pace embarked on the path of European integration. A successful outcome to the referendum on the arbitration agreement is also good news for the Western Balkans region and for Europe. The countries in the region that are capable of resolving mutual difficulties through compromise, mutual understanding and respect, will be additionally qualified as future Member States of the EU. Properly settled relations with neighbours are an important part of the process of approximation and integration into the EU.

The positive trend that has been established between Slovenia and Croatia on the conclusion of the agreement to use arbitration between the two countries, is visibly spreading into the region of South East Europe. This trend has eased relations and expanded the room for countries to forge agreements. All this represents positive processes that

benefit business interests in Slovenia in terms of enhancing economic cooperation. This is even more significant in the period of world recession, when strengthened economic cooperation in the region is all the more important for everyone.

Freed from the burden of years of quarrelling over the border, with the arbitration agreement in place, Slovenia and Croatia can focus to a greater extent on numerous projects of bilateral, regional and European cooperation.

The two countries will be able to make up for numerous cooperation opportunities that were lost in the past. The eased relations between the two countries will undoubtedly facilitate enhancement of economic cooperation. We expect that in the new circumstances, companies from both countries will boldly exploit the opportunities for strategic links and joint appearances in the markets of third countries.

We may also expect the image of one and the other country to continuously improve in the public eye of its neighbour. We may hope now for a predominantly positive story of the cooperation between the two countries and of our interdependence.

In this discussion we should not forget the Slovenian ethnic community in Croatia, which in view of the unresolved problems between the two countries, particularly the unresolved border issue, has not always felt itself in the best situation. Inhabitants of both sides of the border have also continuously voiced the expectation that relations between the two countries would be properly settled, which would contribute positively to improving living conditions along the border. A telling example of this is the recent agreement on easier transits of goods traffic at the Brezovica crossing point linking the company Kolpa in Metlika with its plant in Radatovići on the Croatian side.

With the successful resolving of the border problem and through cooperation projects, the two countries will further strengthen their international standing and weight in the region, as well as more broadly across Europe. Slovenia and Croatia therefore have a chance, both individually and collectively, to make a contribution to enhancing the processes of cooperation in the region. One such joint project, which has already started, is the “Brdo Process”. Thanks to the arbitration agreement, Slovenia and Croatia have also jointly promoted the process of cooperation among countries in the region on a new footing, where there is no talk of regional leadership, but rather of specific projects of cooperation on the basis of equality. This concept of cooperation will enable all countries involved in the cooperation process in the not-too-distant future, when all countries of the region become EU Member States, to act together, such as for instance the Scandinavian countries or the countries of the Višegrad Group.

**Robert Krmelj - Chargé d'Affaires a.i.  
Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia to the Republic of Croatia**



# LJUBLJANA AS PART OF THE ART NOUVEAU & ECOLOGY PROJECT

Jože Osterman Photo Miran Kambič

LJUBLJANA, THE CAPITAL OF Slovenia, has been a member of the Réseau Art Nouveau Network since its founding in 1999. The other members of the network are Brussels in Belgium, Ålesund in Norway, Aveiro in Portugal, Barcelona and Terrassa in Spain, Bad Neuheim in Germany, Helsinki in Finland, Nancy in France, the whole of the Lombardy region in Italy, Riga in Latvia, Glasgow in Scotland, La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland and Havana in Cuba. Within Art Nouveau, the Secession was a movement of young artists and architects

who broke away, in the last decade of the 19th century, from traditional artistic styles and began to introduce elements that reconciled different aspects of artistic creation and gave it new life, while at the same time posing the problem of its internal discipline. The German and Austrian branches of this movement were particularly important: the Munich Secession, the Berlin Secession and the Vienna Secession. The first to break away from the strict corporation of academic artists were the Munich painters who, in 1892, decided to modernise traditional

styles and introduce new modes of expression. Following their model, new artistic styles were soon proposed by groups from Vienna (1897) and Berlin (1899). The Vienna group were by far the most talented artists and soon became the main bearers of the new ideas, with the result that today the word Secession is usually used above all to denote the Vienna group. Naturally, this fact had a powerful influence on Slovenian artistic creativity, since at that time Vienna was also the capital of the Slovenian provinces and the centre of university education for



their inhabitants. Ljubljana is certainly one of the cities on which the Secession left the biggest mark, and it is therefore understandable that it should have been among the founding members of the Réseau Art Nouveau Network.

In mid-May a new project entitled Art Nouveau & Ecology was launched in Brussels, another important Art

Nouveau city. The aim of the project is to highlight the relationship between Art Nouveau heritage and nature. One of the main principles of Art Nouveau was openness towards nature or the achievement of greater harmony with it, which gives Art Nouveau

a topical relevance today. The eminent late-19th-century art critic John Ruskin once said that 'Man will not move forward in the invention of beauty without imitating natural forms.' These words were quoted at the Brussels launch of the project, which has a budget of €4 million. The project organisers also listed its fundamental goals: the conservation and revitalisation of Art Nouveau

heritage, the connection of Art Nouveau cities on the basis of new achievements, and the development of cultural tourism. Ljubljana is taking part in the project with great ambitions, since its desire to significantly improve the presentation of its artistic heritage, of which its Secession heritage is undoubtedly an extremely important part, is a notable element of its development plans. It is represented in the project by the national Urban Planning Institute, which also plays an important role in the planning of the development of the city in general.

Just under half the funds for the project are provided by the European Union. The next phase will be calls for applications for individual points of the project, an area in which Slovenia already has good experience. It is an interesting and significant fact, and one that was presented at the project launch in Brussels, that culture is the field that, in Slovenia, has been most successful in obtaining money from the various European funds.

## STARTING WITH IONESCO'S DEPARTING KING

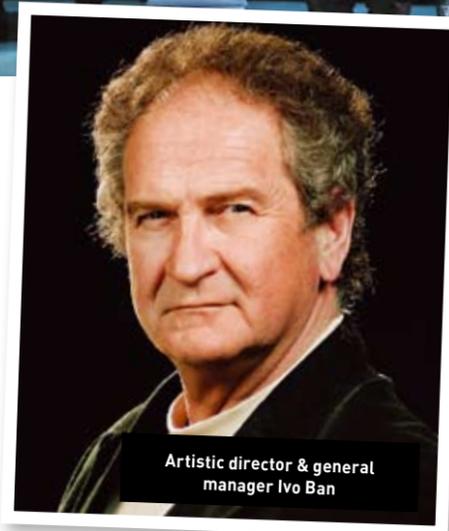
Sanja Prelević Photo archive

IN THE COMING 2010/2011 SEASON, the Drama Slovenian National Theatre in Ljubljana will be laying on an enticing and challenging programme – a full six productions that will be performed for the first time on the Slovenian stage, while at the same time preparations are in hand for two first showings of new Slovenian works. The director of the Drama theatre, Ivo Ban, is promising theatre-lovers a superlative artistic experience and exciting theatrical exploration.

Ljubljana's Drama theatre will start off the new season on its main stage with a premiere in September of Exit the King by Eugene Ionesco, which is being staged in a major international co-production between France, Slovenia,



**'DIRECTOR OF THE DRAMA THEATRE, IVO BAN, IS PROMISING THEATRE-LOVERS A SUPERLATIVE ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE AND EXCITING THEATRICAL EXPLORATION.'**



Luxembourg, Macedonia and Romania, under the direction of the Romanian artist Silvio Purcarete. Although the play *Exit the King* supposedly stems from Ionesco's fear of death, it is in fact a play about life – but about life with an awareness of the end, in other words death. *Exit the King* will be performed in French, with Slovenian overtitles as part of the Ljubljana international festival Ex Ponto 2010.

This will be followed by a first showing of the Slovenian text *Totenbirt* by Ivo Prijatelj, directed by Mile Korun, for which the author received the Grum Prize for dramatic text of the year at this year's Week of Slovenian Drama. "North-east Slovenia, second half of the nineties" is the time and setting for the drama *Totenbirt*, which is set for a first performance at Drama in October. This production will mark the return to SNG Drama after three years of the doyen of Slovenian directors, Mile Korun.

In November the main stage will present a first showing of the comedy *Sauce for the Goose* by Georges Feydeau, directed by Luka Martin Škof. *The Road to Damascus*, by August Strindberg, whose text has been translated for the first time wholly into Slovenian specifically for this production by Darko Čuden, will be staged starting in December, under the direction of Aleksander Popovski.

For the coming season the Drama

theatre also plans to stage a Shakespeare play, this time *The Merchant of Venice*, translated by Milan Jesih, and directed by Eduard Miler. It is scheduled to start in February next year. In April next year we will get the chance to see *Scenes from an Execution* by the modern British playwright Howard Barker, directed by Lindy Davies.

In the Mala Drama theatre, new season productions will start with premieres of the latest work by three modern writers, including *Envelope* by the Italian dramatist Spiro Scimone, directed by Marko Sosič (September) and *Ages of the Moon* by the American writer Sam Shepard, directed by Boris Cavazza (November). In February they will be joined in a production by director Matjaž Zupančič of the play *November* by the American playwright David Mamet, as translated by Darja Dominkuš.

The Slovenian premiere of *The Picture of Dorian Grey* by Oscar Wilde (scheduled for December) was adapted for the stage by the German playwright and translator John von Düffel, and then translated from the German into Slovenian by Rapa Šuklje. It will be directed by Ajda Valcl.

The play by Vinko Möderndorfer *Nežka se ženi* [*Nežka Gets Married*], directed by Jaka Andrej Vojevec, will be staged at Mala Drama for the first time in April 2011. The

script won a noble playwright's quill in Celje as an original Slovenian comedy at this year's anonymous competition.

In cooperation with the Slovenian Society for Studying Antiquity and the Humanities, the autumn and spring cycle at Mala Drama will feature concert readings of as yet non-performed translations of ancient dramatic texts, entitled *Soliloquies from Antiquity* [*Replike iz antike*]. Each cycle will feature three plays each.

So actors will read Euripides's *Alcestis* and Seneca's *Medea* translated by Jera Ivanc, and Sophocles's dramas *Oedipus at Colonus*, translated by Kajetan Gantar, and *Trachinian Women*, translated by Brane Senegačnik. Senegačnik also translated *The Madness of Heracles* by Euripides. Euripides's *Hecuba* was translated by David Movrin.

## RENOVATED FRANJA HOSPITAL OPENED

Jože Osterman Photo STA

THE RENOVATED FRANJA Hospital was opened at the end of May, mitigating at least in part the shock suffered on 18 September 2007 when it was practically destroyed by the great flood that turned the Pasica, the stream that flows past the hospital, into a raging torrent. The Franja Hospital is one of Slovenia's most remarkable historic monuments. In 2000 it was included on the Tentative List for possible inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Despite the many still-unresolved controversies concerning the Second World War period in Slovenia, almost everyone recognises that the hospital is an important part of our national past.

The costs of repairing the hospital, a project assumed by the Slovenian government in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe in 2007, amounted to €2,375,000, which is actually slightly less than was originally envisaged and earmarked in the national budget. Estimates at the time suggested approximately €4.1 million worth of damage. The repairs did not only concern the main part of the monument represented by the reconstructed historic buildings and their equipment, but also included access to the hospital and regulation of the stream to ensure that a similar disaster will not happen again. The money was provided by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. The repair or reconstruction of equipment in the huts was carried out by Idrija Museum on the basis of donations and its own resources. The work involved repairs to two original huts, the reconstruction of 11 completely destroyed huts, the restoration of 30 very badly damaged museum items and 80 items that had suffered less damage, and, above all, the acquisition and reconstruction of 650 other museum pieces and items of inventory. It should be pointed out that

it was only possible to find and restore 225 of the more than 800 original items, with the result that the majority of pieces in the museum are no longer original. Fortunately, however, the contents of the hospital had been recorded and catalogued down to the last detail, thanks to the outstanding work carried out here by museum staff in the past, which has now paid dividends.

The partisan hospital, which is named

after Dr Franja Bojc Bidovec, operated during the Second World War, from 1943 to 1945. It was built to treat the wounded and seriously ill in the area covered by the 9th Corps of the Slovenian partisan army. While it was open it treated over 1,000 wounded soldiers and other patients, and in the course of almost two years its location was neither discovered by the enemy nor betrayed, as happened in the case of some other partisan hospitals.





## “MAHLER IN LJUBLJANA FOR STARTERS”

Sanja Prelević  
Photo [www.ljubljanafestival.si](http://www.ljubljanafestival.si)

**T**HIS YEAR, NOW FOR THE 58TH successive year, Festival Ljubljana 2010 will set the summer arts pulse for the Slovenian capital from 5 July to 26 August. Events will be focused on top-quality dance and music, while there will also be special celebration concerts marking the anniversaries of composers Frédéric Chopin and Gustav Mahler. This year's festival summer begins on 5 July, when the orchestras of the Slovenian Philharmonic and the Slovenian Armed Forces, together with choirs and soloists Sabina Cvilak and Martina Gojče Silič, will perform the concert Mahler in Ljubljana at the Križanke venue.

In the words of the artistic director and overall head of Festival Ljubljana, Darko Brlek, the opening concert of Mahler's magnificent Second Symphony will mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of the great composer, who worked in Ljubljana in 1881 and 1882. "In his time, Mahler was considered one of the greatest conductors, while during his lifetime his compositions were not nearly so well-esteemed. Today Mahler's music represents the pinnacle of the Austro-German symphonic tradition, as well as an end to the monumental form of the late Romantic period", writes Katarina B. Hočevar of the upcoming event in the catalogue.

Two evenings will also be devoted to

musicals – The Marathon Runners on their Final Lap (Maratonci trče počasni krug). This show is the work of the established Serbian director Kokan Mladenović. The musical, which involves around 140 performers, will be staged at Križanke on 12 and 13 July.

The two-day guest appearance by the Boris Eifman Academic State Ballet of Saint Petersburg, with their ballets Ana Karenina and Russian Hamlet, will without doubt satisfy the tastes of even the most demanding audiences at Cankarjev dom on 14 and 15 July. Haydn's monumental work The Creation, as performed by the superlative Munich Philharmonic and world-famous singers, is on the calendar for 18 July, while the Ballet for Life, by equally world-famous choreographer Maurice Béjart, performed by the Béjart Ballet group of Lausanne, is scheduled for 19 and 20 July.

On 22 July, the Maribor Opera and Ballet will be performing Tchaikovsky's Queen of Spades, with Marjana Lipovšek in the title role. Then on 29 July the Maribor ballet dancers will be at Križanke performing a choreography by Edward Clug entitled Watching Others. "The scenes are one big illusion, and I want the viewer's imagination and directly also his emotions to be able to fill the space he is following through the performance", says Clug of his new choreography set to the music of Milko Lazar. Watching Others can be seen

at Križanke on 29 July.

One of the high points of the festival will of course be the three-day guest appearance of the Mariinsky Theatre of Saint Petersburg, with Valeri Gergiev. The evenings of 11 and 12 August will feature the Strauss opera The Woman without a Shadow, while one evening is intended for a concert with the piano soloist Denis Matsuyev.

The Russian conductor and artistic director of the Mariinsky Theatre, Valeri Gergiev, will also be conducting the London Symphony Orchestra on 19 August.

As is now traditional, one summer evening, this time 20 August, Križanke will be reserved for Vlado Kreslin and his guests.

To end the festival, on 24, 25 and 26 August Tomaž Pandur will be back at Plečnik's Križanke complex, this time with Hamlet. The performance will be in Spanish, with Slovenian and English overtitles.

The main cultural events of the summer festival will be accompanied by permanent features such as Summer Night, Film under the Stars at Ljubljana Castle, the 13th International Fine Art Colony, and a host of exhibitions.

The festival events, which will total 81 with more than 2,000 performers from 20 countries, will as in previous years be under the patronage of the Mayor of Ljubljana, Zoran Janković.

For more information and details on events go to [www.ljubljanafestival.si](http://www.ljubljanafestival.si). •

# LENT ORGANISERS INVITE YOU TO MARIBOR

Kick off the summer in Lent!

Sanja Prelević Photo [kibla.org](http://kibla.org)



**L**ENT, THE BIGGEST FESTIVAL IN Slovenia and one of the biggest summer festivals in Europe, will come of age this year. Between 25 June and 10 July, the attractive events on the banks of the River Drava will be staged again for the 18th time. The concept of the festival remains the same as before, say the organisers – a multicultural festival with high-quality performers from all over the world (the performers come from 45 countries), which as if by magic transforms Maribor into a truly special place.

At more than 30 venues throughout this chief city of the Štajerska region, visitors will have the chance to see, hear and feel approximately 450 events, including concerts of jazz, rock, pop, classical and world music; evenings with singer-songwriters and chansons; theatre and dance performances; drama and puppet theatres; creative workshops

for children, sports events and much more. The organisers are anticipating up to half a million visitors. Under the umbrella of the main festival there will also be the international folklore festival Folkart, the jazz festival Jazzlent and the street theatre festival Ana Desetnica.

**‘THE MAIN STAGE ON THE DRAVA, WHICH CAN ACCOMMODATE AN AUDIENCE OF AROUND 2,000, WILL THIS YEAR HOST A RANGE OF OUTSTANDING TALENT.’**

The high point of the festival depends on the individual visitor and their tastes, but the organisers are banking on events on the Main Stage, Folkart, Jazzlent and Park experiences with the Art Camp and street theatre.

The main stage on the Drava, which can accommodate an audience of around 2,000, will this year host a range of outstanding talent, including Perpetuum Jazzile, Darja Švajger, Prljavo kazalište, Zoran Predin, Magnifico & Turbolentza & Ferus Mustafov, Massimo Savič, Aleksandar Sanja Ilić & Balkanika Brass Orchestra, the Roma virtuosos Mahala Rai Banda, the spectacular Shibusa Shirazu Orchestra from Japan and the British stars Matt Bianco. Of course the Main Stage will also present Folkart, this year headlined by an amazing Maori group from New Zealand.

JAZZLENT, which wins over audiences each year with its fine selection of >>>



international jazz stars, while at the same time giving an opportunity to outstanding Slovenian jazz musicians, will thrill visitors this year especially with the groups Yuri Honing Wired Paradise, Abdourahmane Diop & The Griot Music Company, Ray Anderson's Pocket Brass Band, James Blood Ulmer's Odyssey, Gangbé Brass Band, Fred Wesley & The New Jb's and IsWhat?!

Meanwhile the Večer Stage will provide rock-steady rhythms. Visitors will get to hear top hip-hop, R&B and metal groups,

as well as a diverse selection of Slovenian and Balkan bands. This year's performers include Tabu, Dalaj Eegol, Električni orgazam, Elvis Jackson, Dan D, Kultur Shock, Demolition Group, Tinkara Kovač and Zabranjeno pušenje.

For those who would rather experience the stars of tomorrow, and get down with them until the early hours, the Lent organisers recommend the Mladina Stage in the wonderful surroundings of the Minorite Church. The pleasant and intimate candle and torchlight atmosphere

of the Sodni stolp tower will provide the setting for mainly jazz concerts, chanson evenings and world music. Lovers of classical music will come into their own in the Union hall and the Synagogue, both of which are hailed for their unique charm and excellent acoustics.

Festival Lent also gets children and young people involved – the city park is the setting for ARTKAMP, which is a veritable festival in miniature, where all day there are various creative activities for children aged 2 to 99 years. In addition to watching, sports fans can also take active part in the events of Sporting Lent. There will be street basketball, beach volley and five-a-side beach football tournaments, plus student rowing eights regattas and many more events. The city street and square scene will be spiced up by street theatre, where you can expect to see anything from endearing clowns to explosive spectacles.

<http://lent.slovenija.net>

## MUSIC ONCE AGAIN RESOUNDS THROUGH OLD TOWN CENTRES

Jože Osterman Photo Imago Sloveniae

ON THE FIRST WEEKEND IN JUNE, the summer programme of Imago Sloveniae ('Image of Slovenia') began with an inaugural concert in the Slovenian Philharmonic Hall. Today this worthy cultural campaign probably needs no introduction, but perhaps it is worth mentioning some historical facts, in order to refresh memories.

Founded in Ljubljana in 1994, Imago Sloveniae was the expansion of an idea brought to the Slovenian capital by the former Association for the Revitalisation of the Old Town Centre, founded eight years earlier. In the 1980s Ljubljana began – despite a well-conceived renovation project for the Old Town district – to experience significant degradation of its old centre. This was partly the consequence of an ill-advised housing policy which settled a large number of socially disadvantaged people in old townhouses in order to take advantage of the cheap rent, and on the other hand a symbol of the new consumer culture which had begun to shift retail activities, once the main attraction of old town centres, to out-of-town hypermarkets. This was followed by an erosion of activities in the catering and hospitality sector, and a rapid withdrawal of culture from the city centre. The beautiful Old Town, much of which had undergone renovation, was almost deserted. Civil society reacted quickly to this situation with the founding of the association mentioned above. The real hero of this initiative was the unforgettable musician Primož Lorenz, one of the members of the famous Lorenz Brothers trio and a professor at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana. In the space of a year, the Association brought a wealth of cultural and, in particular, musical events to the

streets of the city, which within two or three years had returned to the city centre a good part of its former vivacity. The case of Ljubljana was not an exceptional one, and the old town centres of most other cities in Slovenia were suffering from a similar disease. Imago Sloveniae has transferred its cultural projects to other towns and cities and, it must be admitted, its success has actually been extraordinary. One of the consequences is that around 10 towns, including some smaller towns previously almost unknown in cultural terms, have founded their own summer musical events. Another consequence is that Imago Sloveniae is still today fulfilling its original mission with great success.

Today the organisation numbers 21 towns which, with their own financial contributions, ensure the realisation of a coordinated cultural programme in practically every region of Slovenia, and in particular in old town centres. The

annual programme is correspondingly broad and leaves its mark on Slovenian tourism as a whole. If this year's programme was inaugurated by the famous Bartók Quartett, it will be continued in June, July and August by excellent musicians belonging to the younger generation, among them many performers from France, Italy, Bulgaria, Portugal, the United Kingdom and even China. One of the highlights will undoubtedly be the performance by the Wolverhampton Youth Orchestra. The programme also includes a number of jazz evenings. It is particularly encouraging that many of the events featuring foreign young musicians are sponsored by the embassies of the countries of origin of the performers. This is a gratifying sign of mutual attention and a friendly gesture which confirms how important culture can be in strengthening mutual relations.





**D**UTCH SOCIAL FUND ORANJE FONDS, WHICH IS UNDER the patronage the Dutch royal family, has awarded this year's Appeltjes van Oranje prize for the promotion of social cohesion to Suzana van Keulen (née Studen), a Slovenian woman who has been living and working in the Netherlands for 12 years. The prize is awarded on a different theme each year. This year's theme was the power of sport and how sport influences and connects people. The Dutch royal family plays an important social role and acts as a model to the people. Citizens attach great importance to the Queen's Day, a national holiday, and most people are proud of their royal family.

The Be Interactive initiative aims to encourage socially isolated women from the immigrant community to take up running and eat healthily. Muslim women and women from lower socio-economic backgrounds are often isolated. They do not socialise with others, take too little exercise, eat unhealthy food and are often depressed, overweight etc. The Be Interactive initiative organises running and walking specifically for women (Muslim women do not take part in sport with men). Runs are led by the women themselves. When they take part in a run, women come into contact with other women, people encourage them and at the finish they receive a medal. This is something special for socially isolated women and a way for them to prove to others and to themselves that they are capable of achieving something. Running increases their self-confidence and brings them closer to other people, they learn the language more quickly and easily, they are more able to find work, and so on.

It is well known, for example, that Moroccan women do not learn Dutch, only associate with people from their own circle, do not go out, do not get involved in their children's schools (because they do not know the language), do not read, etc. This is a serious problem, not only for them but also for their children and for society – for the country in general. Such women are also frequently ill, are unable to work, and frequently need medical attention. This is a major burden on the State, and unhealthy for them and their families.

On the streets of West Amsterdam, running and walking are spreading fast among women from the immigrant community, thanks in part to the running project Be Interactive. Around the Sloterplass runners are no longer exclusively white men and women. Moroccan and Turkish women with or without headscarves and wearing djellabas are an increasingly common sight. The women come out of their houses and participate in the society in which they live.

# BE INTERACTIVE

## Running for immigrant women

Vesna Žarkovič Photo Archive

Be Interactive is a non-profit organisation that organises running and walking training sessions and nutrition programmes for socially isolated women, most of them of foreign origin. Started in Amsterdam in 2005, the programme now serves several other Dutch cities. The director of Be Interactive is Slovenian-born Suzana Studen-van Keulen.

# TIPORENESANSA

## The magic of a craftsman's touch

Vesna Žarkovič Photo Mateja Jordovič Potočnik

**M**ARKO DRPIČ, CALLIGRAPHER AND DESIGNER, FOUNDER of a new age - a time when books still held the magic of 'a craftsman's touch'. In the centre of Ljubljana he has set up a reconstruction of a printing press of the kind used up until the seventies. >>





IN THIS WAY DRPIĆ IS PRESERVING THE PRINTER'S HERITAGE and the method of printing that was common in earlier times. He will share with you a range of anecdotes from the history of printing, and together with you he will don his apron and start typesetting. "A printing press is a living space where ideas are sparked and solutions sought for printing hand-set business cards or old-style postcards. At the same time the tiporenesansa printing press is part of the programme for Ljubljana – World Book Capital."

Passers-by at 1 Mačkova Street in the centre of Ljubljana have been able, since 24 April, to look through the display window and see an old printing press - exactly the kind that was used in the previous century. Lead and wood letters, cupboards, stands,

the press, posters and more. "One time when I went to the printers to confirm the prints, I was quite fascinated to notice stands with lead letters and the old printing equipment, which the printer had kept by chance. For a long time I've been interested in how printing was done in the old way, while at the same time it seemed a shame that everything would just be forgotten, that the next generations would no longer know how and what work was done once in a printing press," says Marko Drpić, adding: "I started seriously collecting equipment and tools for letterpress printing, and the City of Ljubljana donated the space in the

centre of the city for three months. Along with the equipment, we are also losing the knowledge, and it is getting harder to find master printers who still have this knowledge. As part of the Wednesday meetings we have already presented the hand and machine compositor, book printer and reprographic master." In June there will be talks held at the press every Wednesday with other craftsmen. A process engraver will speak about preparing photographs for letterpress printing. As many as six steps were need to prepare zinc plates with a screened photograph, and this even put the operator's health at risk. Printed sections of books were finally taken over by the bookbinder. This craftsman will present the old artistic techniques of binding books and

decorating the covers. Finally, a graphics school professor will recount the system of studying for the printing profession. "In this way the old knowledge is being preserved in the best way. A major contribution also comes from visitors who have worked at printing presses, since they bring various tools and accessories, certificates and old documents. In this way the collection is being enhanced, but I would like to stress that I don't just want to make a museum collection, I want to set up a living printing press that promotes the letterpress technique through original designs. This technique is not comparable to the processes used today, since it achieves exceptional visual effects."

**“ I want to set up a living printing press that promotes the letterpress technique through original designs. This technique is not comparable to the processes used today, since it achieves exceptional visual effects. ”**

The printing press is also visited by children. Printing a personal card is a special experience for children, as they discover that the printing press has 2 tons of lead characters the wrong way around, and they can find out how the work is done, and see how it used to be a slow process. "The fact that the children operate the process themselves is fascinating for them, and not just for them, but also for academy students, who see that they can create a wide artistic range with lead and wooden characters."

Plans? "We are hoping that the city authorities will allocate a space for us on Križevniška Street. There we would set up a design studio that will print its work using old printing equipment, and the space could become a centre for classical knowledge related to book printing. The lectures will feature designers and typographers, and in addition to knowledge of designing digital typefaces we will also even be teaching calligraphy and hand chiselling of letters into stone."

So why did the letterpress equipment fall into disrepair? A lot was destroyed back in the war, and later, in the seventies, with the transition to new printing techniques a lot of old things were thrown out, and in the last ten years the greed of managers meant that the majority of printing presses fell apart. Apart from a private collection in Bled, the collections of historical printing at the Technical Museum of Slovenia and the Partisan printing press at Vojsko, there are no major collections in Slovenia.

The highest number of old printing presses and studios in Europe are preserved in Germany.

**Caption**

The main part of the old printing press was the type case. The compositor selected a case with the right kind of font and he placed the mirror-image letters into the composing stick. With the letters he made a composition, adding where necessary a photograph set by the process engraver in a special process, and the result was a zinc plate with a screened photograph. The compositor made a galley proof and gave this to the corrector, who marked errors. If the typesetter missed a single word, correcting the mistake could take a whole hour, and sometimes something was lost in transit, and this meant 14 days of work wasted. Then the composed text went to the printer, who closed it into a form,



which had to be made very precisely, and the printer could then start printing. He had to achieve an exact print, which went to the bookbinder, where the processes were similar.

The printing press will be in Mačkova Street until 2 July, and on 8 July it will move to Kresija Gallery, where it will become part of the 1st Festival of Letters, which will last one month. At the festival, various workshops will show visitors how to hand-make paper, decorative initials or print their own business cards. There will also be lectures by graphic designers and typographers, and the one-week typographical workshop will even feature making up a digital font family intended for production in wood. The festival will close on 8 August, and the organisers will achieve their aim if the printing press grows into a design studio, and into a kind of educational centre for a rebirth of letters. ●

# LJUBLJANA'S JB RESTAURANT, RUN BY JANEZ BRATOVŽ, RANKED AMONG THE TOP 100 IN THE WORLD

JB: local food, world knowledge, global success

Sanja Prelević Photo Borut Rubinič

**O**LD-WORLD CHARM, A HYBRID Slovenian-Mediterranean-French menu, a top-notch wine list and very stylish decor have made this restaurant one of the most popular in town for a fancy meal”, is how the Slovenia edition of the famous travel guide Lonely Planet describes the Ljubljana restaurant JB, run by Janez Bratovž. Now the latest edition of the popular guidebook would need to add that JB is the only restaurant in Slovenia to be selected in 2010 as one of the 100 best restaurants in the world. More precisely, the Janez Bratovž family restaurant secured 89th place in the ranking of the 100 best restaurants in the world this year, as published by the British magazine Restaurant.

Although he was already known to be one of the best chefs in Slovenia, the fact that he is also officially ranked in the world culinary elite has undoubtedly given rise to interest in his restaurant lately exceeding all expectations. The deciding factor, or rather what most pleased the tasters, who spent the past 18 months anonymously frequenting the restaurant in the centre of Ljubljana and gave its menu such a high mark, is not something we can pinpoint with any certainty.

Indeed Bratovž does not just provide self-evidently superior and tasty food, good wine (the wine cellar is stocked with more than 500 wines from all over the world), excellent service, high-quality silverware and crockery and a great atmosphere, he also believes that a



JB is the only restaurant in Slovenia to be selected in 2010 as one of the 100 best restaurants in the world.

restaurant needs to function integrally. In his art nouveau-retro restaurant he pays close attention to literally every detail.

“We have a calm, discreet atmosphere. Alongside the service, which must be high-class, it is also important that there is not too much noise or movement in the restaurant. I think that this has the biggest impact on the final assessment, but of course the food is always in first place”, says Bratovž.

He is one of the rare chefs in Slovenia who circulates among diners, occasionally serving them himself, chatting with them, sharing a glass, talking about the dishes and then retiring to the kitchen.

In his opinion, being ranked on the list of the best restaurants is not just confirmation for him, with his years and years of hard work and sacrifice behind

him, but also for the whole of Slovenia, which in this way has been “put on the culinary map of the world”. “This year, my dreams came true, but this is also a major success for Slovenia itself, since this is the first time something like this has happened”, says Bratovž.

### Familiar face at Ljubljana market

The everyday life of workaholic Bratovž has followed an established pattern for years now. Early in the morning he goes shopping, then he “occupies” his favourite spot – at the stove and among the tables of the restaurant, where he remains all day and sometimes late into the night, until the last guest leaves. He is a master chef and makes his home in the kitchen, he creates and watches over the production

**‘This year, my dreams came true, but this is also a major success for Slovenia itself, since this is the first time something like this has happened.’**

of dishes, while communicating with guests and remaining very sensitive to their responses. However, as a master chef, he of course sticks to his carefully determined principles.

So you can only eat asparagus in his restaurant when it is in season – from April to June. He only serves fresh fish from the Adriatic. So it happens that some days there are no fish at all on the menu. “I’d rather not have them, than have fish from Senegal or whatever.” In short, he is banking on local food and the doctrine that you eat what is naturally available in a given environment at a given moment. His restaurant, where different bread is baked every day from strictly organic, local flour, offers national food in the wider sense of the word. It is important that all the ingredients – be it olive oil or meat, or flour, fruit and vegetables – are from that environment and climate. He tries to use Slovenian products, since he says that Slovenia still has proper farms offering outstanding foodstuffs.

At the same time he admits that in the 33 years he has been involved in cooking,

food has changed markedly. He says that although compared to other European Union countries Slovenia still has more or less good meat and vegetables as well as wine and oil, the meat is no longer fragrant. » “Thirty years ago raw meat had a fragrance, but butchers don’t have it any more. So I buy meat from a farmer who gives animals only natural food. That kind of meat smells good when you cut it, let alone when you cook it. The kind of crackling our mum made and fried eggs on for me – you can’t find that taste any more”, adds Bratovž, who does not eat chicken, since as he says, that is an animal that grows up in fourteen days. “That can’t be normal, it’s not natural, for me that kind of meat is artificial” says Bratovž.

**“The simpler the better”**

Apart from preparing foods that must, as said, be from fresh ingredients of local origin, another special feature of master chef Janez Bratovž is the use of cooking techniques that not everyone masters. An example of this is slow cooking, meaning that meat is cooked in a vacuum for 16 to 24 hours at 62 degrees Centigrade. He likes to prepare more challenging, sinewy pieces of meat that need hours and hours of cooking (for instance tail, cheek or stomach). Behind the great success he has achieved is a simple motto: “The simpler the better” says Bratovž.

“I prepare good food slowly, not too fast, on the lowest possible heat, as naturally as possible, so the dish retains as much of its good ingredients as possible”, he explains.

While he is innovative in the description of his job, at home, where he also does most of the cooking himself, he keeps it simple. One of his favourite dishes is pickled cabbage, or sauerkraut.

Major credit for Bratovž’s success also goes to his wife Ema, who is his main food taster. He says of her, partly in jest, that she’s not that great in the kitchen, but she has an amazing feeling for people.

On the question how is it, that in this traditionally female occupation, there are so few top women chefs, Bratovž responds: “Being a professional chef is



Ljubljana’s JB restaurant, run by Janez Bratož, ranked among the top 100 in the world.

**‘I prepare good food slowly, not too fast, on the lowest possible heat, as naturally as possible, so the dish retains as much of its good ingredients as possible’**

not easy, on average I’m in the kitchen 12 hours a day, since you don’t have standard working hours, at least if you want to succeed, you don’t. I think it is this heavy workload and the fact that because of their family commitments, many women can’t keep such a pace going, that are the reasons for the lack of representation of the gentler sex among chefs.”

**I got into it to keep warm**

Janez Bratovž found himself in the culinary profession through the pragmatic reasoning of his grandmother. “As a child I wanted to be a builder, but my grandmother was against it, saying I’d always be out in the rain and cold. Janči, be a cook, you’ll be warm and you’ll also have something to eat – and she was right” laughs Bratovž, explaining his professional start. He learned the chef’s trade at secondary catering school in Ljubljana, then put this into practice at the Hotel Turist, and also at Šporen in Radomlje and the Hotel Riviera in Portorož. Curiosity and a search for interesting flavours took him very early on to a world where he sought his own expression, exploring traditions and trends through various phases: from the golden classics through molecular cuisine and on to his own polished style. He says



**‘Next year in the top 50? Why not!’**

a chef at the Secondary Tourism and Catering School in Ljubljana. Bratovž would not comment on the quality of the teaching, and he says the most important thing for a chef is to keep at it with education.

“They used to say: if nothing else, you can be a cook. Today the situation is quite different. Nowadays as a chef if you don’t speak two or three languages, you’ll get nowhere. And you also have to travel, you have to go to conferences and workshops”, explains Bratovž, who is off to the Russian capital next month on business. What his next professional challenge might be, is a question we deliberately left unasked. The fact is, Bratovž is a man who works unstintingly

that in his six years as an “emigrant” he learned the most. When he returned home in 1992, he opened the door of his first restaurant, JB Tchebull, in Domžale. His second restaurant, JB, started up in 2001 in the centre of Ljubljana in the Plečnik building at the top of Miklošičeva Street.

His son, Tomaž, is following in his father’s footsteps. He is studying to be

The Pellegrino ranking is much more important than the better known Michelin stars. There are several thousand of those stars in the world, while the Pellegrino ladder ranks only the 100 best. All of them that were ranked on the Pellegrino ladder, except for Janez Bratovž’s restaurant, also had Michelin stars. The San Pellegrino ranking is a system whereby restaurants are placed on it after being anonymously assessed by more than 800 critics. The academy of assessors comprises wine and food journalists, professional chefs and restaurateurs, which is a special feature of this assessment, but of course they cannot vote for their own restaurants. Restaurants cannot apply for assessment themselves, they can only be selected by members of a jury who inspect and assess in 26 culinary regions.

First place went to the Danish restaurant Noma run by René Redzepi, second place to the Spanish El Bulli of Ferran Adrià, and third to the British restaurant The Fat Duck run by Heston Blumenthal. Another restaurant from the former Yugoslavia, Plavi podrum of Volosko near Opatija, stands gallantly in 81st place, but JB has managed to outstrip such great names as Heinz Beck and his La Pergola in Rome (97th place) and Alain Ducasse with his two restaurants: Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester (95th place) and Le Louis XV in Monte Carlo (98th place).

in the profession he loves. In this way he confirms the rule that in this case, too, success is no coincidence. Next year in the top 50? Why not! In the meantime he is working on a new book about Slovenian cuisine, which will present original local types of food, and also farmers producing the best ingredients.

This will be his second book, following the publication last year of his first one entitled Zemlja – morje, Okusi iz Slovenije (Earth – Sea, Tastes of Slovenia), which enjoyed a good international response. ●



## SLOVENIA - THE SENSATION OF THE WORLD CUP?

Andrej Stare Photo Profimedia

**T**HE SLOVENIAN TEAM HOLDS ITS FATE IN ITS HANDS, and following its first two encounters, the door is open to the last 16. Twice in a row now, Slovenia have come out unbeaten, and have shown exceptional team spirit and character. Of course the Slovenians need a good result against former world champions England. After the game against England on 23 June, it will be clear whether Slovenia has made it through to the next stage of the tournament. If they succeed, Slovenia will undoubtedly be the biggest sensation of the World Cup, the 19th world football championship.

This 19th World Cup is undoubtedly the biggest sports event of the year in the world, and one of the biggest events overall. Nine cities in South Africa – Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, Rustenburg, Polokwane, Bloemfontein, Nelspruit – are hosting the events, which will involve a total of 64 football matches. The overall victor will be known on 11 July after the final in Johannesburg. The route to the final will be tough, since the crown of best football team is pursued through a long path of group games, followed by the need to win four times in the knockout games.

The Slovenian football team went off to South Africa with the desire to win its first points at the world championship (in its first appearance at the World Cup in 2002, Slovenia lost all three group games against Spain, South Africa and Paraguay) and to sell itself at the highest price possible.

In terms of land area (20 273 km<sup>2</sup>) Slovenia is the smallest country participating in this 19th World Cup. To date, only three countries smaller than Slovenia have competed in the World Cup. In 1938 this honour went to Netherlands Antilles (surface area of the ABC islands is 960 km<sup>2</sup>), the Trinidad and Tobago team appeared four years ago (surface area of the country 5 128 km<sup>2</sup>), while in 1982 the Kuwaiti team competed (surface area of this Asian country 17 818 km<sup>2</sup>).

Now Slovenia's very first game, against a determined Algerian side, produced a win. A goal from team captain Robert Koren in the 79th minute earned Slovenia the big three points, and served notice of the team's fight for a place in last 16 and the knockout stage, where a team from group D, one of Germany, Ghana, Serbia or Australia, would await them. The match against Algeria was in many ways a turning point. A large number of Slovenian football fans had gathered at the

**According to unofficial estimates, the game between Slovenia and Algeria was watched by more than a million people in Slovenia.**

Polokwane stadium in northern South Africa, and they came to cheer on Slovenia's World Cup campaign. To the strains of the vuvuzela, the Slovenian team managed to beat the tenacious Algerians, and for the first time in the history of the World Cup, secure a win. This success was even sweeter, since Algeria had played in a qualification play-off (as Slovenia had done against Russia), winning a ticket to the southern end of the continent by beating Egypt, who are themselves current African champions, 1-0. Before the tournament, Algeria set themselves the task of beating Slovenia and the USA, but crumbled at the first step against Matjaž Kek's squad. The Slovenian starters for that game were Handanović, Jokić, Šuler, Cesar, Brečko, Koren, Radosavljevič, Kirm, Birsa, Novaković and Dedič. During the game they were bolstered by substitutes Ljubijankič, Pečnik and Komac. The joy was indescribable, with everyone doing the job required of them in the very first encounter. After the game, Slovenian coach Matjaž Kek said: The dream has become reality, we're not stopping here, we're going to progress!

During the Slovenia-Algeria game on 13 June Slovenia was like a ghost land, with city streets and avenues empty, since almost every single Slovenian was watching the game. Unofficial estimates indicate that more than a million Slovenians watched the game, at home, in bars, and even on giant screens put up in Slovenia's towns and villages.

After the game, the Slovenian players returned to their base camp in Johannesburg to rest, and in a relaxed mood they started training for the match against the USA. They visited the big zoo, strolled around Johannesburg and studied the game played by the American team, which fought out a 1-1 draw with England in its first match.

The match between Slovenia and the USA was on 18 June at the Ellis Park stadium in Johannesburg, at a height above sea level of more than 1600 metres. The truly somewhat thinner air and winter temperatures (by day it is only a few degrees above zero in South Africa) are causing the biggest problems for teams at this World Cup. However, given these handicaps, Slovenia's squad specifically did their basic preparation in similar circumstances at Brunico (Italy). The game had an even more momentous feel with the President of Slovenia, Danilo Turk, watching the game at the stadium.



In the first half Slovenia were exceptional, playing in the style of the top teams. Valter Birsa took Slovenia ahead in the 13th minute, and then in the 42nd minute Zlatan Ljubijankič latched on to a Novaković pass to increase the lead to 2-0. Everything pointed to Slovenia getting a direct ticket to the last 16. But in the second half the US players took the initiative and through captain Landon Donovan, reduced the lead in the 48th minute. This triggered a nerve-jangling struggle for each ball and for each millimetre of the pitch. Right before the game ended came the final event. Bradley took advantage of a head-down by Altidore, and eight minutes before the final whistle, levelled the score at 2-2. Both teams can be partly satisfied with their work, with both needing a positive result in their final group games, Slovenia against England, and the USA against Algeria. The Slovenian line-up for the game was Handanović, Brečko, Šuler, Cesar, Jokić, Radosavljevič, Koren, Kirm, Birsa (Pečnik, Komac), Novaković and Ljubijankič (Dedič). Twice in a row now, Slovenia have come out unbeaten, and have shown exceptional team spirit and character.

So the Slovenian team holds its fate in its hands, and following its first two encounters, the door is open to the last 16. Of course the Slovenians need a good result against former world champions England. The England side, playing in South Africa without their captain Rio Ferdinand and their greatest star David Beckham, failed to match up to expectations in their first game. The English, who invented the game of association football in the middle of the 19th century, believe that they are the best in the world and they expect victory in every game.

The match between Slovenia and England will be in Port Elizabeth's Nelson Mandela stadium on Wednesday 23 June at 4 pm. At around 6 pm we will all know whether Slovenia has made it through to the next stage of the tournament. If they succeed, Slovenia will undoubtedly be the biggest sensation of the World Cup, the 19th world football championship.

**“ MATJAŽ KEK ON THE GAME AGAINST ALGERIA: THE DREAM HAS BECOME REALITY. WE'RE NOT STOPPING HERE, WE'RE GOING TO PROGRESS... ”**

# (SUPER)EXCELLENCE IN SPORT: THE PARADOX OF BLED?

Jože Osterman Photo STA



**W**HEN IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE WE WROTE ABOUT Bled's return to the world rowing map with the hosting of a World Cup rowing event, we passed over a number of questions that will need to be resolved in the future, first and foremost by rowers themselves. Since all of us would like to see rowing continue to contribute to the prestige and recognisability of Bled, that icon of Slovenian tourism, it is perhaps appropriate to look at some of these issues here.

It is an irony of fate that in the period in which for a variety of reasons, mainly financial, there were no major competitions in Bled, Slovenian rowers – the majority of whom are actually from Bled – achieved almost unbelievable successes and brought home the most prestigious medals. The last World Championships to be held in Bled, in 1989, brought the first ever medal for Slovenian (then still Yugoslav) rowers at a World Championships, when a local crew took the bronze in the coxed pairs event (we should perhaps mention that in the last five years of the former Yugoslavia, rowers from Bled accounted for 80% of the national rowing squad). After this, competitions at the highest level disappeared from Bled, but rowing medals began to pour in from a variety of events. If we take just the two most important world competitions in rowing – the World Championships and the Olympic Games – the list of achievements is almost incredible. Particularly for a place that numbers roughly 10,000 inhabitants and (currently) around 80 registered rowers, but also for a country like Slovenia, with just two million inhabitants (and no more than 300 registered rowers in six rowing clubs): 18 medals at the World Championships and five at the Olympic Games! But, you might say, rowing is not that popular, it's almost an exclusive sport in which only small numbers take part. But you would be wrong: in Great Britain, for example, there are around two million registered competitive rowers! Plenty of

tranquil rivers and lakes, the prestige of this sport – particularly at universities – and an important rowing tradition play a part in ensuring rowing's popularity in Britain today. The situation is not dissimilar in Germany: several thousand rowing clubs, corresponding to hundreds of thousands of members, yet in the last 20 years they have hardly won more medals than the tiny Slovenian rowing colony!

The Slovenian miracle – leading international rowing coaches and experts freely admit that it is a miracle – has no rational explanation. Those who emphasise the crucial role of Slovenian rowing selector Miloš Janša, the driving force behind the team throughout all these years, are perhaps closest to the truth. As well as the excellent rowers who distinguished themselves in the early days of Slovenia's independence and took two Olympic bronze medals in Barcelona, the products of his stable include Iztok Čop and Luka Špik, both still active today. Their gold and silver Olympic medals seem like an impossible achievement in today's conditions.

Now that top rowing competitions have returned to Bled, there is a fear that the situation will change once again. Slovenia's rowers are undergoing a generational change. For Čop and Špik, giants though they are, it is much harder than it once was to find the motivation needed to repeat their brilliant achievements of a few years ago. The younger rowers are growing up fast and learning quickly, but rowing is a sport that demands a great deal of experience and a huge amount of intelligence. The World Championships are still over a year away and much can be achieved in the time that remains. Let us hope that all those who will be taking their places at the Slovenian oars in racing shells on their home lake next year are able to prepare themselves calmly and without too much psychological pressure, since only in this way will they be successful. ●



# TOMAŽ LAVRIČ

## When Comics Become Art

Andrej Savelli Photo Borut Peterlin

**S**LOVENIA IS ONE OF THOSE RARE countries where it seems that comics have no right of abode. That being the case, Slovenian readers have always preferred to check out foreign comics, mostly Italian, and these were consumed most commonly in Serbian and Croatian. In this way, generations grew up with Alan Ford, Tex Willer, Zagor or Dylan Dog. The only decent Slovenian competition for them came from Miki Muster and his Zvitorepec, Trdonja and Lakotnik. The serial was being published from 1952 to 1973 and later on enjoyed numerous reprints. Cult status was also earned by *Magna Purga* (1977) by Kostja Gatnik, but then there was a long dry period in the Slovenian comics scene. During this time, comics abroad had already acquired the status of artwork, the so-called ninth art, while in Slovenia this status was only shyly confirmed recently. Alongside Muster and Gatnik, the greatest credit for this goes undoubtedly to Tomaž Lavrič,

who has presented his comic strip work in an overview exhibition at the Ljubljana Museum of Modern Art (the exhibition ran from 9 March to 16 June 2010), and this in some way confirmed the artistic status of comics also in Slovenia. Lavrič: **“Yes, it’s nice that comics have somehow made it into the recognised forms of art. Although they don’t completely belong on the walls of a gallery, but on the other hand they don’t belong in a literary evening. It’s a form of its own. The artistic side of the comics is just one side; you have to sit in a comfy armchair and read it leisurely, something I insisted on at the Museum of Modern Art.”**

Even before he finished his degree at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts in 1988, Lavrič had joined the weekly magazine *Mladina*, and since then he has been an indispensable member of their team, and even more than that: he is one of the people that have left the biggest mark on *Mladina* – and not just in the artistic sense. At that

time *Mladina* was witnessing the formation of what was called the “*Mladina Circle*” of young comics authors, gathered around the journalist Ivo Štandeker, who were trying to raise the level of Slovenian comics.

In 1988, Lavrič therefore started producing for *Mladina* the comic strip *Diareja* (Diarrhea), which is still a permanent fixture in the magazine. At first glance *Diareja* is a very simple cartoon, with two or three frames offering a very effective summary of the most topical event of the previous week. The main “character” is drawn in a few pen strokes, abstracted and caricatured to the extreme, and his identity is adjusted with just two or three strokes, making him anything from the average Joe to any of the key players in Slovenia’s political scene. *Diareja* owes its power to the biting one-liners that strike at the core of the issue. Several collected volumes of *Diareja* have now been published, a documentary about it has been made, and it even has a life of >>>



**“The artistic side of the comics is just one side; you have to sit in a comfy armchair and read it leisurel.”**

its own, in two theatre productions and also on the web, with the “Do it yourself Diareja” tool, where users create their own comic strips with Diareja in the main role, and the best ones are published each week in Mladina. **Lavrič: “The web Diareja is quite a phenomenon. Unknown writers have been making up new jokes every day for years and years. Some are plain stupid, some are angry, but some are savagely witty. I feel honoured; this is the true will of the people. It also scares me a little, but keeps me fit at the same time, since it’s not easy week after week being wittier than a band of amateur Diarears.”**

In addition to Diareja, Tomaž Lavrič does practically all the graphic work for Mladina’s articles, except for the photos. His biting and mischievous illustrations adorn the cover pages and numerous articles, and frequently they hit the target even better than the articles themselves. In his work, Lavrič is pretty much autonomous: **“Usually I get a text, sometimes the draft of an article, sometimes nothing and just a happy greeting, but very rarely I get any special requirements. Usually I’m completely autonomous in terms of content and form. I’m lucky to share**

**the same kind of naughty-kid view of the world with Mladina, and largely for this reason we have been living in a symbiosis for so many years.”** And a key factor in this symbiosis is that Lavrič is not an indifferent observer and “drawer” of events around him, but he also takes a clear and critical stand in his work: **“I got infected with politics at Mladina, and now I get a lot of fun out of this local stew, I like wading about in it like a kid in a pond. Although I must say that lately it has at times actually got so mundane that it’s almost impossible to make fun of it any more...”** Since these illustrations are often real works of art – be it artistically or conceptually – they might deserve an independent exhibition with a very extensive catalogue.

The next chapter that should be highlighted in the collaboration between Lavrič and Mladina, and probably the most important one, one that developed on an entirely independent path, is Lavrič’s comics. These have appeared regularly on the back pages of Mladina ever since 1989, and since that time Lavrič has shared these pages with a few other comics authors. The majority of these comics,

be it complete stories on the one hand or comics serials, later found their way into independent graphic novels, which usually sold out straight away. Others in his profession have labelled Lavrič a comic strip chameleon, since he changes his style of drawing as naturally as a chameleon changes its colour. Yet Lavrič is not a chameleon just in the sense of drawing, but also in his narratives, since he tackles both lightweight and satirical, often politically and otherwise incorrect topics, as well as serious, deeply critical comic strip responses to salient current events, and he is even known to delve into science fiction. Just to confuse you even more, he signs his work with a whole variety of aliases, so for years plenty of Mladina readers were certain that numerous comics and illustrations in Mladina were the work of various authors. However, Lavrič’s lines are soft, fluid and recognisable, no matter the style or signature. **Lavrič: “A lot of people don’t get the use of different styles, but it seems quite obvious to me. I use styles as aids, adapted each time to the specific story. And it’s probably true that while they are different, they are all mine, they are just different forms of the same ideas.**

**And as for the aliases, at the beginning I did indeed use them to label various “selves”, but over the years it became too confusing and I stopped doing that. Now I’m just Tomaž Lavrič. Or Lovro Matič. Well, OK, maybe others too...”**

We should highlight here just some of his graphic novels. The first one is Rdeči alarm [Red Alarm] which almost autobiographically describes events in the Ljubljana punk scene of the 1980s. The comic Ratman best illustrates Lavrič’s “chameleonhood”, since in each episode, to portray the adventures of the local superhero – a vigilante – he used a different drawing style, inspired by authors who influenced him – Hugo Pratt, Frank Miller, Moebius, Hermann and so forth. In the album Bosanske basni [Bosnian Fables] he very faithfully portrayed the cruel and tragic war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which took the life of his mentor Ivo Štandeker, to whom one of the episodes is dedicated. This album should also be made into a big-screen feature very soon. The later albums Glista na begu [Worm on the Run], Evropa [Europe] and Novi časi [New Times] are Lavrič’s response to the changed circumstances in Slovenia and its immediate surroundings following the disintegration of the former common state. The comic strip that he produced most from his own heart is Slepo sonce [Blind Sun] from 2004. **Lavrič: “In the stories there is always a part of me and the world around me. I like to observe real life and then carve it into a story. Into a drama, a crime thriller or a weepie. And if I can, I like to throw in a scrap of black humour.”**

Another special chapter in Lavrič’s career as a comic artist is what has been called “Slovenian classics in comics”, which he hit upon with Ivo Štandeker in 1991, and the main purpose of the project was to “comic strip-ize” the body of Slovenian culture in an entertaining way, while at the same time gathering together in one place an overview of all the Slovenian comic strip artists, meanwhile making Slovenian comics more accessible to the domestic audience. Over the last 20 years, Lavrič and 65 other authors have created almost 200 for the most part satirical versions of this or another Slovenian classic, and since 2009

they have been put together in book form.

Bosanske basni also opened up the European markets for Lavrič, with the French publisher Editions Glénat publishing this album in 1999 in the demanding French market, and this was joined by a number of others. In 2001, the same publisher produced his new album Decalogue – Le Serment [Decalogue – The Vow] from the series Decalogue, in which, on the invitation of script writer Frank Giroud, Lavrič tried out for the first time drawing a comic based on someone else’s script. He does not imagine it working the other way around: **“Yeah, drawing to someone else’s script is difficult, but writing a script for others seems to me a bit boring. Most of all I like to work independently, I like to do the writing, drawing and hassling myself. I’m my own master and my own slave.”** His graphic novels later started appearing in versions by Italian, Spanish, Belgian, Portuguese and Croatian publishers, and some were even published abroad before they came out in Slovenia. He has also received some prestigious prizes abroad for his work. So where does he see the difference between Slovenia and other countries? **“The big difference is that in Europe, at least in the Francophone world, comics are big business, in contrast to Slovenia, where it’s increasingly amateur and voluntary.**

**‘I like to observe real life and then carve it into a story.’**

This is a big-number game, comics are part of mass culture, like films, and they need a critical mass to exist. But as soon as a comic is commercially successful, when it brings money and fame (OK, in limited quantities), other problems arise – limitations on creative freedom, everything subordinated to earnings... **Nowhere is it ideal. I try to live with one foot here and the other there, and for the moment I’m managing.”**

Greater recognition for comic strips in Slovenia could be helped by the media, especially the daily papers, since apart from occasional rare exceptions, they do not publish comic strips on a daily basis, as is the practice abroad: **“We are indeed lacking**

**this sector in Slovenia. Newspapers are the natural place for comic strips. I would perhaps not even blame the actual newspapers for this, as it seems to me that there is more a lack of good authors and comics that would be able to keep up with such a demanding pace. Comics are hard work, a daily strip is drudgery.”** Alongside Mladina, two magazines are working to raise the culture of comics in Slovenia, the veteran Stripburger and more recently Strip bumerang. It goes without saying that Lavrič is published in both. **Lavrič: “In the old Yugoslavia, comics were actually highly popular, and if nothing else this was a decent market of some 20 million souls. When this fell apart, comics also virtually dried up. We were lucky with Mladina and Ivo Štandeker, who takes credit for creating fertile conditions for young authors right at that time. For instance we kept the flame burning through the dark nineties, us and Stripburger. Gradually a normal structure is getting established, here and in neighbouring countries, and although everything is extremely fragile, we can hope that it will survive and gain strength. Miki Muster is carrying children’s comic strips on his shoulders almost alone, and the mainstream, in other words main, commercial comics have been well covered by the magazine Stripbumerang.**

Meanwhile, powerful alternative and original comics are the traditional domain of Stripburger. There are some translations, a lot is being produced again in countries

nearby, and there are some sales outlets, plus some small groups of fans and collectors. And even a couple of readers, ha ha.” He adds as a joke: **“My readers are intelligent, young at heart and have a developed sense of humour. My female readers are all beautiful, charming and witty. At least that’s how I picture them.”**

From all of this, it is clear that Tomaž Lavrič cannot be “pigeon-holed”. We would probably need a whole wall just for him, since he would have to be put into every single pigeon-hole, and then we would probably need some more. He also affirms in jest that he is omnipresent. And while that is the case, there is no need to fear for the future of Slovenian comics. ●

# ŽIČE CHARTERHOUSE MARKS 850 YEARS

Medieval monasteries in Slovenia

Albert Kos Photo Darinka Mladenovič



**A**S THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE crumbled over the centuries and numerous peoples migrated en masse, the foundations of the civilisation that had been built up at that time in Europe were pretty much demolished, its demographic picture changed extensively and the majority of Europe was laid waste both materially and spiritually. In the newly created and emerging state formations of Western Europe, an increasingly important integrative role was assumed by Christianity, within which an especially important place was occupied by the monastic orders, which with their numerous monasteries were the primary initiator of medieval European cultural transformation.

The first monastic order in the area of Western Europe was the Benedictines, founded in 529 by St. Benedict of Nursia,

and the first central monastery was built at Monte Cassino, southeast of Rome. In the centuries that followed, its activities spread out across Europe, and in many places they were the most active exponents in converting to Christianity former pagan peoples, including in the area of present-day Slovenia, where they operated in two directions, from Salzburg and from Aquileia. They founded a series of monasteries in the northern and western margins of this territory, which had been settled by the forefathers of the present-day Slovenians, and from these they pursued their mission, while in Slovenia proper they founded their first monastery only in 1140 at Gornji grad, and this functioned for 333 years. With the founding of a monastery at Stična in 1135, they were beaten into second place by a few years by the Cistercian order, who

were reformed Benedictines, but in 1160 these two monasteries were joined by the Carthusian monastery, or charterhouse, at Žiče, built in a remote area of Štajerska (Slovenian Styria) between present-day Celje and Maribor, and this was followed in 1193 by the founding of the monastery of Jurklošter, which was established quite close to the former by the same order in Jurklošter, east-southeast of Celje.

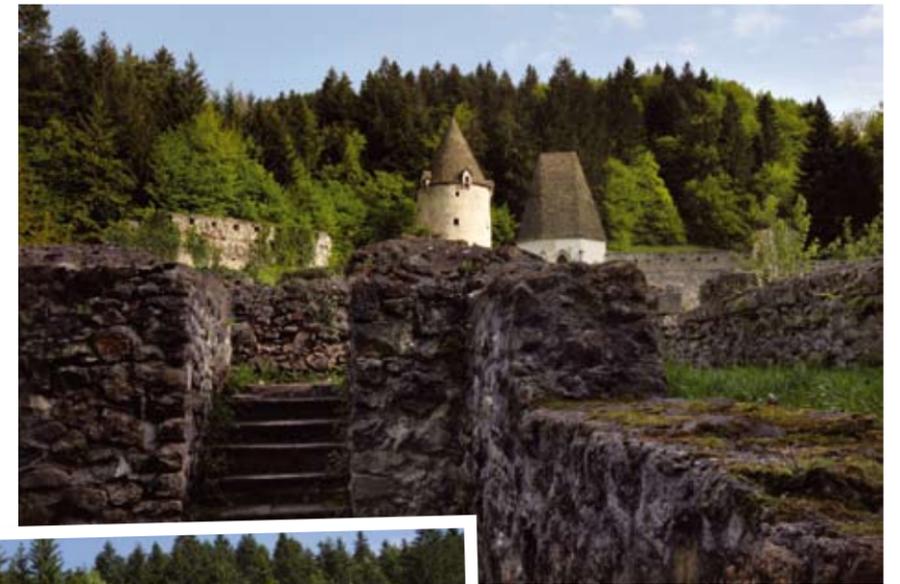
In the centuries that followed, the number of monasteries in the territory of present-day Slovenia grew, being established by the new orders of the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Teutonic Knights, Jesuits and others, and no longer just in the countryside, but increasingly frequently in cities. These establishments included quite a few convents, and for many years, in addition to the religious needs, they

satisfied the educational, health, social and cultural needs of the majority of the population, up until the state took over this role from them.

## Founding and flourishing of Žiče Charterhouse

The founders of the original monastery of Žiče in 1160 were the Štajerska Margrave Otokar III and his son Otokar IV, from the house of Traungau, and it was first inhabited by French members of the original monastery at Chartreuse, which was founded in 1084, in other words less than a century earlier, together with six brothers by St. Bruno of Cologne in the middle of a remote mountain area in the French region of Isère north of Grenoble. The Carthusians are a contemplative order with strict rules, and members opt for a spiritual life removed from other people, so their monasteries are generally established in remote locations where the influence of the surroundings on them is minimised. These conditions were also met by the location of the Žiče monastery in the valley of Sveti Janez Krstnik (St. John the Baptist), not far from the village of Žiče. Construction of the monastery was headed by Prior Beremound, Count of Cornwall, who was related to the English royal family, and a native of France, while actual construction work was taken on by the lay brother Aynard, who participated in the construction of several other prominent European charterhouses. The charterhouse, built along French architectural lines, was for the most part completed by 1190, and comprised an upper monastery in which the monks lived, and a lower monastery, several kilometres down the valley in the village of Špitalič, intended for the lay brothers.

In the following few centuries the Žiče monastery flourished and became an important religious and cultural centre, in which its residents, in spiritual focus and



**‘Žiče Charterhouse enjoyed the high point of its influence between 1391 and 1410, when it temporarily took over as the Grand Charterhouse and was an influential European political centre, since it was from there that the Prior-General Štefan Macone used his diplomatic acumen to bring together the then politically and ecclesiastically divided Europe, and during this period the monastery was visited by numerous European nobles and dignitaries.’**

the wider surroundings. In the period of high feudalism, thanks to their founders and feudal and church supporters, the medieval monasteries enjoyed a sufficiently solid economic base to operate as part of the then feudal social structure, since their estates and the serfdom of the local inhabitants ensured sufficient income for them to be self-sufficient. Žiče Charterhouse enjoyed the high point of its influence between 1391 and 1410, when it temporarily took over as the Grand Charterhouse and was an influential European political centre, since it was from there that the Prior-General Štefan Macone used his diplomatic acumen to bring together the then politically and ecclesiastically divided Europe, and during this period the monastery was visited by numerous European nobles and dignitaries.

## Decline and dissolution of Žiče Charterhouse

With the Turkish incursions and the threat and devastation they brought, the living and working conditions of the monastic orders deteriorated, and this was also felt by the Carthusians at Žiče, while an added threat to them was



the peasant uprisings spurred by the serfs' hatred of those wielding feudal power, which included the monasteries of that time. Yet the Reformation period, which for a short time set down strong roots in the Slovenian lands in the 16th century, was not kind to the monasteries either, and even after the suppression of Protestantism and the calming of the situation in society, the conditions for their continued existence were not significantly improved. Žiče Charterhouse continued to decline, and towards the end of the 16th century it was taken over from the Carthusians by the Jesuit order of Graz, then in 1782 the monastery at Žiče was one of those that Austrian Emperor Joseph II dissolved, in line with his religious reforms. The Gothic monastery church of St. John the Baptist, which was consecrated in 1190 by the Aquileia Patriarch Bertold von Andechs, still functioned for several decades as a parish church, but was then abandoned.

After the monastery was dissolved, the entire monastery complex started suddenly to crumble, and for the most part all that remained were ruins, while a large amount of construction material was carried off and used elsewhere. The monastery church is merely a stone skeleton without a roof, while several parts of the former monastery have been partly preserved or were later excavated, including the Otokar Chapel, refectory, cellars, kitchen, the upper storey, cloister and cemetery chapel. The defensive tower is also wholly preserved. This was erected as part of the monastery walls during the Turkish incursions. Of the lower monastery of the lay brothers in Špitalič, the only remaining structure is the Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a prominent feature of which is the preserved original entrance portal with a lunette. The stock of library material, which according to contemporary testament comprised 2,000 titles, including manuscripts, incunabulae and parchment created at

Žiče, was unfortunately preserved only to a rather limited extent, and for the most part outside Slovenia, mainly in the Austrian city of Graz.

### **Project to renovate and revitalise Žiče Charterhouse**

Awareness of the importance of this cultural and historical monument, and of the urgent need to restore and revitalise it, was awakened in the general public only a decade ago, when individual parts of the monastery complex started to be renovated, partly with European funds. Plans call for the extensive conservation restoration of Žiče monastery, and this should preserve its original design, while at the same time the core and wider monastery areas have been opened to larger, although limited, numbers of visitors that the local environment can support without damage.

Over the past three years, the

**'Plans call for the extensive conservation restoration of Žiče Charterhouse, and this should preserve its original design, while at the same time the core and wider monastery areas have been opened to larger, although limited, numbers of visitors that the local environment can support without damage.'**

renovated monastery farm has housed a permanent exhibition curated by Nataša Golob, entitled 'The Cultural Heritage of Žiče Charterhouse', and operating once more by the access to the monastery complex is Gastuž (from the German Gasthaus), the oldest inn of Central Europe, which at one time offered hospitality to wayfarers who could not enter the monastery itself, while today the building has been renovated, and its ground floor houses a bar and the upper storey a restaurant. Visitors can also stop in at the Viva Sana herbalist shop, which is continuing the tradition of one of the oldest apothecaries, and here members of the public can buy a variety of herbal preparations made for the most part to

the earlier recipes of the Carthusians. Next to the monastery, a local couple maintain and cultivate a garden of medicinal herbs that the Carthusians used in their treatments. The former vaulted cellars of the Charterhouse now house maturing sparkling wines, which are also part of the vine-growing and wine-making tradition of the monastery and formerly one of its important economic activities.

To mark this year's 850th anniversary of Žiče Charterhouse, an international conference was organised in June in Slovenske Konjice, centre of the municipality, while a day devoted to Žiče Charterhouse and its promotion was also held in Ljubljana City Hall.

### **The Carthusian tradition in Slovenia**

The charterhouses at Žiče and nearby Jurklošter were just two of four Carthusian monasteries in the Slovenian lands, for in 1255 the Carinthian Duke Bernard Spanheim founded a charterhouse at Bistra, near Vrhnika on the south-eastern margin of the Ljubljansko barje wetland, and in 1403 Herman of Celje, from the house of the Counts of Celje, founded the charterhouse at Pleterje on the south-eastern slopes of the Gorjanci mountains.

So there were in fact four Carthusian monasteries functioning in the Slovenian lands in the late Middle Ages, although all of them eventually closed. The youngest of them, Pleterje Charterhouse, which was also dissolved in the reign of Joseph, was renovated in 1899, after more than two centuries, when its buildings and estates went into state and private ownership, for the Carthusian order bought it back, and since then Pleterje has functioned as a charterhouse uninterrupted for more than a hundred years right up to the present day, and is one of 25 charterhouses remaining in operation around the world. The Carthusian spirit and tradition are therefore still present, active and alive today in Slovenia. ●

**I FEEL  
SLOVENIA**



**Rowing World Cup meet in Bled**  
Photo Darinka Mladenovič