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The latest from Slovenia

Tough times, tougher decisions

- INTERVIEW: **Iztok Rems, Rašo Nesterovič** • PEOPLE: **Tomo Križnar**
- SPORTS: **Superlatives for Bled** • ART & CULTURE: **Contemporary design in Slovenia**
- SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS: **Vegetarianism - a way to a higher goal?**

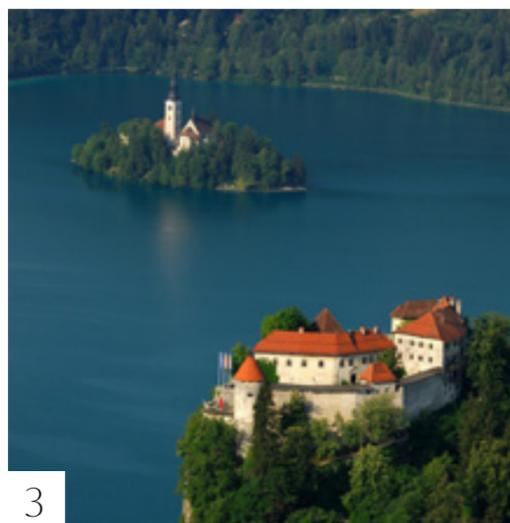
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editorial



Vesna Žarkovič, Editor

Is it possible to live out all our human qualities only in our culture?

Is it possible to feel and comprehend more than that which has been given to us by birth? There are many reasons why many Slovenians left their homeland many years ago and a variety of reasons why they have returned. When they emigrated, they took with them only a knapsack or a small cardboard suitcase and two hard-working hands; today they leave with an excellent education. Only few ever return. And each has his or her own story.

For the first time in many years – or maybe even for the very first time – Ljubljana became a place where all the Slovenians who live around the world came together, at least in spirit. There are many estimates as to how many Slovenians live outside their homeland. The best guess is that a quarter of Slovenians live outside the country's borders – approximately 400 000 people.

At the Bled Forum on Europe more than 400 participants, including politicians, economists and non-governmental players from all over the world, discussed the challenges of and powers needed for the future, the transfer and distribution of power to new power centres in the international community, and how Europe should go forward given the current circumstances. 'I see the solution to the challenges the EU is facing as being a United States of Europe,' emphasised Prime Minister Borut Pahor. 'If the EU does not act, we will witness the decline of the European idea. A new EU treaty must be considered, particularly for the purpose of integrating the eurozone's fiscal policies.' The impressions of the majority of the participants at the greatest sports event held in Slovenia this year – the World Rowing Championship in Bled – are almost euphoric. Bled welcomed over 1 200 rowers, rowing in 415 boats, and approximately 900 team members and officials from the International Rowing Federation, presenting itself with an image that even the locals do not often see. The opening of the 59th international Ljubljana Festival was also especially solemn. A wide selection of summer musical and theatrical events kicked off by way of a major concert held at Ljubljana's renovated Congress Square, where more than 1 100 Slovenian, Croatian and Russian musicians, under the baton of the renowned Russian conductor, Valery Gergiev, performed Mahler's famous Symphony No. 8 in E-flat major, also known as the Symphony of a Thousand, which was composed in 1906.

The crisis in Slovenian traditional building construction has greatly influenced architecture's acceleration towards a more energy-efficient, less ostentatious and extravagant, more ecological type of construction which is considerably more in harmony with the incontrovertible evidence of climate change. Today, as human arrogance has been tempered, sustainable, environmentally-friendly architecture has become one of the most significant elements in development, on the basis of which it would be possible to align our way of life with what our planet's resources can provide.

'Now the preparations for London 2012 Olympic Games will begin. I would like to defend my Olympic title from Beijing, and after London I will be looking to continue my career at the European Championship in Helsinki and at the next World Championship held in Moscow in 2013,' said Primož Kozmus, one of the greatest Slovenian athletes of all time, glowing with happiness with the bronze medal around his neck.

Slovenia has been selected to host the European Basketball Championship in 2013. The award of the championship is a great success and recognition for the country. The Secretary-General of the Slovenian Basketball Federation, Iztok Rems, and the legendary Slovenian basketball player, Rašo Nesterovič, are also well aware of this fact. They invite all sports and basketball fans and all good-natured people to come to visit Slovenia for the 2013 European Championship.



Darijan Košir

Tough times, tougher decisions

We currently have a minority government supported by only thirty-three of the required forty-five MPs; a government in which five ministries are temporarily covered by other ministers, and thus ministerial posts are only two-thirds complete; the whole country is talking about early elections, while the government is soon to subject itself to a vote of confidence; economic activity and growth are slowly but steadily declining, giving rise to predictions of a new recession (although not as long as the previous one); the international economic environment has long been equally unfavourable; the potential bankruptcy of Greece is forecast to lead to consequences comparable to the situation when Lehman Brothers collapsed at the beginning of the global financial crisis exactly three years ago, and the European Union is still struggling to find a solution to this original complication. Is it possible to imagine more complicated circumstances in which to rule a country? Hardly. And how did Slovenia (whether thanks to Slovenian politics or not) even manage to find itself in such a position, when only six months ago nothing like this could have been predicted?

At the beginning of this year – let's say, for the first three months – things seemed completely different: the Slovenian government (regardless of how diversely composed) seemed secure, enjoying a reliable majority in parliament, where even such difficult legislation as the pension reform passed without difficulty, and with a qualified majority of votes; globally speaking, economic growth was steep, especially for our most important trading partner, i.e. Germany, sparking a wave of optimism across every

aspect of the Slovenian economy. We have too little space here for an analysis of what went wrong in the world after the first quarter of the year, causing another downturn in economic activity and allowing pessimism to take the upper hand again; and the underlying causes are too complex to be easily interpreted. However, the internal causes of the split in the Slovenian government coalition are more evident, as are the reasons for the political situation as described above: the answer is simple –

the failed referendum on pension reform. This should not have even happened – and has never happened in any other country in the world – because it is unacceptable that a subject with such profound fiscal consequences should be decided by popular vote at a referendum. However, the constitutional court judged the matter differently and the referendum had to go ahead. Of course, due to the nature of the subject in question, the government lost its case (the people had to decide whether they should voluntarily extend their overall period of employment) – any government in any country in the world would lose.

It would be naïve to say that the Government coalition fell apart because of one failed referendum, although the pension act (which was confirmed twice in parliament, by a secure majority) was rejected at the referendum by more than 70 per cent of voters. The government was already divided before the referendum for a number of reasons: undoubtedly, the most important of these is that a coalition of parties with such heterogeneous views probably needs a good external reason to stay together; there was such a reason before the election (to win the vote from the ruling centre-right coalition), but this has been lost in the years since. If one adds certain personal political differences and views on how the government and the country should be run, the result is a highly 'explosive' mixture. Pension reform was the detonator.

The first spark came from the coalition party Desus, which represents the interests of pensioners and which (for curious political reasons) opposed the pension reform, building its political capital on this question (quite how much this capital has since declined can be seen from polls which show that public support for the party has more than halved in only three months since the referendum). Their stand was even more curious, since in the long run pension reform would ensure safer pensions for the very people the party represents – a fact highlighted by the Slovenian Federation of Pensioners' Organisations, which supported the reform and has more pensioners among its members than Desus, but sadly lacks political representation. The previously stable ruling coalition disintegrated when, at the end of June, the second biggest party, Zares (which held four ministerial posts), left the coalition, presumably due to the government's failure regarding the pension referendum. However, the hardships of the Prime Minister did not end there. At the beginning of August, the Slovenian Court of Auditors published its findings on one of the most notorious recent scandals – the lease of a building to house the Slovenian National Bureau of Investigation. Clues of possible corruption led to the Minister of the Interior, Katarina Kresal, who subsequently resigned, but still claims she will use all the legal channels available to prove that the lease of the building was untainted. Nevertheless, her party, LDS, remains in the government and is forming a minority government partnership

with the ruling SD party, with a total of thirty-three seats in parliament.

Despite the fact that the government is now considerably more functional, homogenous and compact, having only two thirds of its ministers in place, and comprising only two of the previous four parties, and despite the fact that the legislation it proposes still enjoys majority support in parliament (especially if it is supported by one of the previously like-minded partner parties, in which case a new speaker can easily be elected or a revised national budget for 2011 adopted), Prime Minister Borut Pahor had to make a decisive move – not only due to political hygiene, but also due to public pressure and in order to reinforce his team in view of the coming challenges of the economic crisis. He has nominated five new ministers (to replace those who resigned) and tied a vote of confidence to their appointments. Parliament will vote on the matter at the end of September. Based on the outcome of the vote, the Slovenian political class will decide whether to call early elections (in the event of a vote of no confidence) or whether Pahor's government will be allowed to see out its mandate, due to end in autumn 2012. It is a choice between whether Slovenia will win itself another year of relative political calm and a regular transition to a new, post-election arithmetic, or whether early elections will bring on an unexpected additional political crisis (and an uncertain future government coalition) in times of serious domestic and international economic circumstances.

Also, the failure of the pension reform had another painful effect which all of us who participated in the referendum campaign clearly presented to the electorate, although they did not believe us: that rejection of pension reform would lead to a lowering of Slovenia's international economic rating. According to estimates made public by the Minister for Development, Mitja Gaspari, yields on Slovenian ten-year bonds, which the government uses to borrow funds in foreign markets in order to finance its budget deficit (caused by a number of reasons, mainly social), have increased by 200 points (2 per cent) since the June referendum, causing the interest on Slovenia's bonds to approach the danger zone (between four and five per cent), and causing Slovenia to drift away from our benchmark, target price of German and French bonds. Yet another reason for the Slovenian government (the renewed one, hopefully) to immediately start adopting a number of already prepared measures to stop the trend of negative economic news coming from Slovenia and make the international finance markets aware of such recovery – it is they who (whether we like it or not) evaluate our country on a daily basis, comparing it to other, more successful ones. Slovenian politics thus faces important and challenging tasks. We believe in the maturity of the political class to be able to focus on the priorities of the current political situation and adopt corresponding decisions.

At the Bled Forum on the challenges and the power of the future

The focus of this year's Bled Strategic Forum held at Bled on September 9–10 was "the power of the future". The participants – over 400 from the world of politics, economy and non-governmental organizations – spoke about the transfer and redistribution of power to new centers of power in international community, especially to emerging economies, and also about what Europe should do in the given situation.



The central topic of the main panel at the Forum was redistribution of power from traditional holders of power to emerging economies and other non-state actors. In the discussion, the Chinese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Fu Ying pointed out that stereotypes can still be felt in relations between the East and the West.

She explained that Chinese investors investing in the West are very frequently faced with stereotypes since until recently the opposite was predominantly the case, namely the West invested in China. Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Samuel Žbogar believes that stereotypes might be eliminated through dialogue,

through better understanding of one another. It is precisely why the EU has been establishing strategic partnerships with different countries, also China, he said.

Deputy Minister Fu also said that at this moment the world is not undergoing the transfer of power from the West to the East as is generally believed in

the West but we are witnessing the diffusion of power from the West to a wider area. Therefore, some reforms are necessary, especially the reform of international institutions which are based on the situation after the World War II, she emphasized. Richard Boucher, Deputy Secretary General of the Organization for Economic Co-

operation and Development (OECD), is also convinced that the whole world is facing great challenges. He believes that Western countries will have to make certain crucial decisions and the question is whether they are capable of doing it. Russian Minister of Communication and Mass Media Igor Šegoljev pointed out the increasing importance of web-based social networks and new media. He is convinced that apart from advantages they also bring hazards so he believes that it would be necessary to set some rules also in this area.

Fu who otherwise sees Internet as a challenge for the govern-

ments also said that certain limits must exist. Wider masses have quick access to good information so the governments are forced to react fast, she says. The round table was also attended by a blogger from Egypt, Mahmud Salem, who talked about experience from the beginning of the year when in Egypt the appeal of web-based social networks initiated the protests that pushed President Hosni Mubarak out of office after many years in power. The second Friday's panel was devoted to searching new world order in the Mediterranean. As ascertained by the participants, changes in the Mediterranean after the Ara-

bian Spring can be compared with changes in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. They agreed that Europe will also have to play the crucial role in democratization of the Arabic world.

Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland observed that like in former communist countries of Eastern Europe the collapse of regimes in the Arab world also happened "from the inside". Tunisian Deputy Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui argued that revolution in Tunisia was not the consequence of poverty or unfavorable economic situation but the result of people's "desire" for more democracy.

Building of institutions and establishing the rule of law will be crucial for the countries of the Arab world as well as the support to freedom of speech and press, emphasized Jagland. The key role in this region, though, will be played also by Israel, agreed the panelists. Wadie Abunassar from the Israeli International Center for Consultations expressed doubt in the possibility of reaching a peace accord between Israel and Palestinians, especially because the sides neither listen to each other nor understand each other, although there still is some hope, namely in the young.

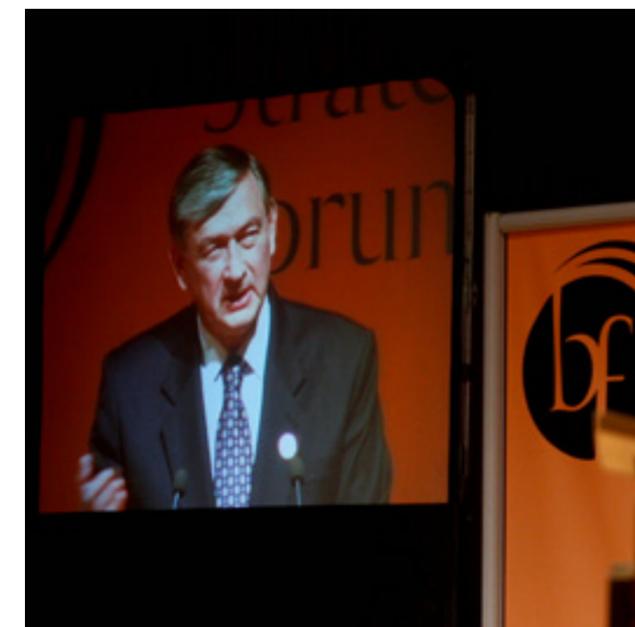
Türk and Pahor in Bled called for reflection about the EU future



PRIME MINISTER BORUT PAHOR:

»I see the solution for the challenges faced by the EU in the United States of Europe. If the EU fails to act, we will witness the demise of the European idea. We have to start thinking about a new deal in the EU, especially for the unification of fiscal policies in the Euro zone. We have to be aware that without strong currency we will not survive as a union. In order to have a

strong currency, however, we need a stronger political and social union than it is today. It is up to us Europeans to decide which way to take in the future. I think the best way for everyone who believes in the European idea, peace, stability and welfare of our nations is to bravely consider the idea of the United States of Europe. We should not be afraid of criticism but should bravely and passionately stand behind this very important cause, not



only for financial stability but also for the safety and welfare of our children and grandchildren.«

PRESIDENT DANILO TÜRK:

»Discussions about institutional and legal changes, about the need for new international agreements, new deals, new sanctions and new institutions are far from sufficient and are perhaps also not the most important. The most important aspect of changes

that Europe needs now will have to come from the inside. Changes always come from the inside. We saw this in the Arab world. Changes came from the inside. And they were dramatic. We expect changes also in the EU, but of a different nature. Nevertheless, they will have to come from the inside, within internal 'soft power' of civil societies, political ideas and above all within the states' sense of responsibility.«

Strategic Forum Bled is an established trademark

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE BLEED STRATEGIC FORUM, MIRJAM MOŽGAN FROM THE SLOVENIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY:

»The Forum has already gained great reputation in the region and also globally. It is an already established trademark and Slovenian economy has been increasingly aware of its importance. It is one of the most

notable international conferences in Slovenia, in the region and wider. The Forum represents one of the best established Slovenian trademarks. It becomes obvious when after six years we practically don't have to specially present the Forum. The BSF offers possibilities to everyone interested in international relations, trends in the economy. It offers the

possibility to hear what the leading world experts think about energy issues of the future, etc. We also address global challenges. On one hand, it is a strategic forum about global challenges, and on the other, it is an excellent meeting opportunity for politicians, business people and others. And a lot is always going on besides.



The first year of Slovenia's membership in the OECD

MITJA GASPARI MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

This month marks one year since we accomplished our last major objective – OECD membership – which we have pursued in international relations since our independence.

The OECD brings together the world's developed countries and shapes globally recognised standards in numerous areas of economic development, such as financial markets, investments, corporate management, combating international corruption, employment, education, the quality of public administration, and also in very specialised areas, such as nuclear energy and biotechnology.

These standards and comparisons between the countries are important for those responsible for formulating economic and development policies, as well as those international investors who often make decisions on the basis of the criteria, ranks and comparisons originating from the data published by the OECD. During the OECD accession process and in the first year of Slovenia's full membership, it was already possible to use and apply numerous comparisons between member countries and to analyse OECD reports when preparing national ones. Therefore, Slovenia was included for the first

time in publications such as Economic Outlook, Going for Growth, Pensions at a Glance, Government at a Glance and others.

This year witnessed the publishing of the second Economic Review of Slovenia, which is, together with its proposed economic policy recommendations, one of the more prominent and most cited publications in this field. In recent years, the OECD has in particular gone well beyond just economic aspects of growth in covering its subject matter. For example, for its member countries (including Slovenia), the OECD has been preparing a review of those innovation policies considered to be sources of growth. It also pays increasing attention to the definition and evaluation of individual sources of growth, thereby (through the Green Growth Project) also emphasising the environmental aspects. The introduction of the 'Better Life Index' this year was very well received; this is a composite index measuring numerous aspects of well-being across OECD member countries.

Reviews on Slovenia that focus on analyses and recommendations for increasing environmental efficiency and improving public governance, as well as a review on territorial development, are currently under preparation. In cooperation with its members, the

OECD has also been preparing comprehensive recommendations for the strengthening of economic growth, which go beyond instruments of a merely fiscal nature. These recommendations cover numerous measures for improvements in the fields of competition, corporate governance, public administration, investments and others. The OECD assists countries with the manner of implementation of established structural changes and adjustments with its "Making Reform Happen" project.

During the previous year, Slovenia took a prominent role in the work of OECD committees and working groups. At the 2011 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, Slovenia has participated as a full member for the first time. It has also been active in various committees at the ministerial level: the Health Committee; the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee; and the Territorial Development Policy Committee. By setting up a Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the OECD, Slovenia established an efficient link between Paris and Ljubljana for the organisation's activities in working groups and the committees' work in the subject area.

At present, fast-growing countries that are not OECD members are assuming an increasingly important role in the

world. In-depth cooperation has been established and the OECD acts as a think tank for the G20. Cooperation within the OECD provides an opportunity for Slovenia to maintain cooperation and coordination on an equal footing with the most prominent economic global players. For Slovenia (the fourth smallest country among the OECD member countries), this is an exceptional opportunity for cooperation within the G20 global forum and with other fast-growing economies. The functioning of the OECD is based on open dialogue and constantly searching for links between areas of expertise and policies for the purpose of increasing their efficiency. The principles of liberalisation and non-discrimination lead to a strengthening of competitiveness, while ensuring social and environmental development, and – consequently – to increasing prosperity. Slovenia makes good use of the OECD's know-how and experience, and it makes every effort to include them in the implementation of its own policies. Following our first year of membership, we can claim with certainty that Slovenia's accession to the OECD was a successful step towards the strengthening of its presence and reputation in international relations.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA, archive SIM, ZKDLJ

The measure is the love for Slovenian identity

This year, on 1 July, the Ljubljana city centre for the first time in many years, or maybe even for the very first time, became a place where all Slovenians who live around the world came together, at least in spirit. If in previous years emigrants presented themselves in the capital – usually with music and folk dances – only for one Saturday afternoon (and in earlier times not even that) and then dispersed to meetings organised especially for them by the Slovene Emigrant Association and the Slovenia in the World Emigrant Society, this time they came for a whole day and charmed us with their sense of belonging to their homeland and with their boundless goodwill to do anything in their power for it.





to data from 2003, there were 73,000 Slovenian citizens with permanent residence abroad. The number includes all our citizens living just across the border in Trieste, as well as Banja Luka, Stuttgart in Germany, to Buenos Aires in Argentina, where the largest “islands” of our people can be found. Among them are, of course, all the Slovenian staff at our diplomatic missions and consulates and the representatives of Slovenian and other companies around the world. Mr Rogelj states another interesting fact: from among the abovementioned number, only 7,763 wish to fulfil their duty as citizens and vote in the elections in the Republic of Slovenia.

WHERE ARE THE REST?

It is understandable that for an emigrant, Slovenian citizenship cannot be a major criterion, owing to the simple fact that the first generation of Slovenians, and the majority of others, emigrated as citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia or former Socialist Yugoslavia. It is not to be expected that these people would change citizenship in their old age.

What is important is their emotional and rational sense of Slovenian identity, or at least some of its elements, such as the culture. On the basis of

this criterion, by far the largest group of Slovenian emigrants can be defined accurately enough. Included in this group are all those who are not Slovenian citizens, but are mostly the members or descendants of all, even the sixth generation of Slovenians, who have already long ago mixed with the local people in life and work, got jobs there, and married with people of other nations.

Having no Slovenian citizenship does not prevent them from feeling they belong to Slovenian people. According to Mr Rogelj, there are 178,000 Slovenian emigrants living just in the USA, as established in the last United States census. The majority of them do not speak Slovenian, although that does not mean they are not willing to learn it, which is an important wish. This is in line with the observation that Boris Jesih, State Secretary at the Office for Slovenians Abroad, always emphasises: that language and culture are essential for preserving and strengthening Slovenian identity and are the only elements that can ensure the sense of belonging to Slovenia in the long term.

With regard to the demanding living and working conditions of many Slovenian emigrants, especially the more recent generations, it is clear that to maintain national identity in

a foreign environment has become increasingly demanding for every individual, but many manage to do so. Evidence of this includes the yearly seminar of Slovenian language at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, which increasing numbers of emigrant children or descendants attend every year, the flourishing of bilingual schools in the border region in Italy and in Carinthia, growing interest for our language at university language courses abroad, and similar. If we add to this number the Slovenian minority in the neighbouring countries and the remainder of the emigrants who moved abroad after 1966, mostly in search of work, and are now coming back in great numbers, we essentially reach the number 400,000.

NEW POLICY

As regards political interests, which in previous decades in many issues divided Slovenian emigrants, and were the result of the break in the Second World War, friction has nevertheless lessened considerably. The interest of the majority of emigrants regarding the political position of the Republic of Slovenia is above all that Slovenia be a well-governed parliamentary democracy built on European democratic foundations, because emigrants recognize these democratic standards. Our difficult history, of course, still burdens the memory, especially that of the members and descen-

dants of those 20,000 political emigrants who emigrated after the Second World War, mostly to Argentina and the USA, and have since then lived for decades with an unbelievably strong national identity in a peculiar cultural enclave, which did not have, nor wished to have any contact with their homeland. There was an impenetrable blockade on the other side too. We cannot deny that many contacts and actions among emigrants are still carried out under the impression of the hard times and injustices that occurred on both sides that fought against each other in the fratricidal Second World War in Slovenia. Nevertheless, these wounds are also healing. An exceptionally talented generation of young educated people, the descendants of these emigrants, represent a bridge between both parts of the Slovenian people.

It is understandable that Slovenia's relation towards Slovenians abroad must carefully and unobtrusively adapt to current circumstances. The firm rule of Slovenia's official policy remains that emigrants are an independent entity with their own destiny and that only their organisations, as well as individuals, can shape their own policy of relations with their environment. This, of course, means that political interests are moved far back in the agenda, while the Government Office for Slovenians Abroad, which is headed by Minister Boštjan Žekš and is the



result of a realisation of how important the question of Slovenians abroad for the future development of the nation is, deals mostly with the question of how and with what forms of assistance and cooperation Slovenia could most efficiently support the strengthening or at least the perseverance of the Slovenian identity of emigrants. Here the scope of assistance widens: from commendable, although a bit superficial, but very important facilitation of Slovenian national festivities in emigrant societies, where many Slovenians associate with each other, to actions that can bring new results in the globalised world, to providing current information on the trends in the Slovenian economy, science and culture, to facilitating the education of children of emigrants, to strengthening the possibilities for learning Slovenian, and to inviting and connecting influential Slovenians.

Minister Žekš has rightly asserted that there is absolutely no need to pathetically pity emigrants, who live far from their homeland, in the world where the distances have shortened, and that the view on Slovenians living abroad must be radically changed. “A sort of pity is a wrong and unnecessary reaction,” said Mr Žekš in the interview for Slovenia magazine. “These are capable, independent people, able to survive without Slovenia. Although Slovenia can help them to maintain their Slovenian identity – help them as equals, not with some kind of charity.”

SIXTY YEARS OF SLOVENE EMIGRANT ASSOCIATION

Finally, it must be noted that this year the Slovene Emigrant Association celebrates its 60th anniversary. This organisation, which was established in Ljubljana in 1951 and is now organised as an association, has throughout its existence substantially contributed to the strengthening of connections between emigrants and their homeland, has awarded numerous scholarships to the children of emigrants and participated in many charities helping emigrants. Today, it still represents one of the pillars of organised work with emigrants, even though the scope of its operation has been reduced, since it does not publish the emigrant magazine anymore. Sincere congratulations to all its members and associates on this anniversary!

It often appears that the emigrants possess more of such goodwill than people living here, for whom the homeland has too quickly become taken for granted. As the gathering was a part of the twentieth anniversary of Slovenian independence, still fresh memories were evoked of all the things our emigrants did at that time to achieve the recognition of Slovenia and the prompt ending of the war for independence. It is a fact that Slovenian emigrants have, by pressuring the authorities in the countries where they live and work, particularly in the countries of Western Europe and the Americas, considerably contributed to the favourable resolution of events and to the relatively peaceful achievement of independence with little loss of human life and material damage. Therefore, 1 July was an appropriate day on which to think about what the country that then came into existence can offer its emigrants today, and how they in turn can help it.

HOW MANY EMIGRANTS?

There are many estimates on how many Slovenians live outside their homeland. The prevalent one is that outside the borders of Slovenia lives a quarter of the body of the Slovenian people: that is about 400,000 people. It has sometimes seemed that this somewhat maximised number is to a great extent due to the traditional self pity over the hard history of the nation, which



Miha Žibrat, TVSLO,
photo: KZS archive, Aleš Fevžer

In 2013 Slovenia will be at the center of the basketball world

Iztok Rems and Rašo Nesterović



Slovenia was chosen to organize European Basketball Championship in 2013. To be selected as an organizer of the Championship is a great success and acknowledgment for the country. Secretary General of the Basketball Association of Slovenia

Iztok Rems and the legendary Slovenian basketball player Rašo Nesterović who assumed the role of the ambassador of Slovenian basketball at the European Championship in 2013 are well aware of it. Nesterović won the title of NBA champion

with the San Antonio Spurs in 2005, he played for the Italian team Kinder in 1998 when it was proclaimed the best basketball team in Europe, and he played in 52 official matches for the Slovenian national team, also as its captain.

When Dr. James Naismith “invented” basketball in 1891, he couldn’t imagine even in his dreams that it would become one of the most popular and widespread sports in the world. Today basketball is practically as widespread as soccer.

What does becoming the organizer of European Championship mean for Slovenia?

Iztok Rems: Sport is the best promoter of any country; that is why I think that Slovenia will be even more notable after 2013, not only for basketball but also for the beauty of our country. Many people who have already visited us, basketball workers as well as others, are acknowledging that this is one of the most beautiful European countries. If we talk about sports, I think that after Eurobasket we will acquire many new skilled workers who will gain experience at one of the greatest sports competitions in the Old Continent as well as new infrastructure that will contribute to the rise of sports as a whole, not only basketball. I think that together with everyone involved, including state authorities, we will do our best to make benefit of this Championship for the promotion of our country and its tourism.

Rašo Nesterović: As a sportsman I see the Championship as an exceptional opportunity for Slovenian basketball to further establish itself in the world and as well or even more as an opportunity for this beautiful sport to spread among the young. For the Championship in 2013, the cities that will carry out the organization of matches have already been chosen: Ptuj, Novo mesto, Koper, Jesenice and Ljubljana.

Are the preparations being carried out without major complications?

Iztok Rems: Despite economic crisis the organization of European Championship was taken responsibly by the Basketball Association of Slovenia in cooperation with towns who will host the competition. We are aware that sports infrastructure will not be built only for the purposes of the Championship but will be used by local communities long after. I am convinced the halls will be ready on time, but we will have very limited time to test new halls which will therefore not be tested as thoroughly as we would desire. In this way we could find certain deficiencies that could be eliminated. They will be tested any way and I believe they will be maximally prepared for all stages of the Championship.

Rašo Nesterović: I know Slovenian sports workers and I am confi-

dent they will prepare everything for the Championship as it should be prepared. Besides, Slovenia already has considerable experience with great sports competitions and there is absolutely no concern that something could go wrong.

Substantial financial resources are required to organize a competition such as European Championship.

Iztok Rems: At the Basketball Association of Slovenia, we already prepared detailed calculation of costs, revenues and expenditures some time ago. We estimate that the implementation of the Championship will cost us approximately Euro 7.5 million. These figures still remain unchanged.

Rašo Nesterović: Rašo Nesterović is staying with the Slovenian national team throughout this year’s European Championship in Lithuania. His presence is important for the players and since he is well known in the world of basketball also for the better recognizability of the team. *Rašo Nesterović:* In Lithuania I try to help our team. Of course I’m not interfering with professional, coaching work but try to positively influence the players with my experience. From time to time I give an advice or two to young players and I have to say they are very responsive. Otherwise I do not disturb them; the players have their own rhythm which should be so.

What does the fact that Rašo accepted the role of ambassador mean to you?

Iztok Rems: For us it is of great importance that Rašo accepted the role of ambassador of Slovenian basketball. We could hardly wish for a better promotion of Slovenian basketball than with the player who was at the top of NBA league and Euro league.

Experience of the Slovenian delegation gained in Lithuania will undoubtedly be very important for the organization of European Championship in two years.

Iztok Rems: In Lithuania it is obvious on every step that this is truly a basketball country. But generally I can say that Lithuania is an excellent organizer of this year’s European Championship.

Rašo Nesterović: When I watch how well this Championship was prepared by organizers in Lithuania,

I sometimes wander whether we will be as good in Slovenia. And the answer is always: “Yes, we will be as good or better.” We have to be aware, though, that this will really be a giant sporting event, probably the biggest in the independent Slovenia so far.

In Lithuania we prepared a press conference in cooperation with the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia. It was attended by a great number of foreign reporters which testifies that there already is great interest in the Championship which will be organized two years from now. We must not forget that Slovenia has an excellent geographic location. It is located in the middle of Europe and access to the cities where championship will be organized is fast and easy. Therefore, I also expect a great number of supporters and other guests from all over Europe.

A large number of visitors will be of great importance for the promotion of Slovenia, not only with regard to sports but also in other aspects. Primarily I have in mind tourism which will have a great opportunity to exploit the arrival of visitors from abroad.

Iztok Rems: We are lucky that Slovenia is recognized in Europe as a tourist destination, so that the accommodation will be arranged at a higher level. At the same time we are lucky that Slovenia is smaller than Lithuania which means that the entire country will live with basketball, not only the towns hosting the competition. Ever since we were selected as organizers of the European Championship we have been exchanging experiences with the Lithuanian Basketball Association and this excellent cooperation has been lasting for several years now. Together with them and the FIBA Europe we carried out a special handover on the last day of the Championship in Lithuania. This was our idea and it happened for the first time in history.

Rašo Nesterović: Our goal is that after the championship everybody leaves Slovenia with the best impressions and keeps coming back. And if I may also reveal my sports wish: it would be nice if after the competition Slovenian basketball players who will play in 2013 would be remembered as “the golden generation.” Namely, Slovenian basketball players are

capable of reaching the European peak also on the basketball court. *Iztok Rems:* Basic goal of the Championship is to popularize basketball in Slovenia while it is also true that we expect positive financial effects. At the same time we expect the Championship to strengthen our sports management, i.e. through volunteers and organization groups of the entire Championship.

Rašo Nesterović and Izток Rems: Everybody who loves sports, basketball and nice people: Welcome to Slovenia to the European Championship in 2013!

Slovenia has a rich basketball tradition as well. First records about basketball can be found from 1920 when basketball was allegedly played in Maribor but there is no firm evidence confirming it. So we can talk about the expansion of basketball in Slovenia only after World War II.

The Basketball Association of Slovenia was established on 15 January 1950.

Slovenian basketball players quickly found their way among the best in former Yugoslavia. Already in 1950, at the first World Basketball Championship in Buenos Aires, a player of the club Železničar from Ljubljana Mirko Amon played as a member of the Yugoslav national team.

Ever since, Slovenian basketball players were permanent and notable members of Yugoslav national teams. The best Slovenian basketball player of all times was Ivo Daneu who was also proclaimed the best player of the Championship at the World Championship in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1967.

Slovenian basketball players have won titles of World and European Champions as well as Olympic medals.

After Slovenia gained its independence, the basketball also stepped on the new path. Slovenian national team immediately qualified for the European Championship and also for the World Championships in 2006 and 2010. At European Championship in 2009 it missed the medal by a whisker and won the fourth place. That year the speculations about Slovenia becoming the organizer of the European Championship also started.



On the brink of a new recession?



Dr Jože Mencinger, economist and publicist.

According to several economists, Slovenia will have to become accustomed to very low economic growth, or even recession, for a very long time

After Slovenian gross domestic product in the second quarter of 2011, at 0.9 per cent, grew by only half the rate in the previous five quarters, and when exports and imports slowed, Slovenians are wondering if the country is on the brink of a new recession. Concern is that much greater since growth in the Slovenian GDP fell from grand eight per cent in 2009, and in 2010, increased by only 1.4 per cent.

Several economists, including Dr Jože Mencinger, point to the fact that very low economic growth or even recession is something to which people will have to become accustomed for quite a long time. And that may lead to even higher unemployment. The Government is determined to control the use of sources in the public sector and to reduce

the number of employees. It has also decisively limited growth in wages, which may trigger strikes by public sector workers, which could have a great influence on the population. In June 2011, the public sector employed 160,310 people, with state bodies accounting for a little over 34 thousand people. In 2011, the number of employees in the public sector increased by more than two thousand between January and June alone. In future, new recruitment in the public sector is supposed to be closely monitored.

The economising package in the public sector also includes the anticipated reform of the healthcare system, which is being drafted by the Minister of Health, Dorijan Marušič, who is also working on the rationalisation of hospital capacity. Although several of the Government's reforms, including of pensions, were rejected in referendums, the Government anticipates further discussions on the changes. The need for pension

reform was also stressed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel on her recent visit to Slovenia. She commended the Slovenian Prime Minister, Borut Pahor, on his hundred per cent commitment to the European idea.

Dr Peter Kraljič, a long-time director at McKinsey, a global management consultancy, stresses that Slovenia needs a variety of structural reforms, which are among the reasons for the country's failing competitiveness. In the Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012 prepared by the World Economic Forum, Slovenia was in 57th place, and after falling nine places last year, has dropped a further twelve places.

Without competitiveness, says Kraljič, it is difficult to be successful in today's world. He also stresses that Slovenia is fortunate that its exports are increasing, since several companies are still competitive enough, but nevertheless, it lacks large companies which would lead

the country forward, and a large number of smaller and medium-sized companies that would follow that lead.

The Slovenian building industry is not yet out of the crisis, and after the failure of several large construction companies, has regressed fifteen years in its economic activities. However, there are many, particularly small construction companies among the newly established businesses. On the other hand, an increasing number of construction workers, skilled workers, fitters and others have found work in neighbouring countries, especially Austria, where construction workers are well paid, and also in Germany. Consequently, some people actually observe that their taxes, too, are then being collected in other countries and forget that there is currently little work for construction workers in Slovenia, because the majority of the Slovenian motorway system has been built. But there will be work again



Dr Peter Kraljič, long time director at McKinsey.



Mitja Gaspari, Minister for Development and European Affairs.

when negotiations on the reconstruction of the railway infrastructure are concluded, when this eventually happens. Construction companies built many luxurious housing units which are selling very slowly, and thus, their money has been built into the units.

Several of the remaining construction companies face problems and large debts. At the same time, NLB, the largest Slovenian bank, will also require a capital injection. Some Slovenian economists are not surprised, having noted that the first capital injection was too small and that other countries supported their banks more generously.

However, Mitja Gaspari, the Minister for Development and European Affairs and, temporarily, also the Minister of the Economy, emphasised that the banking sector in Slovenia is too cautious in assuming risks. Namely, it is NLB - compared to other similar European Union institutions - which accumulates quite large reserves, which is supposed to lead to the creation of quasi-reserved profit, according to data from the Economic Institute of the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana. As Mr Gaspari pointed out, an economy cannot

function without lending credits. Merely allowing companies to go bankrupt and noting reservations is not an appropriate policy. Bank lending has almost completely stopped in the last ten months, which - together with the building industry - is the most important reason for the low economic growth in Slovenia.

In the first seven months of 2011, the Slovenian banking system made some 48 million euro gross profit, i.e. pre-tax profit. As established by the Bank of Slovenia, the banks' balance sheet totals in July moderately increased. By the end of July 2011, the costs of impairments and reservations had increased more than in the same period last year. The capital adequacy of the banking system increased in the first seven months. However, the operation of non-financial corporations is worsening, which causes an increase in delays when settling liabilities to banks.

The poor state of the economy is not a very pleasant situation for Slovenian experts and scientists, who too often seek employment abroad rather than at home. After Slovenia's accession to the European Union, when opportunities for employment

abroad increased, 125 Slovenian researchers and 46 young researchers went abroad, according to the results of the latest survey on the brain drain, which covers the period between 2004 and 2009. According to the Institute for Economic Research in Ljubljana, the brain drain from Slovenia is not yet on a large scale. Most of the emigrants are men, most often with doctorates, with an average age of 37. Two thirds went abroad alone, mainly to the USA, the Netherlands and Great Britain.

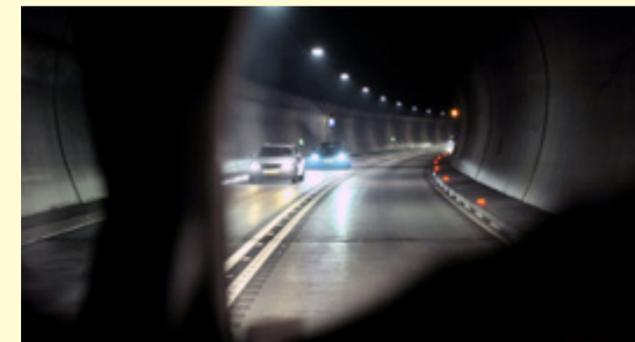
On the other hand, Slovenia became attractive to young researchers from the former Yugoslav countries and Eastern Europe. Their numbers may be gathered from the financing of the young researchers' programme. Recently, 56 young researchers from abroad received financial aid.

Although Slovenia does not score badly in international surveys of corruption, much has been said recently on this issue, especially since the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption drafted a programme which enables insight into business dealings between the state and companies, various law firms and others in recent years. The so-called Supervisor database aroused international interest. While some in Slovenia are enthusiastic about the programme, several economists warn about the inappropriateness of public access to these data, which may in public be perceived as disputable, although in reality they may be completely accurate.

While in the past, poverty was most frequently connected with unemployment, today, in-work poverty is also increasing. Al-

ready in 2001, the first European surveys on this issue showed that the main reasons for poverty in Slovenia are very low minimum wages, which were below the threshold of poverty. When - despite great opposition from employers - the minimum wage was increased in 2010, the number of people in poverty somewhat decreased. However, according to data from the Red Cross, a growing number of beneficiaries of aid for the poor are employed in low income jobs. More than one hundred new applicants seek aid each month. More than six thousand residents of Ljubljana, including over two thousand children, had to survive on humanitarian packages with food this July. If the majority of more than one thousand registered unemployed people in Slovenia have at least one child, the existence of more than three hundred thousand Slovenian citizens is threatened.

The peak of the tourist season saw a disagreement between Slovenia and Austria due to the Karavanke tunnel, which was jointly constructed as a one-tube tunnel. For safety reasons, Austria restricted freight traffic through the tunnel, which caused great dissatisfaction among Slovenian hauliers. Experts, Slovenian ones included, stress that the tunnel urgently requires modernisation and compliance with globally accepted safety standards. Some proposals include the construction of a second tube, or a new tunnel, or a combined road and rail tunnel, as suggested by Andrej Čufer, an architect and innovator in the field of tunnel safety.



Karavanke tunnel.

Tomi Brezovec, Turistica; Maja Pak, Director of Slovenian Tourist Board (STB)

Twenty Years of Slovenian Tourism

Twenty years ago, Slovenia became a new global tourist destination. It had a centuries-long history of tourism that, since the first half of the 19th century, it had marketed under the names of the various political entities of which it was a part.

The repositioning on the tourist market and the development of the image of Slovenia as a tourist destination was a demanding task. The reason was that the Slovenian tourist sites

were known as Yugoslav destinations on foreign markets. Due to the wars on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, everything that was “Yugoslav” had a negative connotation, a

fact that hindered Slovenia’s promotion on the international tourist market. However, the loss of the international market share was not the only challenge the Slovenian tourist in-

dustry was confronted with after 1991. In the two decades since gaining independence, the structure of guests and their needs has also changed; it was a period of privatisation

and the re-structuring of companies, as well as the time of certain drastic changes in the organisation of tourism, both at the national and local levels. And all these factors have influenced the present image of Slovenian tourism.

CHANGE IN TOURIST DEMAND

The response of the tourist market to political developments in Slovenia and later in Croatia was rapid. In the year of Slovenia gaining its independence, the overall number of tourists decreased by 40%, and the number of foreign guests fell by no less than 74%. A further decline in the number of foreign tourists continued throughout 1992, when Slovenia was visited by another 20% fewer tourists. In 1993, the number of foreign guests started to slowly increase; however, at the end

of the 1990s, the number of foreign guests was still lower by one third in comparison with the year before the independence. There was also a rapid decrease in the number of tourists from the former Yugoslavia. In 1990, Slovenia was visited by 800,000 guests from the other Yugoslav republics, but three years later (1993), this number was only 50,000.

The loss of foreign guests was partly compensated by domestic tourists. In 1990, there were 0.6 million Slovenian tourists who contributed to more than one fourth of all tourist revenues (27%). The number of domestic tourists increased by 15% in 1992 and this growth continued until 1995, when their number rose to approximately 850,000. With some fluctuation, this number was maintained for another decade

and then began to increase again in 2006. The rise in the number of domestic guests in the early 1990s can be attributed to political developments and the war in the neighbouring Croatia. For safety reasons, Slovenian tourists tended to avoid the popular holiday resorts in Istria and Dalmatia, and stayed in Slovenia. It was only after the end of the war, i.e. in 1996, that they started to increasingly re-visit Croatia. And it was also then that for the first time after the independence, a decrease in the number of domestic guests was registered, since the majority of them began to visit the Croatian coast again.

SLOVENIA’S PROMOTION ON FOREIGN MARKETS

After 1993, the number of foreign tourists visiting Slovenia has been increasing by an average annual rate of 3%. For the purpose of promoting Slovenia as a tourist destination on foreign markets, the Slovenia Tourism Promotion Centre (STCP) was founded in 1995.

BRAND NAMES OF SLOVENIAN TOURISM

Headed by Franci Križan, the centre’s founders were the Republic of Slovenia, the Government and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia. The founding of the STCP represented a new step forward toward the systematic marketing of Slovenian tourism. The centre’s activities were based on a tourism marketing strategy, drafted in 1994. For the purpose of ensuring a higher efficiency, this document envisaged a centralisation of funds for promotion activities. Rather than geographic areas, the Slovenian tourist industry for the first time marketed destinations and tourist products. A new visual identity of Slovenian tourism was consistently used on all printed materials and in publicity campaigns. Most of the STCP’s operations were aimed at foreign markets. The main activities were trade-fair appearances, the production of promotional material and advertising in the foreign press. In addition, a

network of representative and information offices was established on the incoming tourist markets of major significance for the Slovenian tourist industry.

By way of the Decree on the Transformation of Public Commercial Institutions, the STCP was transformed into a public commercial institution and was named the “Slovenian National Tourist Board”. This decree was followed by an amendment to the decree with certain corrections, including the deletion of the word “national”, and henceforth, the institution has been operating as the Slovenian Tourist Board (STB). The decree, however, not only bought about a new name, but also extended the STB’s activities to the field of research and development. Moreover, representative offices were established on the most important markets (Austria, Germany and Italy), followed by the opening of the STB’s bureau in Brussels for the Benelux countries in 2007.

In the period from independence to the present, Slovenia or Slovenian tourism has been promoted under several brand names. The symbol the Slovenians remember best from the time before and after independence is the then symbol of the Slovenian tourism – the linden leaf.

Based on the Strategy of Marketing the Slovenian Tourism, a bouquet of colourful flowers with the slogan The green piece of Europe was chosen as the emblem of Slovenian tourism within the first Slovenian tourism forum held in Bled. The proposal was chosen as an optimum solution from among several other proposals as the one that best reflected the basic idea of the presentation of Slovenian tourist services and was also in line with the trends of tourist demand at the dawn of the new millennium. The slogan The green piece of Europe, denoting the location, was chosen as a supplement to the



After the year 2000 and for the first time since 1991, more overnight stays were registered for foreign guests than domestic guests. Photo: Ubald Trnkoczy



In the previous 15 years, the Slovenian tourist industry has registered above-average growth; the number of foreign tourists has increased by 160%. Photo: M. Lenarčič



The most popular tourist attraction is the Postojna Cave, annually visited by more than half a million people. Photo: Archive of Postojna Caves

basic emblem of visual identity for the purpose of communication on foreign markets. It highlights the “green” component of Slovenian tourist services and places it in the European context.

In November 2003, the Slovenian Tourist Board launched a contest for a creative concept of marketing communication aimed at increasing Slovenia's visibility and upgrading the marketing communication of Slovenian tourism in terms of content upon Slovenia's accession to the EU. Among the eleven competitors, the Imago agency's Slovenia Invigorates was selected. This was the beginning of the first major joint publicity campaign, by way of which Slovenia wanted to position itself abroad as a country that surprises, invigorates and enriches the European Union. The slogan Slovenia Invigorates represented the first attempt involving the use of a uniform slogan not only in tourism, but in all other areas.

In 2006, this slogan gave way to the new slogan I feel Slovenia, which is in use today. Between 2006 and 2010, the brand I feel Slovenia was primarily used in tourism. In this area, the use of the brand was consistently implemented both visually and in terms of content. In 2010, the brand – particularly in terms of visual elements – was also introduced into other areas, for example in the area of sport, where it was included in major sport events, such as the Winter Olympics, the Football World Cup and the Basketball World Championship.

RISE OF SLOVENIAN TOURISM

A rapid rise in tourist demand began after the turn of the millennium. This particularly involved foreign tourists who (at the beginning of the 21st century, and for the first time since 1991) registered more overnight stays than domestic guests. Since then, the share of the incoming tourism has been steadily increasing, so that the share of overnight stays made by foreign tourists rose to 56%. While the number of foreign



guests in the previous decade doubled, the share of domestic guests did not change.

In the previous 15 years, the Slovenian tourist industry has registered an above-average growth; the number of foreign tourists has increased by 160%. Today, the tourist industry produces 3 million arrivals and 9 million overnight stays, and approximately €1.8 million of tourist revenues from outgoing tourism, which represents 40% of the export of services. Tourism is becoming an increasingly important industry, since it provides (directly and indirectly) jobs for every tenth

employee, whereas its share in the GDP amounts to 12.3%. The ranking of Slovenian tourism in terms of global tourist competitiveness is also improving. Currently, Slovenia ranks 33rd, and in this ranking, it has moved up 11 places.

A systematic approach towards marketing, the renovation of tourist infrastructure, the development of spa and convention tourism, the design of tourist products, the promotion of sustainable tourism, a systematic approach towards the organisation and management of tourism, and increasing tourism turnover demonstrate

the quality of its development in the past twenty years. Looking into the future, however, provides new impetus. A new development and marketing strategy of Slovenian tourism for the 2012–2016 period will above all be based on a comprehensive marketing, the improvement in the quality of services and the development of innovative tourist products aiming at increasing the competitiveness and tourism turnover, and promoting a sustainable development of people- and nature-friendly tourism.

MOST VISITED TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN TWENTY YEARS OF INDEPENDENT SLOVENIA

The most visited tourist attractions, for which the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS) collected data until 2008, are the Postojna Cave, Bled Castle, Lipica, Predjama Castle, the Savica Waterfall, the Škocjan Caves, the Regional Museum in Ptuj, Savinski Gaj,

the First World War Museum in Kobarid, Blejski Vintgar and Ljubljana Castle with its viewing tower. After 2008, SORS stopped monitoring individual sites; therefore, the number of visitors for 2009 and 2010 is based on estimations.

Since independence until the present, each of the above-mentioned sites has attracted at least one million visitors. The most popular tourist attraction is the Postojna Cave, visited annually by over 550,000 people. Since independence, the cave has been visited by more than nine million people (this estimate is based on the frequency of visits in 2009 and 2010, which equals the frequency in 2008). A similar number of people visited Bled Castle, Lipica, Predjama Castle, the Savica Waterfall and the Škocjan Caves in total.

In the twenty-year development of its tourism, Slovenia was visited by 41 million tourists who made 138 million overnight stays.



Originally, the brand “I feel Slovenia” was primarily used in tourism. However, after 2010, it was also included in major sport events, such as the Winter Olympics, the Football World Cup and the Basketball World Championship.



Bert Pribac, Writer

Returned emigrant from two homelands

Reasons why many have left their homeland and reasons why we keep coming back are diverse. First, we left because of the post-war nightmares and changes, and afterwards, mainly Slovenian boys were running away because they did not want to serve any army or there were no jobs available for them: not in the forests, mines, nor on the roads. And they took the beautiful and hardworking Slovenian girls along with them, if they were able to. When we were leaving, we only carried a bundle or a small cardboard suitcase. But in returning, we need large shipping containers, although there are just few of us returning.

But everyone has his own story. I told my story to magazines, radio and television interviews, and in the book titled, *Tam daleč pod južnim križem* (Far Away under the Southern Cross,) which was published last October. It is a vast collection of 45 essays with many pictures from my almost 45 year long emigrant experience in Australia.

Although I did return to my native homeland, a part of me remained forever in Australia, and my soul is pulling me back to be under the Southern stars, because I have almost as many relatives there as I do here in Koper and Trieste. In Australia live my oldest son Friderik (or Zdenko) stayed with my grandson Reuben and granddaughter Minna, many nephews and nieces, and also many friends. They are all a part of who I am.

I came to Melbourne, Australia on 30 March 1960 via West Germany, where I was a refugee for almost a year in Zirndorf near Fürth in Bavaria. I moved to Canberra, the capital of Australia, six years later where I got a job at the National Library, and then at the Department of Health. Now, already retired but with rejuvenated family, I have returned to native Slovenian Istria where me and my wife Ljubomira had built a house at the viticultural outskirt of our native village of Sergaši near Koper.

Already upon my departure from Germany, I had the intention to return to Slovenia at the first favourable opportunity. I thought this would happen after some 5 to 7 years when I made some money. The favourable opportunity arrived 15 years later, but at that time, I had already been so firmly grounded under the Southern Cross that I did not feel like going anywhere anymore. Many Slovenians wait for their opportunity to return, even for more than 50 years. Some, however, gave up the idea completely. So, why did I return to Slovenia? For a very simple reason, after ten years of Australia, my wife Ljuba wanted to return to her folks in Vipavska dolina valley at least for a few years. She wished that our boys, Simon in Ivan, would learn the Slovenian language well. And I said to myself that I can survive another decade or so in my homeland, if God permits, after four decades of Australia.

It can be difficult coming back, since there are usually almost no friends from your youth left in your hometown except for the older emigrants, you are often a foreigner on your own land, and it is hard for you to adjust to new circumstances. This did not happen to me because I had no quarrel with anyone when I left. I had merely withdrawn from the violent intelligence services. All my former friends and classmates kindly and friendly accepted me back; we met at literary and cultural meetings, and shopping on the marketplace, in Mercator and Spar.

My first experience upon returning in my almost denationalized village of birth was rather bitter. I had to adjust to people from the Southern parts of then common state who were afraid that I would take away the land they had seized from my fellow villagers who had been pushed into the world by the collectivization.

But life goes on and people adjust, although younger rather than the elderly. Also I also have to adjust again to an almost foreign country, since



Photo: personal archive

Slovenia is also as the country of yanks now, possessing everything: from jazz, hamburgers and fear from 'dummies' to unfortunately drugged youth, even in villages.

In the majority of the early post-war emigration generation there is no longer the strength or health present that would make one feel like moving and adjusting again. As an old friend from the Karst said to me: "I wonder who still feels like moving in these years?" Or as another colleague from the Notranjska region said: "Children and grandchildren are grounded here in the foreign country, are part of this country, and older you get, rather you stay close to them."

Our first emigration generation truly was nothing but sadness, similar to the Jewish weeping along the willow trees in Babylon at full pots of meat, while the younger generations are quite another matter. They are living with a constant Slovenian presence in the world. They also gained a lot of experiences in the foreign world, and have made great and respectful friendships. It is important that they remain open and friendly towards the homeland of their parents, that they are well-informed and help it when it is in distress.

In view of this, a thought written to me by my late friend and longstanding co-worker from the Association and holder of the Australian national decoration, Marjan Peršič, comes to my mind: "It is important that we, the emigrants, help each other and socialize with each other because we feel good together, and in particular, we must take care of Slovenia's good name in the world!"

I tried to do this to the best of my ability.

Because I have by choice two homelands, this happened by itself in my case. Due to my journalistic and literary education I became the transfer means for goods of culture and civilization between both continents, a kind of small spiritual bridge between Australia and Slovenia, at least in the literary field. Radio Ljubljana broadcasted 13 of my literary nocturnes of Australian already years ago. I was in numerous TV shows and I had many radio and newspaper interviews; I also participated in editing and preparing miscellanies and poetry anthologies of Australian Slovenians.

Thus, upon my constant returnings from Australia, the collections of Australian poetry came to life in the Slovenian language, as follows: *Konec sanjske dobe / End of Dream Era* (an anthological profile of the modern Australian Aboriginal poetry, 2003) and *Vesolje okrog kuščarja / Universe around Lizard* (from the Australian poetry of 20th Century, 2003). In 2008, Salt Publishing in Cambridge published my very notable translations of 120 poets by Srečko Kosovel, done in cooperation with the Australian author David Brooks, entitled *The Golden Boat*. Currently, I am translating the works of poetess Mila Kačič into the English language. I hope that in cooperation with Mr Brooks I will also manage to translate the most distinguished Poems in Prose by Kosovel. Again, I got accustomed to the themes and memories of my native Istria. In March 2010, I published the discussion, *The Bay of Piran belongs to Piran* regarding the conflict with Croatia for the rightful border.

In Australia, I also left behind approximately 50 technical reports and articles on "management" of libraries and health information systems. In the catalogue of the Australian National Library, there are 17 of my monographs, and perhaps the most renowned among them is, next to the translated *The Golden Boat* by Kosovel, the *Bicentennial Bibliography of Australian Medicine and Health Services*.

I could not give up creating all this, and I am very pleased with my work.



Metka Skrobar, Artist

Wherever I go, I always have a sense of coming home

Whenever I go and wherever I go, I always have sense of coming home.

In 1957, my family arrived in Melbourne aboard the migrant ship *Flaminia*. I was nine years old. My parents had made a courageous decision to leave Slovenia (then part of former Yugoslavia) and go to Austria, where we awaited a passage for almost six months to a new "land of promise". It was to be either Canada or Australia, whichever country called for us first.

We arrived with little more than two suitcases between us, containing all our worldly possessions. Even though I was only a child, I remember the pride and dignity of the migrants in that camp and their commitment to make a better life for their children.

As a migrant child, I was very conscious of having to "fit in". I found that my painting and drawing drew a lot of attention and approval from the teachers, so it became a way I could be acknowledged and rewarded. My teachers must have seen some potential talent as they encouraged me in every way, and I won every art prize on speech nights from primary school to secondary college.

After many years of juggling my professional life as a teacher, rearing a family of three children and running the accounting side of our construction business, I finally took the plunge and threw myself into painting full time. Time has proven that my decision was the right one. To date, I have had 23 solo exhibitions both in Australia, and Slovenia and a portfolio of art awards. And in September this year, I will hold my 24th solo exhibition in my country of birth, Slovenia.

I have recently entered the Archibald Art Prize, a renowned national art exhibition, with a portrait of a very special lady by the name of Pearl Goldman who, in her younger years, was one of Norman Lindsay's principal models. This was a wonderful experience, as it has led me to newer friendships with "women of substance."

Being an artist has opened many doors of wonderful opportunities for me; one of those doors led to the outback of Australia. In 2002, I was asked by the Queensland Government, under the aegis of Regional Arts Development, to travel to some remote places in Central and Western Queensland and conduct art seminars and creative art workshops in art societies. Little did I know that ten years later I would be doing this on a monthly basis. This opportunity to be with, and work with the women of the regional remote areas has constantly given me a sense of satisfaction, fulfilment



Photo: Russell Shakespeare

and pride. Whenever I go and wherever I go, I always have sense of coming home.

These women of the outback are so strong, committed and resilient. To get to my classes some have to drive two to three hours and that is after checking waterholes and fences and getting kids ready for school. Their creative work is in such contrast to my other classes in city areas. It is so free, so spontaneous, because their time with me is so limited. Many come out with wonderful little "masterpieces".

In some of my sessions in the remote areas, I have set up classes in the most unorthodox locations: from tin sheds to under the stalls on a race track in 40 degree heat with high winds and an audience of 20 kangaroos.

For the past 22 years, I have also conducted my own fine art studio in Ashmore, where I have been able to pass on some of my own creative knowledge to many enthusiastic art students. It was called *Studio 22*, because I generally had 22 students during my weekly two day sessions.

What I have learnt from these spirited women of the outback is that strength lies in community and no matter what life throws at you, just band together, square your shoulders, and get on with it. As an artist and tutor, for some reason people regard me a little differently, as they respect my willingness to be returning to Slovenia to study or participate in exhibitions.

Being of a culturally different and rich background, people have sometimes been quite interested in what Slovenia is like. So in 2005, I actually brought a group of 10 adult art students from Australia to visit Maribor and the Adriatic Coast, where they attended a special folk festival of which I had a small part. They were overwhelmed and happy to see where my roots were.

For many years after my visits to Slovenia to visit galleries and connect with different artists, I returned to Australia so inspired that I created several exhibitions that covered the whole spectrum of the beautiful abundantly rich in natural wonders the Slovenian countryside and the coastal towns of Piran and Portorož.

In my own way, I was giving Australians a glimpse of my interpretation of Slovenia, my mother home, as I will be now in September showing to Slovenia my interpretation of the vast rich and textured landscape of Australia at the *Galerija Grad* in Slovenska Bistrica from 29th September to 20th October.

Anja Zorko and Maja Vardjan, photo: Jana Urbas

SILENT REVOLUTIONS: Contemporary Design in Slovenia



The touring exhibition Silent Revolutions: Contemporary Design in Slovenia which will be on display for the first time from 22–25 September 2011 at the London Design Festival represents the selection of design projects that marked the first two decades of the young European state. The exhibition will be open on Friday, 23 September by Borut Pahor, President of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

The exhibition title – Silent Revolutions – portrays Slovenia as a state with exceptional design history which, however, has not yet been established as an important design location in the wider European space. The “silence” was one of the drives inspiring the concept of the exhibition with a wide array of recent products placed in a dialogue with five historic, iconic design products. The aspect of “revolution” exposed in the title points out to the fact that a considerable number of products with ground-breaking innovation set new standards on the global scale.

The exhibition is not focused only on excellence of individual products but on the position they take in a wider context of modern Slovenian design. This context was fundamentally changed after Slovenia declared its independence in 1991 which was followed by a sudden leap into a new system of free market economy. Therefore, clients, producers and companies that played an important, crucial role in the implementation of the projects are also presented at the exhibition along with products and designers. Innovative approaches, new directions of development, unusual visions, new design mentalities and good strategic navigation in today’s constantly changing economic situation are pointed out. The selection presents products of large-scale industries with their own brands as well as pieces produced in smaller series by the hands of the designers themselves. This vital variety that reflects exceptionality and heterogeneity of this moment are pointed out as the main common denominator of modern production design in Slovenia.

Among various, exceptional examples are top-class, filigree turntables and arms by Franc Kuzma, seductive Black Cherry Lamps by designer Nika Zupanc as well as the world’s first larger hybrid boat Greenline 33 Hybrid and modular façade systems Qubiss One with ArtMe, developed by the company Trimo. The exhibition also presents key products of the giants of Slovenian industry, among others the series of Elan’s flexible skis WaveFlex designed in coopera-

tion with Geodesign studio, Alpina’s Racing Elite cross-country ski boots developed in cooperation with Jure Miklavc studio and Gore-nje’s Simplicity home appliance line designed by the Gorenje Design Studio. The exhibition which is the first extensive international presentation of Slovenian design in the last two decades is also accompanied by the publication in a form an extensive catalogue. After the first presentation in London, it will be on display also in other important European centers, such as Milano, Eindhoven and Helsinki. Implementation of this project is the result of active cooperation between the Museum of Architecture and Design, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of the Economy of the Republic of Slovenia, Public Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investments and the Government Communication Office of the Republic of Slovenia.

The exhibition was placed in the editorial selection of the ICON magazine – Icon Design Trail which in its guide points out selected events during the London Design Week.

Tent London @ Dray Walk Gallery
Old Truman Brewery, Brick Lane
E1 6QL London Great Britain
September 22–25 2011

Presented designers: Igor Akrapovič, Asobi, Bevk Perović arhitekti, Lara Bohinc, Ivo Boscarol, Gigodesign, Gorenje Design Studio, Jernej and Japac Jakopin, Leonora Jakovljevič, Kabinet 01, Toni Kancilja, Rok Kuhar and Katjuša Kranjc, Franc Kuzma, Studio Miklavc, Rok Oblak, Oloop, Tanja Pak, Marko Pavlinec, Janez Suhadolc, Arne Vehovar, Nika Zupanc, Peter Florjančič, Niko Kralj, Saša J. Mächtig, Davorin Savnik, Marko Turk

Presented companies: Akrapovič, Alpina, Lara Bohinc, Elan, Glesia, Gorenje, Intra lighting, Kuzma, La Femme at la Maison by Nika Zupanc, Leonora Mark – ave femina, Pipistrel, Seaway Group, Stol & Stol, Tehnos, Trimo, Vertigo Bird, Zilio Aldo & C. sas, Iskra, Imgrad, Stol Kamnik, Elektroakustični laboratorij (Electro-Acoustic Laboratory, EAL)

Polona Prešeren, photo: STA

SIDDHARTA a Slovenian rock band that dares



Some believe that there is no real stardom in Slovenia, at least not stardom as known in other countries with bigger markets, including the music markets. Nevertheless, there are Slovenian musicians who lure thousands of fans to their concerts. They are the rockers of Siddharta, a group referred to only with superlatives in Slovene pop culture. This is the most popular Slovenian rock band and they recorded their first live concert album at the new stadium in Ljubljana this summer.

Although they did not repeat their success of eight years ago when they sold out the old city stadium, they are special heroes on the Slovenian music scene. They decided to go ahead with the project at the new stadium as the first band ever to perform there. The band thus kept the promise given to 30 000 fans at their spectacular concert at the old Bežigrad stadium in 2003. Frontman Tomi Meglič left the stage, saying: ‘See you at the new stadium’. As men of their word, they performed at the new stadium, proving yet again that they are the only Slovenian performers capable of attracting such crowds.

Around 23 000 tickets were available at the new stadium and more than 10 000 supporters turned out to listen to their concert that was beyond any doubt a great success. Even the weather held out under black, stormy clouds. The band played all their greatest hits and 12 new songs that were recoded live for their concert album. The band Laibach and vocalist Josipa Lisac were guest performers during the three-and-a-half hours.

Siddharta spent a month in Los Angeles preparing for the concert with producer Ross Robinson, who recorded their concert album. In autumn, it will be available in shops together with a DVD. The big-budget project spared little expense with a sound system that provided high quality sound to all concert participants and had been previously tested by Metallica, Celine Dion, Rod Stewart, Led Zeppelin and Paul McCartney.

No other Slovenian group has had as large a following as Siddharta. It all started 16 years ago as a project of four friends in secondary school. Their first public appearance was at their school dance in Ljubljana. They have two goals: to play good music and to succeed. Their music is pure rock, melodic yet slightly melancholy, and singable. As the first Slovenian rock musicians, they performed with the symphony orchestra of the national radio and television broadcaster. They were also the first Slovenian rock band to fill the old Ljubljana stadium to capacity.

Their efforts and energy have been awarded with numerous prizes but the band most appreciates the support of their loyal friends who travel to their concerts all over Europe. The boys are something special for another reason – on their web site they have published detailed instructions on communication with the media. They make it clear that their private lives are nobody’s concern but their own and they answer only questions about their music and the band. The yellow press is of no interest to them, because they want to entertain with their music.

Polona Prešeren

DESIGNING THE REPUBLIC Architecture, design and photography in Slovenia from 1991 to 2011

The Museum of Architecture and Design (Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje) celebrates Slovenia’s 20th birthday with its project ‘Designing the Republic’. It is a creative and forward-looking contribution of the museum to the events marking the anniversary of Slovenia’s independence and includes an exhibition, a catalogue and short films about architecture. The aim of this exhibition is to verify the effectiveness of approaches used in architecture and design and to complement them with photographic responses. The balance sheet of architecture, design and photography shows surpluses and good investment, highlights red figures and deficits over the past two decades and raises questions about the future.

Almost all spheres of life, including design, have undergone a great transformation that begun twenty years ago with political, social and economic changes. The work of architects and designers has changed considerably as they have been forced to assume the role of providers of cheap and fast services delivering instant results for greater comfort.

Nevertheless, the period of the first twenty years of independence provides an interesting compilation of projects that have increased the variety of approaches and products with individually adapted design, and with space and objects notably acting as generators of human experience and adventure. The exhibition was prepared by an interdisciplinary group of curators headed by Matevž Čelik. The architecture exhibits were selected by Jeff Bickert, Petra Čeferin, Matevž Čelik, Tadej Glažar and Bogo Zupančič; the design exhibits by Cvetka Požar, Špela Šubic and Maja Vardjan; and the photography exhibits by Primož Lampič.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

A DELIGHTFUL SUMMER OF CULTURE IN SLOVENIA



Whoever expected that the economic crisis would seriously affect this summer's cultural scene would be surprised by how well it turned out. At the end of August, we can see that this has been one of the liveliest summers of culture for quite some time. This proves that the promoters of cultural life know how to find ways to carry out their programmes, and that those who provide the finances are well aware that culture has become a factor that simply cannot be ignored.

This wasn't only in the larger cities, where summer cultural programmes are traditional. It was nice to see, for example, that in the region of Bela Krajina, where the economic crisis has had a particularly devastating effect, two charming festivals, Plac in Metlika and Črnfest in Črnomelj, continue almost without any problem and are even attracting increasing numbers of visitors to their venues. At the beginning of August, they were joined by the Schengenfest music festival in Vinica, which hosted elite performers, from Vlado Kreslin to the bands Pankrti, Prljavo Kazalište and Niet. In these quiet towns, where otherwise not much is happening, successful organisers are usually young enthusiasts or local student clubs.

In the last days of July, cinema was the attraction in Ljutomer, with the Grossman Festival, which hosted film legend Christopher Lee; this was widely covered by Slovenian media. Hats off to this ninety-year-old artist who has demonstrated how clever, humorous and convincing a man can be even at his age! Novo Mesto organised the Fotopub festival of photography, at which more than 60 excellent and internationally recognised photographers exhibited their work. The "Slovenian Woodstock", the now legendary Otočec Festival, was also run excellently by the local organisers. Tolmin again hosted the creative Saje Camp, offering its visitors a mixture of music, workshops and lectures. Cerklje was, of course, again occupied by heavy metal groups and fans. As a kind of a counterpoint to the aforementioned rock festivals, Mokrice Castle was the venue of an excellent chamber performance of the opera Dido and Aeneas organised within the 23rd festival called Image of Slovenia – Imago Sloveniae. The opera was mainly performed by the Ljubljana Vocal Academy, last year's European champions and the winners of the Grand Prix award in choral singing. They were accompanied by Val Camerata, an instrumental ensemble playing original baroque musical instruments.

On the other bank of the Sava River, the traditional Seviq Brežice Festival of ancient music took place under the reliable managerial baton of Klemen Ramovš. The Gorenjska region enjoyed the sounds of the Okarina Ethno Festival in Bled, which also saw the opening of two interesting fine-art exhibitions (the ceramics of Pablo Picasso and the works of Slovenian impressionists). A particularly interesting accomplishment was made by theatrical workers in Jesenice staging the drama entitled Blast Furnace, written by France Klinar. Among the cultural events and shows of the summer, only the most interesting have been mentioned – the full list of them is much longer.

However, regarding cultural life in summer, the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana has no match when it comes to a truly breath-taking and wide variety of events. Among them, the grand opening of the annual Ljubljana cultural festival, which took place on the renovated Kongresni trg (Congress Square), should be highlighted in particular. The concert featuring Gustav Mahler's Eighth Symphony No 8 in E-flat major, also called the Symphony of a Thousand, and performed under the baton of the famous conductor Valery Gergiev, gathered more than 1,100 performers, including symphony orchestra musicians, chorus and solo singers, on a huge stage erected in front of the building of the Slovenian Philharmonic Society. Set in the midst of the newly, attractively renovated surrounding buildings, the magnificent décor of the new square with a view of Ljubljana Castle, as well as an audience of 15,000 attest to the fact that this was one of the most awe-inspiring events of its kind in Europe. By joining efforts with Croatians (the concert also marked the 20th anniversary of the independence of both states), Slovenians have set a new standard for staging large cultural events.

However, this grand event did not overshadow other traditional festivals of the capital; for example, the Ana Desetnica street theatre festival, which later triumphantly moved to Nova Gorica; the premiere of Twilight of the Gods, directed by Tomaž Pandur and performed by the Madrid Teatro Español in the Križanke open air auditorium; August's splendid Trfest and the Young Lions festival, placing the new Tabor cultural quarter on the Ljubljana map, where culture was happening as a way of life.

Indeed, in summer, Ljubljana truly was the capital!

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

19th LENT

During a period of a little over two weeks between June 24 and July 9, the most popular and the most attended Slovenian cultural festival, the Maribor Lent, was again attended by more than a million visitors. The organizers were delighted about the merciful weather which – unlike last year and a year before – this year enabled the realization of all the planned programs.

As every year, after the magnificent opening where more than 300 singers and musicians were presented on the raft floating on the Drava river, the event started with the Folkart, doubtlessly the largest and the most important international folklore festival in Slovenia where folklorists from Chile, Bulgaria, Nepal, Ireland, Kalmykia, Croatia and Slovenia could be seen. According to the well-established routine, the Folkart was followed by festival events at several locations that were taking place practically throughout the days: activities for children and sports events in earlier hours were followed by concerts, theatre performances and other shows in evening hours. A lot of serious culture, but also a lot of more popular genres and events. It is not exaggerated to say that this year's Lent was also a kind of a dress rehearsal for the project European Capital of Culture which will take place in Maribor next year. The goal for the city to become a place of culture and socializing for its citizens and generally the greatest possible number of people and to actually have impact on their lives was therefore also clearly visible in the projects of this year's Lent.

The festival found two new locations in the city center: the newly laid out Leon Štukelj Square where street theater settled, and the hall of the former Udarnik cinema where electronic music found its place. Among the great number and variety of events, the already mentioned Folkart, guest musicians Monster Magnet, Asian Dub Foundation, Rolling Stones stars Darryl Jones and Will Calhoun, Vlatko Stefanovski with trumpet players and of course evergreen Slovenians Vlado Kreslin, Adi Smolar and Slon in Sadež were especially noticeable this year. At the end we can also conclude that the otherwise pervasive economic crisis was not so obvious at Lent since its skillful organizers again found a way to fully implement the budget in the amount of Euro 2.5 million and make the visitors truly satisfied.



Jože Osterman, photo: STA

MARIBOR 2012: Most of the programme already known



At the end of June, the organisers of Maribor's European Capital of Culture were proud to present 277 cultural projects, representing about three quarters of the entire programme. Art Director Mitja Čander and the director-general of the Maribor 2012 Institute emphasised that the detailed programme would be known towards the end of September; however, given the circumstances, much intensive work was done in the first half of the year and at present, the character of the whole project has become clearly visible.

Among other large projects, it is worth mentioning the Twelve Project (projekt Dvanajst) which consists of 12 lectures of world-renowned intellectuals, a visiting of German-Dutch photographer Ulaya, a performance by pianist Ivo Pogorelič with the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, a visit of the Vienna State Opera with The Marriage of Figaro and a performance by the Osipov Russian Folk Orchestra. Maribor's own productions are in any case rather impressive: Carmina Slovenica is preparing the Turban Tribe opera, Director Jan Cvitkovič is preparing the Film Omnibus Project, Tomaž Pandur is working on a dramatisation of War and Peace, Dušan Jovanović on the Funeral Fashion Show and the Betontac group on Audition for Life. An immense common project of both Slovenian operas, Kogoj's Black Masks, should open an event in the Capital of Culture in January.

Čander and Fišer emphasised that the programme had been launched in accordance with the existing financial funds amounting, at present, to €24.3 million for the programme needs. This amount means that Maribor will be the second least expensive Capital of Culture; less money was spent only in Vilnius. This alone is not commendable. However, most important must be the effects that can be satisfactory even with less money. The venue creates a problem, since according to some people from the programme committee there will probably be no central venue – Maribor Culture Centre Maks – built. If there is no other solution to be found, a central venue made of prefabricated buildings is being considered. However, the Municipality of Maribor has promised that the centre would be built in any case, and that it would be located in the former Merinka factory in Studence.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

DRAGO JANČAR WINS THE KRESNIK AWARD FOR THE THIRD TIME

Every year at the end of July, the Slovenian public eagerly awaits a decision on who was the best novelist of the previous year. In the field of literary creation, the Kresnik Award is, next to the Prešeren Awards, an event attracting unusually wide attention and thus excels in promoting culture during the summer, when cultural life moves at a slower pace. Usually, the books entering the final selection for the Kresnik Award sell better and are borrowed more frequently from libraries.

This year, the award was presented for the twenty-first time. The jury, composed of President Miran Hladnik, and members Vesna Jurca Tadel, Urban Vovk, Miriam Drev and Peter Kolšek, made a final selection and nominated the following authors and their novels: Evald Flisar *Na zlati obali*, Štefan Kardoš *Pobočje sončnega griča*, Sebastijan Pregelj *Mož, ki je jahal tigra*, Vladimir P. Štefanec *Odličen dan za atentat* and Drago Jančar *To noč sem jo videl*. This time, the selection truly included authors who have shown the most systematic and persistent work in writing novels in the recent years.

It came as no surprise that the award was presented to Drago Jančar, even though this is the third time the author has become the Kresnik laureate, which was more of a burden than an allowance in making the selection. He first won the award in 1998 for the novel *Zvenenje v glavi* and again two years later for *Katarina, pav in jezuit*.

His most recent awarded novel is very interesting for its narrative structure – the story of the protagonist Veronika is told by five different characters, whereas Veronika herself does not directly appear in the novel. In addition to commending this extraordinary approach to telling a story, the jury based its decision for presenting the award to Jančar on the following: "At the end, all truths are blazed into a recognition that history is beyond man, that it inflicts him with harm. And for this very reason, a man stands tall not only in love and suffering but also in errors and ideas. *To noč sem jo videl* is the ninth novel written by Jančar. Though relatively short, it brings about one of better literary texts on the Slovenians entangled in the Second World War and with each other."



Polona Prešeren, photo: STA

PILE-DWELLINGS IN THE LJUBLJANSKO BARJE ON THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST



In the immediate vicinity of the city of Ljubljana, there is the Ljubljansko Barje, which is an incredible treasury of natural and cultural heritage. This idyllic landscape is home to a number of species of fauna and flora, as well as archaeological sites.

The area's prehistoric pile-dwellings received a unanimous vote for entry on the World Heritage List at the annual session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Paris on 27 June. They were enlisted together with a serial nomination of "Prehistoric Pile-Dwellings in the Alpine Area". They include a selection of 111 of a total 1,000 archaeological sites in six countries around the Alps (Switzerland, Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia). Slovenia has thus achieved its first cultural nomination for the list, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the entry of the Škocjan Caves on the list under natural criteria.

Following the invitation of Switzerland as the leading partner, Slovenia joined France, Germany, Austria and Italy in the preparation of a serial nomination "Prehistoric Pile-Dwellings in the Alpine Area" for the UNESCO World Heritage List. Prehistoric pile-dwellings in the Ljubljansko Barje were represented by two locations near Ig, in the surroundings of Ljubljana. Their complexity demonstrates the richness and diversity of pile-dwelling heritage in this part of the Alpine periphery.

The pile-dwellings in the Ljubljansko Barje Landscape Park were entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List, which assigns them, under the strictest international criteria, extraordinary universal value and the contribution to the knowledge of prehistoric pile-dwelling civilisations, which existed in the region for over 4,500 years, from 5000 to 500 BC. Their archaeological remains were

found mostly on lake banks, under the water, along marshes and rivers: at locations enabling their extraordinary conservation. These pile dwellings give a clear and detailed presentation of the world, life and inventions of the original farmers in Europe.

Since the findings were sunk in the ground that were constantly wet, wooden structures, food remains, wooden tools and even clothes remained excellently preserved, and they enable an in-depth insight in the life of those times. Pile-dwellings and moor settlements from the prehistoric period are a special phenomenon typical of Alpine lands. Nowhere else in the world is the development of settlement communities from the Neolithic and Metal Ages so clearly visible and simultaneously enabling extremely thorough research. The findings in the Ljubljansko Barje are one of the most significant archaeological sites in both Slovenia and in the world. It is a precious part of the human past and at the same time an inexhaustible archaeological source in the mosaic of common human memory.

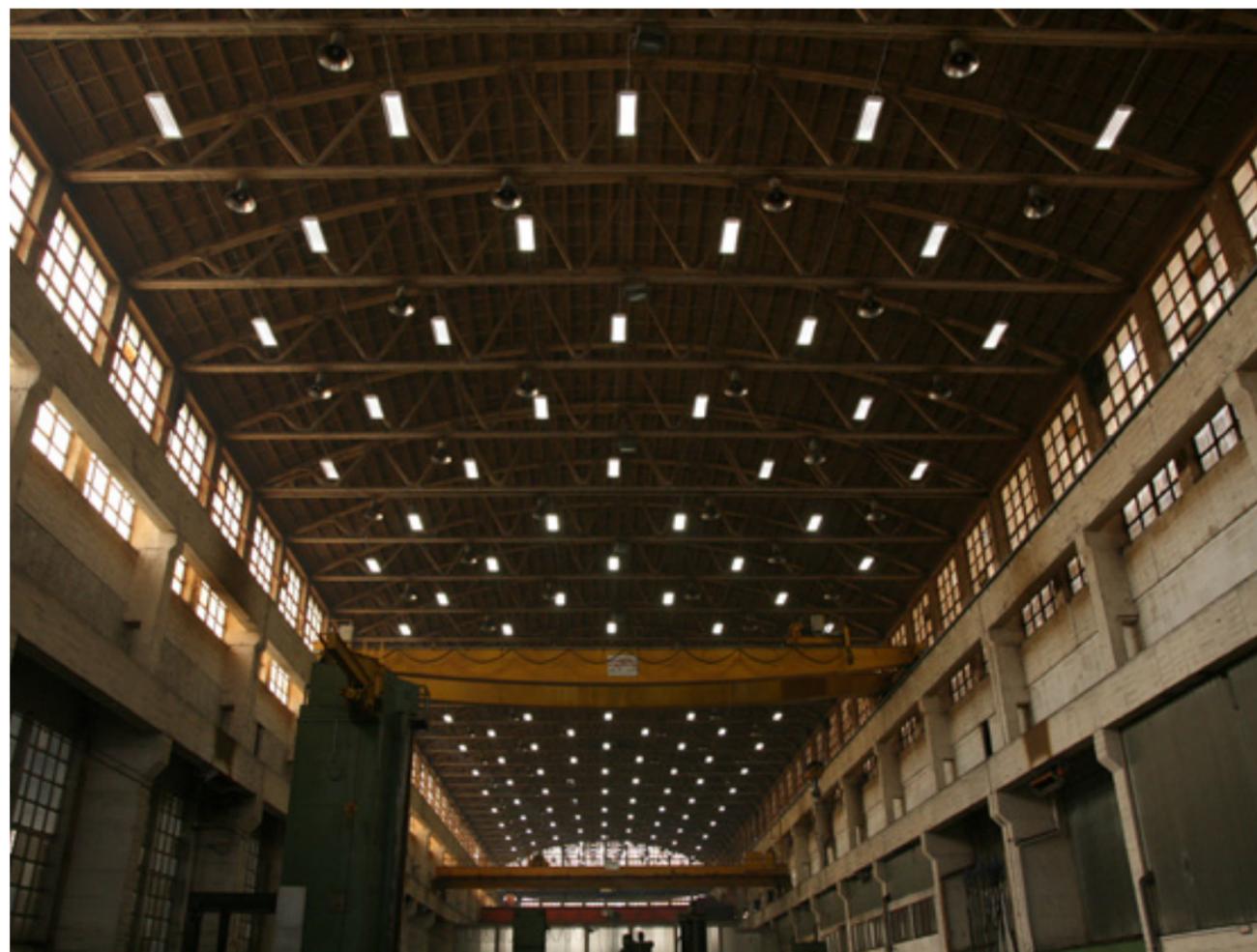
Thus far, only the Škocjanske Jame caves have been entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a natural value in Slovenia. In 2009 and 2010, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee considered a common serial nomination of Spain, Slovenia and Mexico entitled "Quick Silver and Silver". The towns of Almadén, Idrija and San Luis Potosí did not receive sufficient support for the entry. At the same time, the committee gave a recommendation that the countries should reconsider and submit a revised nomination that has been made by Slovenia and Spain this year. The new decision of the committee is expected to be known in June 2012.



Vesna Žarkovič, photo: archive Svetloba

Svetloba – a company on the way towards the global peak thanks to its innovativeness

The Reflecta system enables more than 50 % savings in electricity consumption by using sensor-guided smart electronics – which makes these luminaries something special also on the global scale.



For the third time, the newspaper Finance announced the winner of the competition Best Business Idea and Best Business Eco-idea 2011. Among five finalists is also the company Svetloba. The jury was convinced by its high-tech system of Reflecta industrial lighting and its innovative marketing approach. The Reflecta system enables more than 50 percent savings in electricity consumption by using sensor-guided smart electronics which follows the daylight and adequately adapts the luminance of the already highly energy-efficient fluorescent luminaries while the companies are also given the possibility to finance the replacement of their lighting through bank credits in the amount of achieved savings which means they have no additional costs. By consulting, Svetloba also assists customers in acquiring

available grants. This year the company is planning to enter new European markets. Last year it achieved 48 % growth in revenues while this year the revenues are planned to be a bit lower since it intends to attract investors that would enable it to accelerate development and enter the international market.

According to director Hine Alex Vrtačnik, industrial lighting is a large black hole that has not been given special attention by anyone. »«We found out that most lighting was in critical condition in large factories and also in other industrial facilities; I am convinced we could abandon the Šoštanj Thermal Power Plant if most of the lighting in Slovenian industry is replaced by our solutions,« he claims confidently. »Namely, that much can be saved: 15 percent of entire

industrial energy consumption is attributed to lighting and we can reduce industrial energy consumption by 10 percent. Toyota was also unaware of energy consumption for lighting in its factory in the Czech Republic until we conducted an analysis and discovered that it amounts to between Euro 250,000 and Euro 270,000 annually.«

The essence of Reflecta intelligent systems is constant adaptation of the amount of light at workplaces in accordance with users' needs and the additional effect of daylight. In this way, efficiency of the system supported by information from sensors is optimal. Everything takes place in real time and does not disturb the working process which is especially important in industrial environments. An important component of the system are special luminaries with as much as 93.8 % luminous efficiency and high durability in all industrial environments – in dust, moisture, heat and aggressive atmosphere. Despite considerable loads in industrial environments, the guaranteed performance of the systems is between three and eight years.

BIG SAVINGS

By installing Reflecta lighting, one of Toyota Peugeot Citroën Automobile factories will save at least Euro 200,000 annually. In Sip-Šempeter they use 82 % less electricity after replacing old luminaries with the new ones, while in Henkel they improved luminance by as much as 50 % while they still consume 10 % less of electricity. The luminaries are currently being tested in Volkswagen and Dorma factories in Germany, Hyundai and Ontex in the Czech Republic and in the company Borckenstein in Austria. In Slovenia, they were installed in Geberit, Alples, Fructal, Litostroj and Duropack-Tespack; on the average, 50 % of electricity for lighting was saved while luminance was considerably improved at the same time. In 2009, buyers of luminaries saved 5.7 GWh of electricity and reduced CO2 emissions by 2,446 tons. This is equal to removing 500 cars from the roads or planting a forest the size of 22 soccer fields.

Svetloba also provides its customers with services according to the principle "all in one place." An investment is returned in two years and the system can also be used in high-rack warehouses where all goods are illuminated vertically as well as in logistic centers, sports halls, gymnasiums and filling stations. Bulbs have a three-year warranty and during this time the quality of light remains unchanged. The duration of luminaries is 25 years, after which time they are 100 % recycled.





The manufacturer is capable of express installation of luminaries that are easy to install and to move which enables simpler maintenance and reduces replacement time by as much as 70 %. Svetloba provides assistance in acquiring funds for investments, also according to the principle “pay with savings.” Free analysis of lighting in the amount of up to Euro 3,000 is also available which can be used by costumers at energy audits, in acquiring energy performance certificates or as a preparation for the upcoming taxes related to CO emissions.

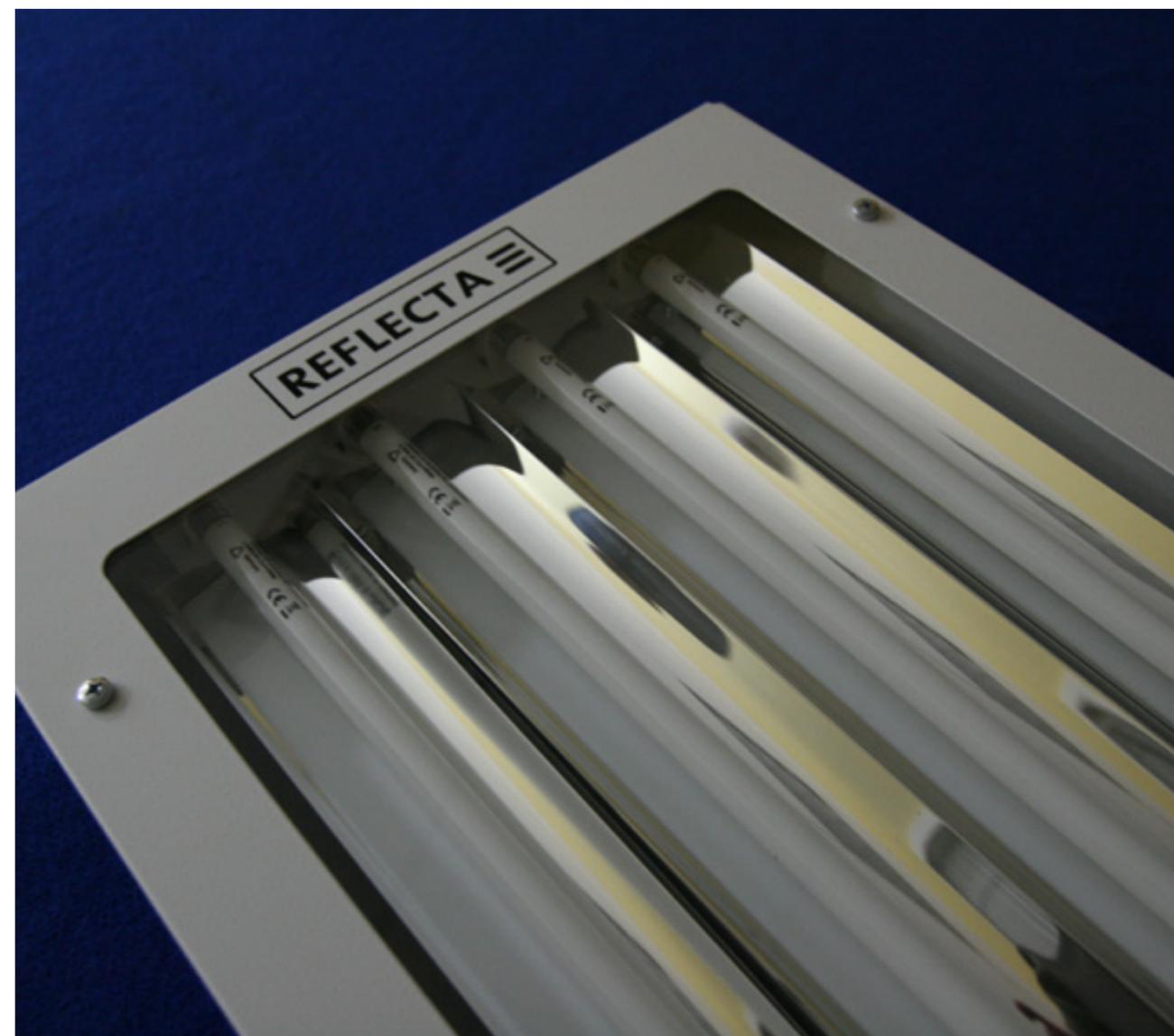
Apart from patented innovative lighting, a specialty of Svetloba in the area of energy-efficient industrial lighting is also the innovative project Zero. The project enables companies the repayment of their investments in lighting renovation without a start-up investment, exclusively through savings in electricity consumption. In the company for which – among others – there is interest in the KPCB fund, the co-owner of Google, Amazon and Sun Microsystems, the way of management

is also distinctive. The founder of the company has based the network of key competences on “outsourcing.”

LITOSTROJ'S CATHEDRAL IS MORE LUMINOUS AT LESSER COSTS

My shoulder hurts, complained Mr. Topčič, assistant of the head of technical sector. Why is that so, wandered Svetloba representatives. Because workers tap my shoulders all the time and thank me for substantially improved working conditions, he answered. Working in the Cathedral, as this production hall in Litostroj is called due to its height (over 20 meters), is really not easy. Despite air exhausting, manufacturing of industrial machines and elements for hydroelectric power plants takes place in dust and oil vapor so dense that they can actually be seen. Light here is a real treasure. Therefore, they replaced 127 old luminaries with 162 new REFLECTA luminaries. Measurements of luminance at workplaces showed that luminance increased from the previous average

of 70–130 lx to 350–510 lx which is a 370-percent increase. However, this is not the only advantage of the REFLECTA system. Although the Cathedral is illuminated by 35 more lights, their nominal power is only 37.5 kW while they previously consumed 118.75 kW. In this way, electricity consumption is three times lower – from 666,872 kWh they reduced it to only 210,162 kWh annually. Electricity consumption for lighting in Duropack-Tespack was reduced by 50 %. In the company Duropack-Tespack where they produce cardboard packaging, the lights are on 10 hours a day, 251 days a year. This is almost the shortest operation time at which the replacement of lighting at current electricity prices is worthwhile by the standards of Svetloba where they follow 2–3 years of the average return period for investments in highly energy-efficient REFLECTA systems. Calculation of investment profitability of course also depends on the price of electricity which is growing. Old and obsolete lighting did not provide good



illumination of working areas while at the same time electricity consumption was so high that the company Duropack-Tespack was paying over Euro 35,000 annually only for lighting (including maintenance costs). The analysis showed that with the introduction of energy-efficient REFLECTA lighting they would reduce electricity consumption by 60 percent and system maintenance costs by more than 70 percent.

HENKEL: 500 % INCREASE IN LUMINANCE WHILE SAVING AT THE SAME TIME

»The measurements during the test- placement of lighting made our decision much easier since horizontal luminance between racks was on the average 150 lx with Reflecta system, while competitive lightings produced only 100 lx on the average. Reflecta improved luminance by 500 % and at the same time enabled us to save 10 % of energy,« explained Zdenko

Pospišil, head of workshop and Borut Suhadolnik, head of maintenance in the company Henkel.

97 % COST SAVING IN SIP ŠEMPETER

“Only by replacement of luminaries, 82-percent saving was achieved while an excellent sensor control taking into account the presence of daylight adds eight percent savings on the average. Thus, in a two-year period, 90-percent electricity saving was measured in the system.”

RECEIVED AWARDS BY REFLECTA:

- Reflecta luminaries received a silver award for Innovation of the year 2008/2009 by the Chamber of Commerce of Slovenia.
- In 2008 the Facility Management Association of Slovenia awarded Reflecta luminaries as Facility Management Product of 2008.

- Intelligent sensor-controlled system developed together with our partners received a golden award for Innovation of the year 2008/2009 by the Chamber of Commerce of Slovenia.
- Certificate of Conformity by SIQ (Slovenian Institute of Quality and Metrology)
- Reflecta was the winner of CleanTech Invest 2010
- Reflecta was ranked among Top 50 companies at EVS European Venture Summit
- Reflecta was ranked among Top 20 Clean-Tech Companies at EVS European Venture Summit
- Award for the best business model at Slovenian Innovation Forum 2010
- Reflecta luminaries received golden award for Innovation of the year 2010/2011 by the Chamber of Commerce of Slovenia.
- Reflecta intelligent systems received Best Business Eco award 2010/2011



Jože Osterman, photo: mreža Ekovasi

Living in harmony with nature

Slovenian architecture and (to some extent) building construction have always kept pace with current thinking and the technologies in their fields. Our architects – from Plečnik, Fabiani, Vurnik and Ravnikar to their pupils who often succeeded in developing excellent projects – knew how to listen to the requirements of their time. However, the times have changed significantly.



The crisis of our classic building construction, which paid attention mainly to the building of demanding road and other utility infrastructure, larger housing projects, industrial and commercial, sometimes also of cultural and sports buildings, has accelerated an ever more intense turning of architecture to the areas of energy-efficient, less ostentatious and extravagant, more ecological construction that is considerably more in harmony with indisputable climate changes. The first signs of this kind of architectural thinking are actually very old, but they have until recently been relatively disrespected as a type of strange persistence in using older methods of construction and spatial development. Today, as human arrogance has been tempered, the architecture of sustainable nature-friendly development has become one of the most significant elements of the development, on the basis of which it would be possible to bring our way of life in line with resources offered by our planet.

MORE INTERESTS FOR SUSTAINABLE PLANNING

In the increasing part of modern Slovenian architecture, which is also followed by publications (for instance, the magazine Mladina with its treatment of modern architecture as well as daily papers, particularly in their supplements), interest in modern, sustainable architectural and urban development planning has increased considerably. This is a result of a rapidly growing environmental awareness, which can be traced since the middle of the 1980s (although it is still insufficient), and which now exercises influence over all areas of social life. Its generators are numerous civil movements and initiatives that are changing, through persistent pressures, a still dominant self-sufficient belief that little needs to be done to coordinate the exploitation of nature and the possibilities available to renew energy and other resources.

All this has been rather successfully transferred to the profession itself and to the every day awareness so that capital is not as easily available for investments as it was only a few years ago.

The issue of building nature-coordinated housing settlements, the so-called eco-villages, has also been placed at the forefront of public attention in Slovenia. However, it is not only about the architecture but about seeking a whole pattern of life. The civil initiative that acts within the long-range ecological movement in Slovenia has been connected with the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) since the beginning of this decade. Through the establishment of the Ecovillage Institute (Zavod Ekovasi), it has established a point for exercising initiative concerning the sustainable construction of settlements and related issues. At the beginning, there was little response, but the things have changed in recent years. Similar ideas and people have gradually associated within the Slovenian ecovillage network that has been active since 2010. It has developed as the result of the creativity of many individuals and groups (the aforementioned Zavod Ekovasi (Ecovillage Institute), Zavod Rodna zemlja (Native Soil Institute), and skupine Soustvarjanje (Co-creation groups)) in order to connect the existing and emerging ecovillage seeds throughout Slovenia, and other settlements that will try to live more ecologically, will choose sustainable development and strengthen neighbour connections with a view to establishing firmer, stable and nature-coordinated local communities.

Domen Zupan, who is in charge of organising the institute and is the website operator of www.ekovasi.si, emphasises that this is much more than the construction of dwellings and/or buildings, although it is clear that the creation of homes is one of the greatest challenges in life. In ecovillages (in Slovenia, none has been established yet), it is necessary to think primarily of three main elements providing a basis for their existence: care of people

in which independence, cooperation and mutual solidarity in particular have to be established; equitable proportions, where it is necessary to provide equal access to natural resources, which are to be shared with other species living in nature; and care for nature, because every planning and changing of nature must be founded on natural systems, taking into consideration their possibilities.

WASTEFUL CIVILISATION

It is a fact that the Western, energy-wasteful civilisation (of which we Slovenes are a part) takes for its existence considerably more resources from nature than can be provided by the planet. The principle of constant economic growth without paying attention to its consequences is on the road to ruin. According to a relatively accurate calculation, the European way of life, i.e. the average of consumption identified in the European Union, exceeds the capacities of the planet by three times. The even more wasteful American way of life, which exceeds the capacities by five times. Taking into consideration the fact that certain big societies such as the Indian and Chinese are in the process of “awakening” towards similar levels of spending, our living conditions will considerably deteriorate in implementing the trends above.

A valuable philosophy based on experience acquired in ecovillages is that this is not the defeatism of people who were disappointed with their lives but the awareness of the need for changes on the basis of which our way of life could promptly be adjusted to the realistic possibilities. In ecovillages, computers are normally used, houses are rationally heated and people feel quite comfortable and they are mobile, using in particular public means of transport. Furthermore, they use local sources of energy and construction materials and live in harmony with their needs, so that they are able to adapt to other people and especially to nature.

Ecovillages include highly urban parts of town built on a high level of technology, simple settlements, and African villages built of clay where man and nature are true partners. There are some exceptional examples confirming in practice that this all is possible: in Findhorn in Scotland, which in addition to ecovillage is also a spiritual community and education centre, “the environmental footprint” of this town (i.e. the negative influence on the environment) represents only a half of English average and in the area of food and buildings or used energy, only 37% and/or 21.5% of the English average, respectively. If we take into consideration that the Slovenian “environmental footprint” is one half of the English one, it becomes clear that the Slovenians could bring their life in line with natural possibilities relatively quickly.

In this context, the Slovenian GEN unit has been systematically convening meetings, the so-called “ecovillage days”. This year, it has been done for the fifth time. Meetings are held in natural environments of various farms in the Gorenjska, Primorska or Štajerska regions. It is quite surprising how many architects and construction engineers of all ages have devoted their serious attention to professional questions about the construction of new buildings on the basis of natural materials that can be mainly obtained nearby. They have been using older methods of construction with straw and clay, while timber should become the main construction material. Given the fact that Slovenia is a country endowed with timber and since it has no other raw materials in abundance, the ecovillage culture is also becoming important as a possible labour and market niche, which could also be successfully realised abroad.



Hana Souček Morača, photo: Tomo Križnar archive

TOMO KRIŽNAR

“I ACCEPT BORDERS BUT NOT THE UNNECESSARY ONES”

“Do you know how natives manage to survive when they get bitten by a green mamba?”, he asks, looking at me with the eyes radiating inexhaustible energy. “They burry themselves in the ground, in a special kind of loam, where they pass out for several days in a row. They dig themselves out only when they are completely exhausted but healed.”

In this way, Tomo Križnar confirms his reputation as a fighter and a man full of life optimism in a single sentence.



WHO IS TOMO KRIŽNAR?

He completed studies in economics and mechanical engineering but today he is known primarily as a great humanitarian. He has been travelling his whole life. He has been searching for qualities in mythologies of indigenous peoples and the ways how to protect communities that survived in harmony with nature.

“I FOLLOWED MY YEARNING”

He always liked reading and was curious. “I never believed that in my culture I can fully express all my human potentials and capacities – since my early years I have had a feeling that more could be felt and comprehended. Already as a student he travelled by hitchhiking around the world, by motorbike in Africa, by moped in South America and a by bicycle in Asia. As he says, he is not the only traveler in the family since his grandfather on his mother’s side was a wood trader and floated logs down the Sava and the Danube rivers into the Black Sea. Apart from

courage, innovativeness is also embedded in his genes. “My grandfather on my father’s side was a mayor, he brought iron plow, a bridge and soybeans to the village of Okroglo in Upper Carniola. Farmers were chasing him with forks convinced that he brought the devil to the village that will disrupt the established order.” Shortly before he joined the army in 1979 he saw the front cover of the book “Nuba, die Leute wie von die anderen Sternen” (The Nuba, People as From Some Other Stars) by Leni Riefenstahl in a display window of a bookshop in Maribor. He followed the call and together with a donkey, two goats and four chickens managed to sneak into hardly accessible mountains of the Kordofan province which were closed to foreigners already at that time. He came naked between naked people in an environment resembling the Christmas crib as imagined by the Christians. “I felt instinctively that I have to take off all the junk of civilization and get rid of Westerner’s mind. Already then I felt that Western

reason would bring the world into environmental crisis, social distress and spiritual disaster from which all its agitators combined would not be able to find an easy way out ...” During the two-month period of staying with “primitive barbarians”, after which he contracted an unknown tropical disease, he experienced by his own senses that European conceptions of “wild savages who indulge in the most vile of passions in the wilderness” are merely the remnants of lies by European anthropologists who were sent to the Third world by colonial metropolises in the previous century in order to find justification for mass slaughtering of Indians, Aborigines, Eskimos and other indigenous peoples on occupied continents. Soon after that he experienced the greatest shock that completely changed his life. His new friends led him to the Kaka village by the Nile river that was bombarded by a Sudanese army airplane that morning. Among burnt huts he found remnants of at least a hundred



chopped and charred bodies. In that moment he realized that the spirit of civilization based on machines and exploitation of non-renewable energy sources escaped out of the bottle and that not only his own people exterminate animals, plant species and people still connected with nature. He started helping indigenous peoples and cultures in Africa as well as in Tibet, Australia, New Zealand, Oceania and both Americas by visiting them without machines and oil, on the bike, carrying nothing

but a camera.

After he biked around the world he returned to the Nubas 19 years after his first encounter with them, sneaking with a bicycle through besieging rings of various armies and filming the proofs of the most hidden genocide.

When in December 2005 Janez Drnovšek, Slovenian president at that time, saw Križnar's documentary "Nuba: Pure People," he called him and asked him how he could contribute. "I told him that trans-

aminases of the same cancer were already spreading in Darfur at that time as well as along the entire border between Northern and Southern Sudan and I offered myself to be his special delegate."

After the United Nations convinced Drnovšek that presidential visit to a refugee camp in Darfur on the border between Chad and Sudan would not be safe, Drnovšek called Križnar to return back to Slovenia. But Tomo was not ready to give up and despite the danger he crossed the



border between Chad and Sudan alone and recorded the war between Arabic authorities and various groups of Darfur rebels by cameras for five months – until observers of the African Union handed him over to the Sudanese military and security intelligence in July 2006. He was accused of spying and false reporting about Sudan and convicted to two years in prison. After two months spent in prison in El Fasher, Sudanese dictator Omar Bashir amnestied and exiled him on 6 September 2006.

FOR THOSE WHO CARE

Ever since, Križnar has been addressing everybody who cares. He has been warning that all areas between Northern and Southern Sudan where the last remaining indigenous people suffer due to the consequences of climate change has to be equipped with devices for finding water so that local people would be able to stay at home. Areas where there still is water should be equipped with video surveillance which would prevent wars for water that are being abused by western and eastern great powers for their own wars and the control over Sudanese oil reserves by using the tactics "kill a slave with another slave."

In March 2009 he used funds gathered at the charitable concert of Slovenian and African musicians to purchase five video camera sets, small portable computers and satellite phones and returned to Darfur illegally. In cooperation with the humanitarian coordinator of Darfur rebels Suleiman Jamous he taught volunteers how to record and send evidence of violence to the media and the International Court of Justice in the Hague that pros-

ecutes crimes against humanity. In May 2009 Jamous reported that in the areas known by everyone to be equipped with cameras there were no more reports of rapes and other worst atrocities.

In December 2009 Križnar was joined by Klemen Mihelič with an idea of using miniature video cameras which are even more helpful to women in camps and on frontlines since they are easier to hide. In November 2010 they returned with satellite portable modems for even cheaper and more efficient transmission of information and this year they expanded video surveillance also to the Nuba mountains and the Blue Nile on the border between both Sudans. So along the entire border where due to the secession of Southern Sudan which was, apart from the USA, orchestrated also by EU member states, the Sudanese dictator Omar Hassan al Bashir, convicted of four worst crimes against humanity at the Hague Court, started fighting a new – maybe the last – war against African indigenous peoples on 6 June. "Humanity, humanitarianism, nobility and nobleness are being lost in the West ever since we massively started to lose faith in God's ability to see and hear everything," says Tomo Križnar and warns that God that has become a little blind and deaf has to be assisted with digital senses. Insisting that profit is the main driving force of life on Earth will eat our planet away and kill everything natural, including natural peoples and cultures and in the end also our grandchildren if we fail to see, hear and feel the pain of transaminases with digital senses and cut off cancerous growths while there still is time.

DOCUMENTATION

BOOKS:

On Search for Love or Around the World by Bicycle, 1989
Shambala – to Tibet by Bicycle, 1995
Lonely Paths, 1995
Mana – by Bicycle Among Indians, 1996
Nuba, Pure People, 1999
Oil and Water, 2010

DOCUMENTARIES:

Lonely Paths, 1995
Nuba, Pure People, 2000
Nuba, Voices from the Other Side, 2001
Darfur – War for Water, 2008

HOW TO HELP?

Last year after returning from Darfur with Križnar, Klemen Mihelič established the humanitarian institution H.O.P.E., specialized in assistance with drilling rigs for finding water where local population is affected by climate change and video surveillance where there is water but pressures by the thirsty population are increasing.

INTERNET AND CAMERAS FOR SUDAN

Iban: SI56 6100-0000-1966-537
Swift code: HDELSI22XXX
Purpose of payment: Internet and cameras for Sudan

DRILLING RIG FOR DARFUR

Iban: SI56 6100-0000-1846-742
Swift code: HDELSI22XXX
Purpose of payment: Drilling rig for Darfur

www.tomokriznar.com

www.hope.si



Jože Osterman, photo: OO Bled 2011

SUPERLATIVES FOR BLED

The largest this year's sports event in Slovenia, the Rowing World Championship in Bled, ended in the beginning of September.



The impressions of most participants were almost euphoric. Namely, the image of Bled as it hosted more than 1200 rowers rowing in 415 boats along with approximately 900 of their attendants and functionaries of the International Rowing Association is otherwise rarely seen even by locals at this time of the year. Late summer provided beautiful weather, the first week being also considerably hot, a splendid lake with clear and warm water with the temperature of around 26 degrees Celsius which was perfect for bathing, and a green landscape where the greenery of nature just started turning into more melancholic yellow tones of the approaching autumn. Added to this was splendid organization that did not fail in any moment although the number of competitors was record breaking; so far, they have never carried out so many individual races and such an extensive program at any world championship. Apart from rowers, approximately 4000

different guests stayed in Bled during the championship as well as other spectators, especially schoolchildren who came to see the races within one-day trips. Nevertheless, everything went smooth! It is charming that the only two delays during the championship which were no longer than a few minutes were caused by regal birds – the swans – who obviously wanted to see the races from up close and crossed the race track in an inappropriate time. Of course, no hero dared starting the race; moreover, giving right of way to feathered beauties was accompanied by enthusiastic applause by rowers as well as spectators. Promotion of Bled as the re-established world capital of rowing and a touristic pearl whose images were spread around the world through numerous television channels and attracted attention of many spectators with its beauty definitely surpassed the expectations. At the same time, it is certainly not negligible that Bled as a tourist

and rowing center directly benefited from the reconstruction of its infrastructure which has been, mildly put, rather obsolete in recent years. New money arrived in Bled which is especially important in the time of financial crisis. For the Euro 4.2 million worth renovation project, 3.5 million Euros were acquired from the European Regional Development Fund, 200.000 Euros were provided by the state of Slovenia through the Foundation for Financing Sport Organizations while half a million Euros were provided by the Bled municipality. Some funds were also contributed by the Slovenian Rowing Association and the Bled Rowing Club. For instance, 790,000 Euros were spent for the renovation of the boathouse and the gymnasium, 400,000 for the new judge's tower, 471,000 for the spectators' stand, 200,000 for piers and 950,000 Euros for landscaping. Quite a respectable sum for Bled, but thanks to it a new, modern rowing Olympic center stands



on the lake's shore that might become – at least according to the statements of rowing functionaries from abroad – one of the most attractive preparation centers for rowers, used especially by rowers from across the Atlantic, since most summer regattas take place in Europe. Besides, the state added some funds in the last moment for additional promotion, while the implementation of races was financed primarily by sponsors. Last but not least, the championship is importantly placed among the events by which Slovenians celebrate the 20th anniversary of our statehood so it was very important that everything was carried out in the best possible manner!

The championship united citizens of Bled in a special way which has not been the case for quite some time. Around 400 volunteers, mostly locals, unselfishly carried out most of the tasks that are usually performed by paid services, for more than ten days from morning until evening. They performed their tasks with smiles on their faces, obviously proud that their town became one of the world sports centers for a few days. This also turned out to be an excellent experience thanks to which locals were asked by many rowers when they were departing to organize some big rowing event again as soon as possible. Well, next year Bled will be already hosting European championship for juniors.

One thing, however, which we have feared for quite some time, did not end up entirely according to our expectations. This time, the achievements of Slovenian rowers that were excellent not so long ago, most of them coming from Bled, were far below the expectations. Even the rowing legends in double scull Iztok Čop and Luka Špič couldn't get beyond 5th place since the competition in this sport is incredibly fierce. It is true that the national team also had a lot of bad luck, namely less than a year ago health problems and injuries of three excellent young rowers put two quadruple

sculls with great potentials for grand finals or even medals out of competition. Thus, the championship ruthlessly pointed to the necessity of rejuvenation of the national team and the necessity of expanding the quality peak which also means the increase of the number of rowers in general since less than 300 are rowing in Slovenia today. If the championship was at least slightly successful in carrying out its promotional role among the young, the increase of this small number should not be too much of a task.



Andrej Stare, photo: STA

THE CHAMPION RETURNS

In November 2009, Slovenia was shocked at the news that the Olympic and world champion in the hammer throw, Primož Kozmus, was retiring from athletics.



He spoke briefly: "I'm tired, I've lost motivation. My private life is my priority now." The Slovenian sports world was shocked, since there had never been such a true champion in Slovenian athletics before. At only 30 years of age, Kozmus' retirement was undeniably premature.

Slovenian sport mourned its best athlete and last year's European Champion in Barcelona brought poor results. At the end of the year, Kozmus, after coming to an agreement with the Slovenian Minister of Education and Sport, Dr Igor Lukšič, suddenly announced his return.

The hammer throw is technically the most demanding athletic discipline. After a year-long break, Kozmus had to start the training over, which was nothing new to him. Every day he worked on explosiveness and his movement, body, and strength coordination. He had trouble returning to competition and his results suggested he had little chance of winning a medal. His achievements were moderate. His best throw in the season was 77.12 m, which meant his results would drop for at least two ranks.

Before leaving for the 13th World

Championship in Daegu in South Korea, Kozmus was brief: "I only wish to make it to the final and throw over 79 metres. I have no other desire." Slovenian athletics enthusiasts accepted that Kozmus was no competition for the world class hammer throwers such as Krivitski (Belarus), Pars (Hungary), Murofushi (Japan), and Esser (Germany) who had been beating Kozmus' throws by more than three metres the whole season.

In Daegu, Kozmus successfully qualified for the final by placing 10th even though he did not meet the minimum qualification standard. His performance in the final was a pleasant surprise. With only his first throw, he placed second, right behind Murofushi from Japan. He threw the farthest in the third series when he hurled his hammer 79.39 metres. By the time the competition had finished, the only other competitor to have thrown further than him was Krisztián Pars, the Hungarian and competition favourite, leaving Kozmus with the bronze medal. The return of the forgotten was complete. After the competition, he was ecstatic:

"I was unexpectedly reborn as an athlete. I haven't thrown this well since the 2009 World Championship in Berlin where I won the world champion title." As the press peppered him with questions, Kozmus (called "Kori" by his friends) said: "I'm starting preparations for the 2012 Olympic Games in London where I will be defending the title of Olympic champion from Beijing. After London, I will compete at the 2013 European Championship in Helsinki and the next World Championship in Moscow." Primož Kozmus has pleasantly surprised us once again and has now proved to be one of the greatest Slovenian athletes of all time. His bronze medal from Daegu glistens like gold, since it represents all the hard work he has put in. His achievement came despite having taken a break from all sports activities and is his fourth medal in major competition.

PRIMOŽ KOZMUS' MEDALS:

2007 – World Championship in Osaka – 2nd place
2008 – Olympic Games in Beijing – 1st place
2009 – World Championship in Berlin – 1st place
2011 – World Championship in Daegu – 3rd place

Andrej Stare, photo: STA

A BITTER AFTERTASTE BEFORE THE CHAMPIONSHIP IN LJUBLJANA

Although European Basketball Championship in Lithuania was exciting, it ended far below expectations for the Slovenian national team.



For the team with great dreams, the seventh place is a bad prospect for the next European Championship that will be held in Slovenia in two years.

Before the Championship, the Slovenian national basketball team went through numerous turmoils and the arrival of the top expert Božidar Maljković raised hopes of medals. Unfortunately, though, neither Maljković as one of the most shimmering coaching authorities in Europe nor the Basketball Association of Slovenia was unable to ensure the performance of all our best players at the European Championship.

Primož Brezec, Radislav Nesterović, Beno Udrih, Boštjan Nachbar, Sašo Vračič, Miha Zupan... cancelled their participation one after another for various reasons. The national team remained decimated and very heterogeneous with players who have already surpassed their playing zenith (Jagodnik, Laković, Samo Udrih, Ožbolt, Smodiš...) or those that are young and without experience from such great competitions (Goran Dragič, Murič, Rupnik, Begič...). Selector Maljković carried out preparations that lasted almost two months and has gotten familiar with

the entire team as well as with capabilities of individual players. But unfortunately, once again it became clear that preparation matches are something different than the big competition.

In Lithuania, Slovenia played 11 matches altogether, winning six times and losing five times. But the defeats against Russia, Greece, Macedonia, Spain and Lithuania finally pushed us to the seventh place.

Therefore, Slovenia will definitely not play at the Olympic Games in London because the team should have won at least fifth place in order to be able to play in additional qualifications for London 2012. The victory over Serbia (which is, like Slovenia, disappointed about non-participation at the Olympic Games) was only a plaster over the wounds from the previous matches. The only consolation for the Slovenian national team may be the fact that Serbia, Croatia, Germany and Turkey similarly failed to qualify for the 2012 Olympic Games in London. Even the German Dirk Nowitzki, the best basketball player of the NBA League in the last season, failed to secure a place among the best to his national team.

For Slovenian basketball, Lithuania re-

mains a big unused opportunity which, perhaps, at least provided a great experience before the upcoming great competitions. Already in 2013 Ljubljana will host the European Championship which will be the next big opportunity for Slovenian national team – to win a much-desired medal at the great competition before home audience.

Especially the excellent Goran Dragič, his brother Zoran, the center Begič and Lorbek in optimal shape could be a superb basis for the attempt to win a medal in Ljubljana. All basketball lovers in Slovenia can only hope that there will not be so many cancellations by the best players and that in less than two years Slovenia will present a completely different – winning – team at the European Championship in 2013.

Results of the matches played by the Slovenian team at the European Championship in Lithuania:

Slovenia : Bulgaria 67:59

Slovenia : Ukraine 68:64

Slovenia : Georgia 87:75

Slovenia : Belgium 70:61

Slovenia : Russia 64:65

Slovenia : Greece 60:69

Slovenia : Macedonia 59:68

Slovenia : Finland 67:60

Slovenia : Spain 64:86

Slovenia : Lithuania 77:80

Slovenia : Serbia 72:68

The following players played for Slovenia (number of achieved points is given in parentheses):

Goran Dragič (129)

Erazem Lorbek (122)

Jaka Laković (104)

Zoran Dragič (89)

Mirza Begič (85)

Sašo Ožbolt (65)

Matjaž Smodiš (47)

Uroš Slokar (40)

Edo Murič (30)

Goran Jagodnik (26)

Samo Udrih (16)

Luka Rupnik (2)



Vesna Žarkovič, photo: archive Govinda

Vegetarianism – a way to a higher goal?

When cooking, a bit of oneself, a bit of one's positive meditation, energy has to be put into food, thus adding special flavor to it – homo vegetus – mentally and physically vital human being, healthy, hale and fresh.

We are living in times where our nutrition matters. Our nutritional habits play an important role in preserving our well-being and health. Vegetarianism as a lifestyle that excludes meat from the diet is already widespread around the world; how about Slovenia? Crucial role in spreading vegetarianism awareness can doubtlessly be contributed to various spiritual groups, among which the Society for Krishna Consciousness based in Ljubljana is definitely the most notable. It has been promoting vegetarianism since 1983 through awareness raising projects aimed at pointing out the advantages of vegetarianism over meat consumption. The Govinda's chain of vegetarian restaurants numbering around 100 around the world has a tradition of over 40 years. It all started far back in 1970 in America, continued in England and Australia, Sweden, India, Russia, while in March 2008 a vegetarian restaurant was open also in Slovenia. Originally, the word vegetarianism signifies a way of life that is harmonious from philosophical as well as moral and nutritional viewpoint. There is a widespread opinion among vegetarians that we can contribute to a more peaceful society only by solving the problem of violence in our own hearts. It is therefore not surprising that thousands of people from all social classes became vegetarians in the process of searching for the truth. Vegetarianism is, they emphasize, a very important step towards a better society.

People wonder what the advantages of vegetarianism are – can vegetarian diet improve or restore health, can it prevent certain diseases? Advocates of vegetarianism have been affirming it for a long time although they were not supported by scientific community until recently. In the past few decades, however, medical researchers discovered that consuming meat is closely associated with fatal

diseases such as heart disease and cancer, so vegetarianism is today regarded from a different perspective. It is well known that in the countries where average consumption of meat per capita is high, a lot of people die of cancer and cardiovascular diseases. These same diseases, however, are rare in countries with low meat consumption. Already in 1961, the Journal of the American Medical Association published that 90–97 percent of heart diseases that cause more than a half of deaths in the USA could be prevented with vegetarian diet.

ETHICAL BASIS OF VEGETARIANISM IS NON-VIOLENCE.

It supports charity, one of the four pillars of religion. As they point out, God is the supreme Father of all living creatures, not only humans, so killing an innocent animal is equal to murdering one's own brother or sister. According to the law of karma, natural law of cause and effect, humans are punished for every killing which is against the Lord's laws. Despite potential allegations that vegetarianism involves killing plants, such food as fruit, nuts and grains does not require taking lives. Even if plant's life is taken, the caused pain is far lesser than the pain caused by killing animals such as kettle, sheep or goats which are more susceptible to pain. Also, members of Hare Krishna first present vegetarian food to God, the Krishna, the supreme owner and steward of everything. Such spiritualized and purified food can be consumed without concern and without violating any law of nature. This is nothing extraordinary, it has been known in our country as a Christian tradition of blessing Easter food or consecrated food. Before the meal people pray and thank God for blessings on the table.

TRADITIONAL VEDA CUISINE

The cuisine is based on rich variety of spices and foodstuffs complementing each other and contributing to healthy diet.

Mitja Bitenc, manager of Govinda restaurant: I was first acquainted with vegetarianism in 1990 in the Hare Krishna Center and I have to say that I was very surprised by the service and a wide variety of food I was offered. Since then I have been very actively involved in all projects that include vegetarian diet. Of course, I started first as an assistant and was trained while working with highly skilled and experienced chefs from around the world. Soon I also started to prepare masterchefs by myself, their secret chiefly being the way

they are prepared. I came to a very important conclusion that food should always be prepared in a tranquil state of mind that highly affects the food quality. At the beginning I had more than a few problems cooking tasty food, however, I quickly realized that in cooking, part of oneself needs to be put into food, part of positive meditation, energy that adds special flavor to food. Whoever tastes such food will feel lightness and joy. This is my main guideline in cooking and a recipe for success. I wish to show how we can be vegetarians in practice, how we can enjoy vegetarian delicacies and remain healthy.



PAKORE

fried vegetables breaded in chickpea flour (aubergines, red pepper, cauliflower, zucchini, ...)

Spices: asafetida, curcuma, coriander, caraway, kalonji, chili, red pepper, salt, chickpea flour, water

Procedure: Make breading mass by mixing dry components (chickpea flour and spices), then add water, the mass should be of right density, approximately as for pancakes. Let the mass rest for 10–15 minutes. Dip various vegetables, cut in any way desirable, into a breading mass and fry it in hot ghee (purified butter) or on palm butter.



RAJTA - BUNDI

fried golden pearls

Spices:

1.) dough: chickpea flour, salt, asafetida, curcuma, red paprika, water

2.) yoghurt: parsley, pepper, red pepper, salt

Procedure: Make breading mass. Pour the mass through a strainer; let it drip into hot ghee – in this way pearls are made which are dipped into spiced yoghurt. If you want pearls to be crispy mix them with yoghurt only shortly before serving.



MALPURI

yoghurt, forest berries, croquettes without eggs

Ingredients for croquettes:

flour type 500, 500 g; powdered sugar, 300 g; baking powder, 1 spoon; milk, 4 dl; curcuma, lemon peel, vanilla sugar

Procedure for croquettes:

Mix flour, sugar, baking powder and milk. The dough has to be thick so that it doesn't drop from the spoon. Leave the dough resting for 10 minutes. Scoop the dough with a spoon and fry it in a medium-hot ghee. When balls become golden-brown take them out of ghee and strain them.

Ingredients for yoghurt:

yoghurt, 2 liters; sugar, 400 g; berries, 500 g

Procedure for yoghurt:

Mix everything and add fried croquettes. The croquettes should be dipped at least two hours. This dessert can be prepared one day earlier for the croquettes to become softer.



SABJI

main vegetable dish: carrot, potato, zucchini, tomato sauce, common tofu

Spices:

coriander, caraway, fennel, curcuma, ginger, parsley

Procedure:

First make pasta from dry spices. Make it by grinding all spices into a powder, then mixing it with a few drops of warm water. Then fry the pasta in oil and add tomato sauce and a little sugar. Let it cook for 10 minutes. In the meanwhile stew carrot and zucchini in another pan. Fry potato and tofu in oil. In the end mix everything, add parsley and some salt.

RICE WITH POPPY

side dish

Ingredients

Rice, 2 dl; salt, a pinch; water, 3 dl; poppy, 1 soup spoon

Procedure:

First rinse the rice. Put oil into a pan, enough to cover the bottom. Then add rice and fry it for approx. 2 minutes. Add water and poppy, mix thoroughly and cover with a lid. When rice is boiling put the fire to a minimum and cook for another 10 minutes. At the end add some salt and stir carefully not to damage rice grains.



HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY HRANA ZA ŽIVLJENJE – FOOD FOR LIFE SLOVENIA is a non-profit humanitarian organization which by distributing free vegetarian/vegan meals around the globe brings food and life to those in need. All over the world it distributes more than 2 million meals to those who need aid and to the socially deprived on all continents of the world. In its operation, it follows the millennium goals of the United Nations. An important component of Food for Life activities is hospitality and hearty culture of aid. Food for Life is an independent organization welcoming everybody who wishes to help in its projects for the benefit of the community and its goals. The organization was founded in 1974 by sage and Indian swami Shri Prabhupada. He encouraged his followers not to allow anyone starving in a circle of 15 kilometers around their home. The program expanded quickly and today Food for Life is present in more than 60 countries around the world.

Albert Kos , photo: Darinka Mladenovič

FESTIVE MUSIC EVENT UPON 20th ANNIVERSARY OF SLOVENIA'S INDEPENDANCE

PERFORMANCE OF MAHLER SYMPHONY NO. 8 TO HONOUR THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF SLOVENIA'S AND CROATIA'S INDEPENDENCE

This year's opening of 59th International Summer Festival in Ljubljana was particularly impressive. On 3 July, there was a large scale concert in the recently renovated Congress Square in Ljubljana introducing the rich of the summer music and stage programme, where more than 1100 Slovenian, Croatian and Russian musicians under the baton of the famous Russian conductor Valerij Gergijev, performed the

remarkable Mahler Symphony No. 8 in E Flat Major, also known as the "Symphony of a Thousand" written in 1906 and first performed on in Munich with 850 choristers in 1910.

During this performance in Ljubljana, alongside the orchestras from the Slovenian and Zagreb Philharmonics, 21 Slovenian and Croatian choirs joined with 950 choristers and 8 soloists, the leading opera singers from Slovenia, Croatia and Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg. According to the number of performers, this certainly

was the largest world music event this year. This ambitious undertaking left a strong impression on the music community as well as the whole world.

There were several reasons for the development of a music project of such magnitude and pretentiousness. Several 'stories' which are connected to this event all coincided with the performance this year. The open air performance of Mahler's symphony was dedicated to 20th anniversary of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, two new states that came out of the



Ljubljana, Slovenia stayed in a sort of an indirect contact with him, since it was in his Vienna period when he wrote many of his most important works during his summer residence in the village of Maiernigg next to Wörthersee in Carinthia, an area that was mostly ethnically Slovenian more than century ago.

Already last year, during the centenary of the birth of Mahler, there was a concert cycle of his compositions performed in Ljubljana in memory of the great composer. This past spring, 'Mahler's year' was also marked by a visiting exhibition from the Vienna Theatre Museum of his life and work, which was opened for a month and a half on the premises of the Slovenian Philharmonic, and a two-day musicological symposium, dedicated to Mahler's composition opus. Two days before the concert performance of the Symphony No. 8 on the Congress Square, a statue of Mahler by academic sculptor Bojan Kunaver was unveiled near the embankment of the Ljubljanica River at Dvorni Square, almost touching the Congress Square, which symbolically revives presence of Mahler in the middle of the Slovenian capital. This location is in the vicinity of the present building of the Slovenian Philharmonic which was erected at the place of the former Provincial Theatre, where Mahler was engaged as a conductor 130 years ago.

RENOVATION OF THE CONGRESS SQUARE IN LJUBLJANA

As already mentioned, one of the key events being recognised by the summer the open air performance of the Mahler Symphony No. 8 was the opening of the renovated Congress Square, one of the public places that marks the identity of the Slovenian capital. The vast and spacious square surrounded by a row of prominent buildings of Ljubljana's architectural heritage was, due to construction of underground car park, it closed for a long period. This construction, which revealed a lot of unknown archaeological heritage, was also an opportunity to freshen up and renovate the square and surround area which remains recorded in the Slovenian historical memory as a site of variety of turning points.

The history of the Congress Square reaches almost two centuries back into the past, in a time where on this land, at that time still located at the outskirts of the medieval Ljubljana, the Capuchin Monastery, church and garden stood. During the times of Napoleon's occupation and the Illyrian Provinces, the French authorities evacuated the convent, moved the monks elsewhere and used the monastery buildings as accommodations for its military and other mili-

former Yugoslavia and declared their independence on the same day. The patrons of this event, which was also performed next day in the Arena Zagreb in Croatia, were the presidents of the Republic of Slovenia and of the Republic of Croatia, Mr Danilo Türk and Mr Ivo Josipović, who also honoured the performance with their attendance in Ljubljana. At the same time, the concert marked 310th anniversary of the establishment of the Academia Philharmonicorum in Ljubljana, a precursor of the Slovenian Philharmonic, and the 140th anniversary of the Zagreb Philharmonic. Ljubljana also honoured the centenary of Mahler's death, and the 130th anniversary of his working in Ljubljana.

A CREATIVE STOP OF THE COMPOSER GUSTAV MAHLER IN LJUBLJANA

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911), who in the history of the modern music stands as one of the most important composers from the

beginning of the 20th century, after concluding music studies in Vienna, started his path as a professional musician in Ljubljana, where during the 1881/82 season he was a conductor of the Provincial Theatre. While in Ljubljana he also actively participated with the Philharmonic Society. It is in Ljubljana where Mahler is supposedly to have honed his conducting skills; since it was there that he conducted the majority of the most popular and often performed musical pieces. Ljubljana's musical critique of that time shows that his work extremely appreciated and well recognised.

Therefore, Ljubljana was the first of more than half a dozen creative stops of Mahler's musical career. When he left Ljubljana after one season, his path first led him to Olomouc, then to Kassel, Prague, Leipzig, Budapest, Hamburg and Vienna. In 1907, he left from Vienna to the USA, where his music creation came to an end four years later in New York. After Mahler left Lju-

tary needs. Thus, after the departure of the French, these premises were abandoned and neglected. Shortly before 1821, when it was determined that one of the congresses of the Holy Alliance would take place in Ljubljana, the City Government of Ljubljana started levelling and arranging the location, in order to make a place, which preserved the name Capuchin Square, available in the time for the congress taking place from January to May 1821 for numerous military and social events.

A year later, after the Holy Alliance congress of 1821, Capuchin Square was, on the initiative of the then mayor of Ljubljana Mr Hradecki, renamed Congress Square in the memory of the exceptional historical event in Ljubljana, and this name has remained until today. At that time, also on the mayor's initiative, a part of the square was planted with chestnut trees, and paths were arranged across it in a shape of a star, thus the name Zvezda (Star) adhered to it which is still used by people today.

From the Austria-Hungary period until the end of the World War I, Congress Square has had mainly social and ceremonial functions. In the twentieth century, more and more social, political have taken place there contributing to the identity of the State. On this square, citizens of Ljubljana and Slovenians gathered in masses, striving for a break from Austria for their own unification into a new state with oth-

er South Slavic nations at the end of the World War I. At the end of the World War II, they celebrated liberation from foreign occupation, and with this, also massively supported and greeted a new, socialist regime of Slovenia and Yugoslavia. More than forty years later, with adoption of the May Declaration by acclamation and with the support to the imprisoned Four JBTZ, accused of breaking Yugoslavia, the square was readied for Slovenia's gaining of independence. All of the above mentioned events, related to Congress Square, are in addition to others events deeply implanted in the historical memory of Slovenians.

In the first years after the independence, Congress Square hosted a few exceptional events, among them, the visit of the American President, Bill Clinton to Ljubljana, but in general it has slipped into a grey everyday life. Since its non-garden part has always been occupied by a full parking lot, and the other part with planted trees, the square has mainly been a "transit" point for the pedestrians. With the decision of Ljubljana City Council and the current mayor Zoran Jankovič to construct a multi-level underground car park below Congress Square in order to reduce the overcrowded parking issue of the city centre, and provide better traffic flow, the open area of Congress Square was also reviewed for renovation. Without stationery traffic in the square, this area shined in a new

way. It was especially important that the renovation preserved all the architectural and horticultural elements of the Square, and also the park's garden arrangement that since before World War II, when architect Jože Plečnik replaced the original chestnut trees with the plain trees, has remained almost untouched and almost all old trees still survive.

With the renovated Congress Square, citizens of Ljubljana and the visitors to the city, see this part of Ljubljana in a new, brighter and more airy image. Due to historical tradition, carried and preserved by the Square, it also was completely understandable that its re-opening coincided with the state celebration of the 20th anniversary of Slovenian independence on the eve of the Slovenian Statehood Day on 25 June of this year where state sovereigns of all four neighbouring countries of Slovenia: Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia honoured Slovenia with their presence.

All these stories, the State's story of Slovenia's independence, Slovenian culture's story of Mahler's, and the story of Congress Square relating to the Slovenian capital and its history, met and intertwined in the event which citizens of Ljubljana, Slovenian and other guests followed on the Congress Square on 3 July as an introduction to a rich and diverse programme of this year's International Summer Festival in Ljubljana.



Juš Turk, photo: Andrej Sedej

THE NEGLECTED PREKMURJE?

IN THE ENCHANTING GORIČKO LANDSCAPE PARK





Goričko is the northernmost corner of Slovenia and part of Prekmurje which extends on the left side of the Mura river after which this region is named. Since this is a less developed part of Slovenia, it is supposed to be given more attention by the Government, at least in recent years. Generally some people claim that Prekmurje has been largely overlooked by the center. However, its bonds with the rest of Slovenia have been weak throughout history. Nevertheless, in comparison with real poverty in the past, life in Prekmurje today is considerably easier, more entrepreneurial and stimulative: farmers cultivate their fields with great care, others work hard in enterprises (those that are still left), and almost everyone tends their homes in order to keep them as nice and tidy as possible. Some people commute daily to work in Austria and many are employed in tourism. Prekmurje is home to the almost entire Hungarian minority in Slovenia as well as to the highest number of the followers of Evangelical Church. There is also a little over three thousand Roma who – unlike in other places and probably countries – mostly live in nicely kept villages and in peaceful coexistence with the majority population. Most of the Roma live in the village of Pušča which is their only independent settlement in Prekmurje, while they have the most nicely kept homes in

the village of Ojtina in the municipality with an unusual name Tišina (Silence).

WHAT ARE THE DREAMS OF A NEW “PREKMURIAN” MICHEL VAN MULDER’S?

Goričko is an idyllic landscape park enclosed by three other landscape parks in the neighboring Austria and Hungary: Naturpark Raab in the west and Őrségi Nemzeti Park and Kerka-mente Naturpark in the east. The idea to form a three-national landscape park in the areas not yet affected by industrialization was born in early 90’s.

Underneath the rolling hills of these parks is hidden the bottom of the former Pannonian Sea, so almost everywhere fossil sea-shells millions of years old can be found. Today in Goričko also many foreigners live who bought quite a number of mostly abandoned homesteads. Some renovated them and settled there permanently, others use them as holiday houses, while still others also try to do business there. One of them is an especially interesting Belgian Michel van Mulders who came to Goričko together with his son two years ago, bought a large estate with an old, crumbling house in the municipality of Grčarevci which was not renovated yet, but nearby he put up a modern sawmill in which he installed the equipment for the preparation of special wood, used for the manufacturing of string

instruments. He makes this special wood from maples and Pokljuka spruces which are said to be the most resonant and exports both exclusively to China. But there is another, nobler goal: on his estate he is planning to set up, as he says, an Art Eden – artistic paradise of a sort, in a new building where there will also be a hall for artistic performances.

A VERY AMBITIOUS TOURIST PROJECT “HRVATOVA DOMAČIJA” (CROATIAN’S HOMESTEAD)

Goričko is truly an idyllic landscape park, perfectly suitable for such activities. There still are several old farm houses thatched with straw that must remain whole and must not be cut by a machine, so it is hard to come by nowadays. One of such truly beautiful houses stands on the so-called Croatian’s estate (Hrvatova domačija) in Grčarevci (while in other places houses thatched with reed can be seen). The old Croatian’s House was, partly with European funds, completely renovated and expanded by Verica Bokan and her friend Andrej Sedej, a journalist from Upper Carniola, who is so overwhelmed by the life in Goričko that he is by no means prepared to return to the Upper Carniola high mountains. Upon deciding that they will engage in agritourism, they built two smaller buildings apart from the basic one and also



thatched them with straw. In one of them, guests can sleep on hay instead of in bed, of course if they desire so. Andrej who is also highly skilled in informatics says that he acquires as much as 90 percent of all their guests through the Internet. He can also provide them with all relevant information on five golf courses and five thermal spas dispersed in an area no larger than 20 square kilometers around their homestead. They serve their guests in a large traditional farmhouse room heated by the typical Slovenian tiled stove during the winter. They also offer all original Goričko dishes, from the famous Prekmurje layer cake (prekmurska gibanica), salads dressed with

home-made pumpkin seed oil, so typical of northeastern Slovenia.

In the largest castle in Slovenia but also above the mysterious source of energies Almost everyone visiting Goričko usually visits the triangularly-shaped Grad castle in the village of Grad (meaning Castle) which with its 365 rooms – as many as there are days in a year – is the largest castle in Slovenia. In its original form it already stood in 11th century. According to the popular saying, it was built by Knights Templar as their transient post. Evidence shows that after them it was owned by numerous Hungarian feudal lords. During World War II it was occupied by Soviet soldiers for some

time while later by poor families until its renovation started. Now there is an information center in the castle, along with the exhibition, wedding and knight halls, the round saloon, the black open-fire kitchen and castle cellar with typical Prekmurje wines. Several legends are connected with the castle, one of them about a dragon with a golden crown who supposedly lived in it. People also claim that energies pour out of the depths beneath the castle court which is felt by people like heat or itching skin. All this is engulfed by a magnificent park with unusual tree species, designed in English style. But why was – and partially still is – Prekmurje always remote from the developments elsewhere in Slovenia? As said, the answer lies in history. This region was constantly under Hungarian influence since 11th century and was therefore different from other Slovenian regions in many respects. Although there were attempts already in 1848 to link Prekmurje people with other Slovenian compatriots in the west, they continued to live a remote life in relation to Slovenia. Only with the disintegration of Austria-Hungary during the First World War, Prekmurje was first annexed to the state of Slovenian, Croats and Serbs (SHS) and then to Yugoslavia, while officially it was integrated in 1920 when the peace treaty was signed with Hungary in Trianon, France. At the end of Hungarian rule, there were around 90.000 inhabitants in Prekmurje who preserved their Slovenian character.



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

