

Sinfo 03

ISSN 1854-0805

March 2011

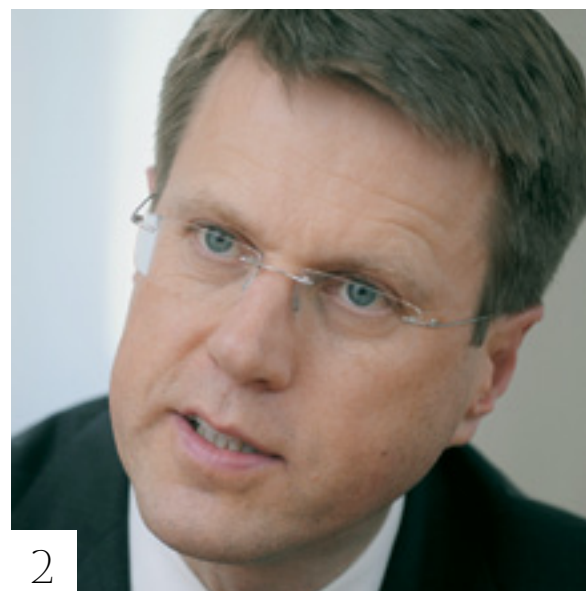
A candidacy that makes good sense

- INTERVIEW: **Samuel Žbogar** • PEOPLE: **Miroslav Košuta and Anton Nanut**
- SPORTS: **Collectors of medals** • ART & CULTURE: **Prešeren Awards in good hands**
- SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS: **From nature to your plate**

contents



1



2



3



4



5



6

1 In focus

Re-energising global responsibility through effective multilateralism

6

2 Interview

Samuel Žbogar

10

3 Before and after

Twenty years of Slovenian foreign policy

16

4 Art & culture

Prešeren Awards in good hands

24

5 Green corner

Organic farming

34

6 Natural trails

Jezersko – an oasis of peace and purity

49

MONTHLY COMMENTARY

A candidacy that makes good sense

4

BUSINESS

Exports remain the foundation of Slovenia's economic growth

14

A LETTER

H.E. Sanja Štiglic, H.E. Roman Kirn

22

ART & CULTURE

The cultural holiday in Prešeren's Town, Maribor 2012 forges ahead!, Exhibition: In Memoriam Vojteh Ravnikar, Boris Pahor – Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, 60 years of the Slovenian people's theatre Celje

24

OUR EXCELLENCE

The first safe house for students in Europe

31

PEOPLE

Miroslav Košuta and Anton Nanut

36

SPORTS

Collectors of medals

40

SLOVENIAN DELIGHTS

From nature to your plate

43

CULTURAL TRAILS

More powerful than a factory of death

46

Sinfo – Slovenian information

Editorial: Government Communication Office,
 Director: Darijan Košir, Gregorčičeva 25, 1000 Ljubljana,
 tel. +386 (0) 1 478 2630, fax + 386 (0) 1 251 2312, www.ukom.gov.si
 Editor-in-Chief: Valerija Mencej
 Executive Editor: Vesna Žarkovič, vesna.zarkovic@gov.si
 Editorial Board: Mateja Malnar Štembal, Jože Osterman, Polona Prešeren,
 Hana Souček Morača, Nataša Marvin, Manja Kostevc
 Photo Editor: Janez Vidrih
 Production: Nait d.o.o., Translation: Amidas d.o.o.
 Printed by: DZS, d.d., Slovenia
 Number of copies: 4600
 Available also at: www.ukom.gov.si/eng/slovenia/publication/sinfo
 Cover photo: STA

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

editorial



Vesna Žarkovič, Editor

CAN WE MAKE ANOTHER CONTRIBUTION IN 2012-13? YES, WE CAN.

This is the question posed – and simultaneously answered – by President Danilo Türk in connection with Slovenia's new candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2012-2013. We devote a considerable part of this issue of the magazine to understanding this candidacy, which is not a random impulse of Slovenian foreign policy but a considered action reflecting Slovenian policy in recent years and aimed at placing our young country in a broader international context. There is no doubt that Slovenia is able to bring new views and new topics that will reflect an altered concept of security that goes beyond narrow geopolitical understandings to include developmental elements, human rights issues and a response to rapid changes in the modern, globalised world.

The eve of Slovenia's most important cultural holiday was marked by the bestowing of the country's highest honours in the field of culture: the Prešeren Awards and Prešeren Foundation Awards. In the artist's eternal search for beauty and truth, poetry and thought, the question posed by Prešeren's contemporary Friedrich Hölderlin comes to mind: What use is a festival of poetry in a time of crisis? The answer is clear: it allows a country, not only in a time of crisis but systematically and permanently, to devote its energy to the matter of art and culture. To be aware of its debt towards vulnerable individuals, ordinary individuals and so allow art to speak, bowing humbly to it with honours consecrated by the name of a poet. To be aware that art is not here to rid the world of its uncleanness but to reveal it.

Care for the environment and a healthy lifestyle are becoming two of the priorities of our modern way of life. This issue also looks at organic farming, which stems from the realisation that only an approach to work that derives from a partnership with nature can be successful. The organic method of cultivating the land is certainly not unknown in Slovenia – the number of organic farms is constantly growing and an increasing number of farmers are opting for this form of farming. We present the "House of a Special Sort" and its locally produced, organically grown food, its wonderful surroundings and the desire of its owners to offer guests something more.

The whole of Slovenia celebrated the victory of skier Tina Maze, who won a gold medal at the FIS Alpine World Cup Ski Championships in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Boxer Dejan Zavec also successfully defended his IBF world title in the welterweight category (up to 66.678 kg). Where does little Slovenia, with its population of just two million, get such a fantastic team of athletes, competing in almost all sports and also winning medals? Particularly in winter sports, Slovenia is incredible: Alpine skiing, biathlon, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, ice hockey – in all these sports Slovenia is right at the top with the very best. And after all this the answer to the question of whether we Slovenians can contribute to a better tomorrow is clear: yes we can!



Darijan Košir

A candidacy that makes good sense

Slovenia's new candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, to which we devote a considerable part of this issue of Sinfo, is a move which has its logical background in the whole of recent Slovenian foreign policy. In order to understand this candidacy, then, we need to ask the following key questions: what are, in fact, the basic focuses of Slovenian foreign policy as reflected through the activities of the holders of political power? In what direction is the Slovenian state conducting its foreign policy, and what is its aim? These are questions of key importance for every state. Let us try and give brief answers to them.

From the 1990s onwards, Slovenian foreign policy made no secret of the fact that its ultimate goal was to achieve the integration of this young state into all key Euro-Atlantic structures, in particular, of course, the European Union and NATO. Following a decade of political manoeuvring on the domestic and European political fronts, this goal was achieved in 2004, having previously been ratified by Slovenian voters in a referendum in which more than 80% of the participants expressed themselves in favour of EU membership. Before this, of course, Slovenia had already joined certain other key organisations on gaining independence, for example the United Nations (from May 1992), the OSCE and the Council of Europe – and indeed has already chaired the latter two organisations. It has also already occupied a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

But the key objective, as we have said, was membership of the EU (including membership of the Eurozone and the Schengen Area) and NATO; once this objective had been achieved, it appeared for a moment that Slovenian foreign policy, which was also caught up in a number of recurring neighbourhood disputes (with Croatia), had been emptied of all strategic content and gave the impres-

sion that it no longer knew, in the wake of this great achievement, where to place Slovenia in the international context. With the election of President Danilo Türk (2007) and Prime Minister Borut Pahor (2008), two men who, in view of their long political careers (one is a former Slovenian Ambassador to the UN and the other a former MEP), show a readier understanding of the foreign policy activities and priorities of the country, there has been a gradual move towards strategic considerations that began to place Slovenia more logically into the new global frameworks and activities.

Naturally the central strategy of an orientation towards Euro-Atlantic structures had not changed. Rather, it was consolidated and began to gain in meaning. During the economic crisis of the last two and a half years, Slovenia's politicians have succeeded, thanks to the good economic position of the country – particularly with regard to the low public debt and low unemployment, a sustainable budget deficit and the adoption of both ongoing and structural economic measures – in getting the country aboard the “express train of Europe”, to borrow a phrase frequently used by the Prime Minister; this train means the Germany-France axis, which distances Slovenia from the slightly problematic debtor countries of, in particular, Mediterranean Europe (Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy). Slovenia's good position in the EU is also strengthened by the fact that Slovenia enjoys excellent relations with all its EU neighbours (Italy, Austria and Hungary), something that significantly improves both its general position and its security position. It is not insignificant that Slovenia continues to perform all the necessary functions expected of it by its NATO allies; with an extremely active role in the peacekeeping force in Kosovo and a presence in chaotic Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force, it has definitively consolidated its status as an important new member on which its allies can always rely.

This candidacy is not, in short, a coincidental or impulsive idea, it is a proposal which has evolved naturally from the endeavours of Slovenian politics in recent years to place our young country in a broader international context.

Borut Pahor's recent visit to the USA, where he was received simultaneously by President Obama and Vice President Biden, confirmed Slovenia's status as “an equal partner of the USA”, to quote Biden.

Besides the basic strategic and geopolitical orientation towards Euro-Atlantic alliances, the second most important field of Slovenian foreign policy activity is the so-called Western Balkans; the Slovenian government has recently adopted a coordinated strategy for this region, to which Slovenia belonged in the 20th century and to which, owing to its ties from the days of Yugoslavia, it is much closer than any other country. In accordance with this strategy, Slovenia is striving for the broadest possible integration of the countries of the region with the European Union – in general terms this means Croatia as currently the only serious potential full member of the EU, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Macedonia as key associate members. Slovenia is present in the region both economically and politically, it is a good adviser to the countries of western Europe and, in particular, the EU (the most recent proof of this is the special report by former Slovenian President Milan Kučan on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the needs of the European Council), and has a clearly expressed strategic interest in the region.

The third major category of foreign policy focuses for Slovenia in recent times is that of relations with superpowers, meaning the USA, Russia and China, all three of them with permanent seats on the UN Security Council. Together with the assessment of Slovenia's leading role in “this part of Europe”, this gives our country great weight. In recent times Slovenia has been intensively developing and strengthening its traditionally excellent relations with Russia. These will be further consolidated by the visit of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, scheduled for

this spring, and the signing of an agreement on Slovenia's cooperation in Russia's South Stream gas pipeline project, one of the biggest energy projects in recent European history. Slovenia is developing its relations with China in several directions, although it appears that these are not yet as developed as relations with the USA or Russia.

And finally, in the last two years Slovenian foreign policy has also actively sought and found alliances in the rapidly developing countries of the world, where, if we may once again borrow a phrase from Prime Minister Borut Pahor, it has targeted three key “basins”: Latin America (particularly Brazil), the Middle East (particularly Qatar and Libya, also Turkey), and India and the Far East (particularly Indonesia). Slovenia's political and economic leaders have already carried out – or will shortly be carrying out – key visits to these countries and forged the most important contacts, which means that our ability to “monetise” them, to use an expression from economics, is now entirely a question of day-to-day political astuteness.

In view of the stated key and strategic foreign policy priorities of the Slovenian state, some of which have not been specifically detailed here (for example the activities of President Türk on the margins of the former Soviet Union), Slovenia's desire to be considered once again as a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council appears perfectly logical, entirely appropriate and fully developed.

Slovenia, as we have outlined above, enjoys extremely good, well-established international relations across the whole spectrum, ranging from the immediate region, to European (and Atlantic) structures and world superpowers, and also including the rapidly developing countries of the world. As a result, it is able, through its contacts and know-how, to occupy itself in an appropriate manner with the active addressing of other international problems which the UN Security Council, through its permanent and non-permanent members, is attempting to resolve.

Re-energising global responsibility through effective multilateralism

On 22 May 1992, when Slovenia was admitted to the United Nations, the country fulfilled a historical aspiration to join other independent states in the international community on an equal footing.

As a staunch supporter of effective multilateralism, Slovenia is well aware that the size of a country is neither an obstacle to active participation within the UN system, nor to acting with like-minded countries to seek solutions to a range of problems.

An active member of the UN

Slovenia remains an active UN member state not only through numerous statements within the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the UN General Assembly (UNGA), but more importantly through the various positions it has held within the UN system.

During the 64th session, the Slovenian Permanent Representative to the UN was among the 21 Vice-Presidents of the UNGA, and together with Argentina, headed the process of revitalising the General Assembly's work. In parallel, Slovenia also took part in the inter-governmental negotiations on Security Council reform, ensuring the inclusion of our own proposal for such reform, as presented in 2008 by the Slovenian President, Dr Danilo Türk.

For Slovenia, the promotion of human rights has been high on the agenda for many years, a commitment that was especially highlighted through our membership of the Human Rights Council in 2007–2010. Traditionally, we have endeavoured to promote children's rights, gender equality, the



Slovenian diplomacy therefore continues to abide by three golden rules: an ambitious, relevant and global foreign policy; a silent, effective and balanced foreign policy; and a principled foreign policy.

rights of national and ethnic minorities, the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation, human rights education, and the abolition of the death penalty.

In light of our priorities on guaranteeing children's rights, Slovenia has channelled its activities through the UNICEF Executive Board, as one of its Vice-Presidents. At the Board's

last annual meeting, Slovenia proposed marking the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our work with UNICEF will con-



MFA Žbogar meeting with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, February 2011

tinue this year, as we assume the Presidency of the Executive Board.

Slovenia has been actively engaged in the field of human security, both as a member of the Human Security Network and within the Group of Friends of Human Security. We were actively engaged in the drafting of the first resolution on human security in the UNGA, and led its formal meeting on human security. This vital issue remains one of our priorities for the 65th UNGA session.

As a member of the Bureau of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Slovenia was particularly active in the preparations for the eighth session of the States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and for the first Review Conference of the Rome Statute, in which Slovenia assumed the role of regional coordinator for the participation of countries at the high-level conference. We firmly support the work of the

ICC and other international instruments of individual criminal accountability, but at the same time stress the primary obligation of national jurisdictions to try such crimes.

In pursuit of a more global foreign policy, Slovenia is striving to expand its activities. In April 2010, Slovenia was elected to the Executive Committee of the Programme of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order to support its work in facing a number of growing problems whose successful solution requires close cooperation among all humanitarian actors. At the end of May 2010, Slovenia became a member of the informal group 3G (Global Governance Group), which is tasked primarily with strengthening cooperation between the G20 and the UN.

The right to development is a basic right of all people and countries. Sustainable development is necessary in order to achieve global peace and security, and it is essential to focus

Slovenia is determined to remain a responsible and creative UN partner during a period that calls for the advancement of reforms to the UN system, including the Security Council, in order to improve the transparency and efficiency required to empower the UN, by making the organisation more in touch with the realities of a constantly changing world.

President of the Republic of Slovenia, Danilo Türk:

Yes, we can: Slovenia in the UN Security Council 1998–99



Slovenia's first term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (1998–99) was a rewarding experience. Merely five years into its independence Slovenia successfully campaigned for the much coveted non-permanent seat and, importantly, after having been elected, demonstrated that it can assume its responsibility effectively. Slovenia was then seen as "punching above its weight" (according to the "Financial Times") by actively working on such crisis situations as Iraq, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and DR Congo. Its chairmanship of the Libya sanctions committee was widely respected as fair and helpful in the process of bringing the two suspects for the Lockerbie bombing to justice. At the time of the East Timor Crisis (1999) we participated in the Security Council's mission to Jakarta and Dili, which helped making the agreement on the peacekeeping operation and on the subsequent political stabi-

lization. Slovenia broke new ground in the Security Council's dealing with prevention of armed conflicts and, importantly, in handling the Council's relations with the media.

I continue to have fond memories of those days as Slovenia's Ambassador to the UN at the time and its representative on the Security Council. I believe we have made a decent contribution. Our Security Council team was young and enthusiastic, flexible in thinking and imaginative in the creation of ideas. We successfully cooperated with other countries, then represented on the Security Council. Friendships made at that time have endured. And, most important, we have learned that irrespective of doubts and disappointments, the UN represents an indispensable instrument of global peace and security. Used wisely, it can make peace a reality. Can we make another contribution in 2012–13? Yes, we can.

Prime Minister, Borut Pahor:

Principled, inclusive and transparent foreign policy



Since gaining independence twenty years ago, Slovenia has become a full member of the European Union, NATO, and the OECD, introduced the euro, and joined the Schengen area. In 1998 and 1999, Slovenia held a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and successfully chaired the OSCE in 2005, and the Council of Europe in 2009. As the first of the new member states Slovenija also held the Council of the EU in 2008. Over 5000 Slovenian peacekeepers have been deployed around the world to UN peacekeeping operations.

This shows that, despite its relatively brief existence, Slovenia has become a visible and respected member of the international community. Slovenia may be a small state, but it has the heart of a big one. Strong Slovenian heart is especially expressed in our commitment in embracing democracy, human rights, rights of women and other humanitarian activities. Slovenia understands its candidature for the non-permanent membership of the Security Council also as an opportunity to further contribute

to the maintenance of international peace and security as well as the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The United Nations represents the core of global governance structures, and embodies the essence of effective multilateralism, to which Slovenia is deeply committed. I believe that as an indispensable universal organisation, the United Nations also serves to remind us of the constant need to promote the noble purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Slovenian candidacy for the UN Security Council for the period 2012–2013 underscores the great significance that Slovenia attaches to the role of the United Nations in an increasingly interdependent and complex world, where every country has to take on its share of global responsibility. I truly believe that with our rich multilateral experience, Slovenia can take on the responsibilities of a non-permanent Security Council member, one that is guided by a principled, inclusive and transparent foreign policy.

primarily on human development as the main development indicator. As a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, Slovenia is fully committed to working hard and constructively to make the 4th Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) a success. The Conference provides significant momentum to renewing and enhancing support for LDCs, which will greatly contribute to reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Pressing challenges ahead

We face a complex and interdependent world in which no country can reach its foreign policy goals independently. Only through effective multilateralism can we successfully deal with the security-development nexus, prevent and mitigate climate change and ensure respect for human rights and democratic principles. Equal importance must be placed on confronting global and transnational threats by emphasising disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, and the fight against terrorism and organised crime.

Slovenia has traditionally devoted special attention to issues of international peace and security, human rights and strengthening international law and justice, the protection of children, the advancement of women, the eradication of

poverty and social injustice, the advancement of sustainable development, and the protection of the environment.

As a strong advocate of effective multilateralism and a facilitator of the UN reform process, Slovenia actively contributes to the implementation of the 2005 Outcome Document.

Striving for a global foreign policy

Slovenia is an active and ambitious member of the international community. We believe that modern foreign policy should be global, because all the challenges we face are global. With this in mind and building upon our experience in various multilateral bodies, Slovenia presented its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2012–2013.

The candidacy underscores a genuine desire to utilise the rich multilateral experience gained during Slovenia's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2009, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2008, membership of the Human Rights Council in 2007–2010, and as Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2005.

Membership of international organisations offers foreign policy opportunities, and also



MFA Žbogar meeting with PGA Joseph Deiss, February 2011



MFA Žbogar addressing the UN Security Council, February 2011

requires assuming a share of global responsibility and solidarity. Slovenia's membership of the UN Security Council would be based on the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, in particular, international law and international humanitarian law.

Slovenia will strive for inclusiveness, legitimacy and transparency in decision making on international issues. Slovenia will support the development of an international community based on human dignity and global justice and will ensure environmentally acceptable and sustainable development.

Should the UN membership allow us once again to share the burden of ensuring international peace and security, Slovenia will focus primarily on emphasising the need for conflict prevention, the effec-

tiveness of the sanctions regime, and underlining the importance of protecting civilians in armed conflict. We will also continue to focus on issues relating to environmental security, promote regional cooperation, and strive to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the UN Security Council.

Now, nineteen years after joining the UN, Slovenia remains committed to the noble purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Slovenia is a strong advocate of the pre-eminence of the United Nations, and we have demonstrated this with active membership in a host of international organisations.

This is the path to a world of peace, security, and freedom for every individual and for all nations, a world with more solidarity and social justice for all.

This is the kind of United Nations for which Slovenia will continue to strive.

The International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF)

Slovenia has been active in de-mining and related activities, especially through the ITF, which was established by the Slovenian Government in 1998, as well in several other humanitarian projects. Among these is the rehabilitation of disabled children from Gaza, which was implemented on the initiative of President Dr Danilo Türk. The ITF has thus far supported the rehabilitation of 61 children from Gaza at the University Rehabilitation Institute in Ljubljana. It is planned to rehabilitate 90 disabled children by the end of 2012.

Green Group

The Green Group was launched on Slovenia's initiative to promote environmental issues on the global agenda, together with Costa Rica, Iceland, Cape Verde, Singapore and United Arab Emirates. Through joint statements, articles and awareness-raising events, the Group aims to draw attention to the importance of addressing climate change, providing water security, promoting renewable energy and supporting science for the Earth.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the participating states meet annually during the course of UN General Assembly sessions in New York to discuss the programme of work and priorities of the Group. The next Green Group event is on World Water Day, 22 March, in Ljubljana and New York.

»It is highly possible that Slovenia would take over the presidency of the UN Security Council already in the first month of its full-fledged membership, in January 2012«

Samuel Žbogar



The candidacy for the UN Security Council is not an end in itself, it is a tool that opens up new horizons in the process of gaining support and paves the way to new experiences and opportunities, including economic ones, stresses Minister of Foreign Affairs Samuel Žbogar.

Minister Žbogar, the Slovenian candidacy for non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council in 2012-2013 will be a major challenge in the second half of your term of office. How are you preparing for the candidacy?

The candidacy of the Republic of Slovenia for non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council is currently our main foreign policy priority. Our work on the candidacy is being carried out at two levels. We are undertaking numerous activities to mobilise the support needed for the election. At the same time, we are making preparations for membership, both in terms of content and organisation. After all, if the elections scheduled for October are successful, Slovenia will assume its duties within the UN Security Council as early as the beginning of this November, but without the right to vote. Furthermore, it is highly possible that Slovenia would take over the presidency of the UN Security Council already in the first month of its full-fledged membership, in January 2012.

We regularly participate in all open UN Security Council discussions and take part in numerous regional organisations' summits, as they provide us with a better insight into the problems that countries and regions face, especially those often featured on the UN Security Council agenda. We would like for Slovenia in the Security Council to speak not only for itself, but to be the voice of like-minded countries from all regions of the world.

Membership of the UN Security Council would certainly be an opportunity for Slovenia to attain its foreign policy goals more successfully. What are the goals, and to which issues

would Slovenia attach particular importance?

The Republic of Slovenia understands its role in the international community in the light of continuous confrontations with real global challenges. Two years have passed since the new Slovenian Government took office; its main goals are to modernise and develop the country, to guarantee prosperity and the exercise of democratic principles, and to establish Slovenia as a credible partner in the international community.

Slovenia pursues its fundamental goals through the realisation of foreign policy objectives. It places special emphasis on its neighbourhood, particularly on activities in the Western Balkans. Our priorities include sustainable development, which must be based on social justice and investment in an energy-efficient society. Within the given context, we also advance general economic cooperation. Another priority is ensuring peace within the existing system of collective security under the UN framework, which gives due consideration to the principle of human security and the consolidation of the international legal order, which can only be achieved through effective multilateral institutions. Slovenia will strive for the EU to become a global partner on the international stage.

If elected, the Republic of Slovenia will follow its fundamental foreign policy principles, which are enshrined in both the Slovenian Constitution and the Charter of the United Nations. Our activities in international organisations are underpinned by our democratic and legal foundations. The priority areas of activities of the Republic of Slovenia in the UN Security Council will

focus primarily on conflict prevention, with an emphasis on mediation, the targeted use of sanctions, the protection of civilians, environmental security, the promotion of regional cooperation, and improving the efficiency and transparency of the Security Council's work.

In 2011, Slovenia will not cover its UN membership fee due to restrictive budgetary measures. Does this worry or burden you? Is it possible for Slovenia to withdraw its candidacy?

The global, financial and economic crisis has had consequences in every country; it has also affected the capacity to meet international obligations that include contributions to the operation of international organisations. In this respect, Slovenia is no exception. In 2010, only 13 of the 192 UN Member States covered all their financial obligations to the UN. In the context of these obligations, one must differentiate between contributions to the regular UN budget, contributions to the ongoing renovation of the United Nations Headquarters, contributions to the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (the ICTY) and Rwanda (the ICTR), and contributions to the budget for UN peace-keeping operations. With the exception of the latter, the Republic of Slovenia met all its financial obligations to the United Nations in 2011 and in 2010. Given all this, the claim that the Republic of Slovenia will fail to meet its UN membership fee is incorrect.

How do you assess the other three candidates for membership? What advantages does Slovenia have over other candidates? And what will be the

decisive element in the candidacy for the UN Security Council?

The Republic of Slovenia is indeed competing for a seat reserved for the Eastern European Group (EEG) against three other countries. Unfortunately, our regional group failed to reach consensus on one single candidate. Nevertheless, we are confident that our efforts will be rewarded. In June 2000, when Slovenia was the first in the EEG to announce its candidacy for the period 2012-2013, we did not expect many competitors. However, things changed when first Armenia and then Azerbaijan decided to declare their candidatures as well. Hungary, which was originally a candidate for a later period, joined the "race" in 2007. But, we remain confident, also because our positions on international issues are consistent and well-considered.

On several occasions I have stressed that the candidacy for the UN Security Council is not an end in itself. It is a tool that opens up new horizons in the process of gaining support and paves the way to new experiences and opportunities, including economic ones.

What new, fresh and unique contributions does Slovenia have to offer the UN Security Council?

The Republic of Slovenia can offer the experience of a country that understands small and medium size countries, has experience of UN Security Council membership, has held the chairs of the OSCE and Council of Europe, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and is an active member of the Human Rights Council. Slovenia can also contribute the experience of a country that has undergone the challenging experience of transition and that has a principled, transparent and open foreign policy.

We will strive for the development of an international community that shows consideration for human dignity and global justice and guarantees environmentally acceptable



sustainable development, inclusiveness, legitimacy and transparency in international decision-making and the consistent fulfilment of political commitments that reflect the shared responsibility of the international community. Slovenia particularly seeks to achieve and maintain a consensus between the Security Council members and to remain open to dialogue.

Is Slovenian foreign policy ambitious enough? How is that manifested?

The Republic of Slovenia is realistic, with the right amount of ambition. The work done in the past year testifies to the success, efficiency and competence of the Slovenian diplomatic corps. Its competence is reflected in numerous activities, as well as in the organisation of and participation in

challenging multilateral conferences and numerous bilateral visits.

The withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan is no simple matter. Nonetheless, does Slovenia still see itself there?

As a responsible member of the international community, Slovenia contributes to the efforts to permanently stabilise Afghanistan. This includes a contingent of the Slovenian Army in the ISAF. From November 2012 onwards, the Slovenian presence will concentrate exclusively on training the ANSF, which is the best way for Slovenia to contribute to the projected transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan authorities. In accordance with the recently adopted strategy on its role in the efforts of the international community to stabilise Afghanistan, Slovenia

intends to preserve its military presence under certain conditions and, perhaps in a somewhat modified form, until the end of the transition in 2014. The Slovenian military contribution will focus solely on training the ANSF, which is the only way to allow for the withdrawal of international troops from the territory of Afghanistan in the foreseeable future.

What was Slovenia's role in the UN in the period from 1998 to 1999, when Slovenia was a non-permanent member of the Security Council?

On 1 January 1998, Slovenia began its two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. In August 1998, when the Security Council addressed the majority of the most pressing issues (Iraq, Kosovo, Libya), Slovenia held its first presi-

dency, which was very successful. During that month, we attended to the transparency and openness of the activities of the Security Council and to the efficiency of its work. Slovenia was thus actively involved in collective security, and cooperated on an equal footing in decision-making that concerned numerous regional and global issues.

In November 1999, Slovenia held the presidency of the Security Council for the second time. During that month, we also organized an open discussion on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts.

Slovenia's membership in the Security Council in 1998-1999 was an important experience for us and a unique opportunity to engage actively with the international community on a host of important issues.

Peace and Security. I personally took part in the event on the margins of the general debate of the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2010.

In terms of global action, you attach importance to green diplomacy. What is green diplomacy?

Environmental diplomacy is first and foremost the awareness that environmental issues are also issues for foreign ministers. Climate change and the degradation of the environment, such as the loss of biodiversity, have an immediate effect on peoples' health and the food supply. They also hamper economic and social development. As a result, they have negative effects on international stability.

Environmental diplomacy provides an opportunity for small countries to contribute to the global dialogue on these issues. Several European countries, primarily the Nordic countries, are building their foreign policy identity on issues of a green future. In 2009, a Slovenian initiative, the Green Group was established - a group of like-minded countries at the level of foreign ministers focussing on climate change, water, renewable energies and support for science.

What is your response to criticisms of the work of the UN General Assembly to the effect that it is all words and no action?

In the context of the work of the UN General Assembly and the readiness of the UN to combat global challenges, it should be underlined that it is the only universal organisation with 192 Member States. Negotiations on individual decisions are often lengthy. However, this does not mean that the words spoken are irrelevant. Seeking agreement in such a varied circle of interests is definitely a daunting task. At the same time it has to be underlined that, the commitments made are all-encompassing and im-

pose a moral imperative on the countries to meet them. Decisions adopted within the UN have yielded the Millennium Development Goals, adequate responses to numerous humanitarian crises, assistance to the most vulnerable groups and peace-keeping efforts across the globe with more than 120,000 peace-keeping troops.

What of allegations that the UN and countries around the world are poorly prepared for global challenges, including ethnic conflict, outbreaks of contagious diseases, terrorism, climate change, energy security, food and water shortages, and that they are simply unable to cope with them?

The UN is the only forum that brings together all of the world's countries. As such, it is unique, valuable and special. It is the only such forum we have, so - to paraphrase the late American president John F. Kennedy - we must ask ourselves not what the UN can do for us, but what we can do for the UN. Every global challenge has its own specifics and dynamic of development. The UN has laid the foundations for the resolution of the majority of those challenges. It would be unfair to say that the UN does little. As a matter of fact, the UN does a lot. It continuously adapts itself in its work and consolidates itself on the basis of every new experience and lessons learned in the field. The UN has contributed to the codification of a number of international instruments, the establishment of norms and rules, the respect for human rights, the rights of women and children, the elimination of discrimination etc. Moreover, we should not forget the activities of individual UN agencies and funds, such as UNICEF. The UN and its principal bodies are responsible for solving the most acute and burning issues in the international community. In contrast with the complex and daunting crisis situations, the successes of their endeavours are not usually the focus

of attention of the international public.

If the first half of your term in office focused primarily on Croatia, what are your priorities for the future?

The activity of the Slovenian diplomatic corps will focus on the European External Action Service, the forging of strategic partnerships with key European countries, the United States and the Russian Federation, active involvement at the regional level and maintaining Slovenia's position on the European energy and infrastructure map. We will offer a contribution to the consolidation of the international legal order and economic diplomacy, which has become our priority over the past year.

Increased attention on Bosnia and Herzegovina is another priority of Slovenia's foreign policy strategy regarding the Balkans. Is the appointment of former president Kučan as special rapporteur for Bosnia and Herzegovina a step in that direction? Is that a niche that offers Slovenia the opportunity to present its proposals?

The Western Balkans is a priority of Slovenian foreign policy. In our opinion, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country that should be accorded adequate and continuous attention by the international community. Slovenia has actively endeavoured to introduce visa liberalisation - both in terms of immediate assistance in the fulfilment of criteria and in terms of political support within the EU. At present, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to improve and strengthen the efficient functioning of the country and its institutions at all levels. Negotiations on constitutional reform to ensure efficiency are underway. On one hand, there is a clear need to harmonise the Constitution with the European Convention on Human Rights. On the other, a "European clause" is needed for an expedited accession to the EU.



Exports remain the foundation of Slovenia's economic growth



Jani Soršak, the outgoing director of the Competition Protection Office

Slovenia ended 2010 with economic growth of slightly under 1%, inflation at 1.9% and approximately 110,000 unemployed. For 2011, the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (Umar) forecasts slightly faster economic growth, inflation of approximately 2% and a further increase in the number of unemployed. In January unemployment figures already stood at 113,000, which for Slovenian conditions is a significant number. Following Slovenia's achievement of independence and the collapse of the market of the former Yugoslavia, unemployment was higher still, at over 130,000, but there is a major difference between conditions then and the situation today. At that time it was necessary to find new markets quickly, something Slovenia

managed to do very successfully. In this period of global economic crisis, however, this is much more difficult. Although exports are currently the main and, in fact, the only stimulator of economic growth in Slovenia, analysts at Umar point out that Slovenian exports are recovering more slowly than those of Slovakia, the Czech Republic or Hungary – countries with which Slovenia is frequently in competition in foreign markets. In the opinion of Umar director Boštjan Vasle, one of the most important causes of the slower recovery of Slovenian exports is the relatively poor technological structure of the Slovenian economy, since figures show that the production and export of technologically more complex products are recovering faster in Slovenia.

The second factor impeding a more rapid recovery, says Vasle, is cost competitiveness, in other words how cost effectively Slovenian enterprises are capable of producing what they sell in global markets. In the last two years these conditions have worsened perceptibly in Slovenia. Although there has been a slight improvement in recent quarters, Slovenia still needs to take a relatively small step forwards in comparison with other EU member states. In Boštjan Vasle's opinion the reasons for Slovenia's lack of cost competitiveness lie in the high costs of labour and increases in the minimum wage.

Although economic growth is still very modest, considerable increases in the prices of refined petroleum products have seen other prices, particularly food prices, start to rise. This in turn has led to debates about retail margins, given that producer prices have hardly increased at all. Calls to limit retail margins have been rejected by the Ministry of the Economy, since such an intervention would affect competition in the market. Jani Soršak, the outgoing director of the Competition Protection Office, points out that the estimates of 90% margins referred to by some critics are not accurate, and that retail margins are not excessive and are actually in line with the rest of Europe. He also calls on suppliers to act in a coordinated manner. In his opinion both farmers and food processors still have considerable reserves in productivity in order to be able to cover the increased costs deriving from higher prices of raw materials. Experts warn, however, that

significantly higher global food prices will eventually make themselves felt in Slovenia. Opinions on the economic situation in Slovenia and on what should be done in order to improve conditions vary considerably. At a conference on the development of Slovenia organised by one of the political parties, development minister Mitja Gaspari underlined the fact that Slovenia urgently needs to reduce its government deficit in the next few years, something that in his opinion does not exclude economic growth. Gaspari listed the numerous problems that Slovenia is facing: a worsening of the wage-productivity ratio dating back a number of years, pensions growth that has been almost as rapid as the growth in wages, and doubts over the suitability of the distribution of social transfers. The effectiveness of funds for development and education is also called into question, in that while Slovenia apparently tops the list of EU countries in terms of the share of funds for education, results are nevertheless below average. There is also a need to create a more efficient public sector and introduce more order and better management in its institutions, something about which employees in the public sector are apparently unenthusiastic. The economist Dr Jože Mencinger is less worried about conditions in Slovenia. In his opinion the structure of public spending is as it should be and is similar to that of other EU countries. In Dr Mencinger's opinion, Slovenia's government deficit is not high, and neither is government debt. In his view the govern-

ment's hurry to consolidate government debt is a mistake, since the entire focus is on expenditure instead of dealing with ways to increase income. At the same time, however, Dr Mencinger admits that the government does not have much in the way of reserves on the income side, since because of the threat of inflation it is too late to increase VAT, and warns that enterprise and bank debt is a significant and serious problem. These difficulties are the reason why the number of bankruptcies is increasing, particularly in the construction and retail sectors. In December last year over 6,000 legal persons defaulted on the payment of financial obligations, with construction and retail enterprises accounting for the largest share of them. The number of companies in administration is also increasing. The government is drafting a special act to enable it to deal more decisively with the problem of poor payment discipline, which should also see Slovenia implementing the European directive governing payment periods for business-to-business transactions. In the view of some commentators, the introduction of prescribed time limits within which pay-



Development Minister Mitja Gaspari

ments must be made and invoices settled will also attempt to regulate the situation of those subjects who are not paying invoices despite having sufficient liquidity. The biggest problems with non-payment are faced by subcontractors in the construction sector, in which the number of enterprises is decreasing. In 2010 the number of construction companies deleted from the register outstripped the number of newly founded construction companies by almost a thousand. In the case of sole traders the picture is different, and newly established sole traders outnumber those that cease trading. Nevertheless, profits in the construction sector have fallen by as much as 81% in the last two years. According to figures from ratings agency Bisnode, last year 44% of construction company invoices were up to 30 days overdue, while 18% were over 30 days overdue. According to the Bisnode Failure model, risk in the construction sector last year was on average 11% higher than in the rest of the Slovenian economy. In view of the difficulties of the construction sector the government is preparing a series of measures designed to alleviate the situation in a sector

which in past years has contributed a great deal to economic growth.

Slovenian citizens have submitted almost a million comments to the Surveying and Mapping Authority, which has prepared, on the basis of a census, an estimate of the value of immovable property that will be the basis for the property tax due to be introduced in 2012, which also happens to be a general election year, something which as regards the introduction of such taxes is not exactly encouraging for citizens.

Essentially this means that one in every two Slovenian citizens has complained about the estimated value of his property. Owners were most dissatisfied with the valuations of houses, of which there are 530,000 in Slovenia. There are in fact a total of slightly over six million items of immovable property in Slovenia, including just over one million buildings, 1.7 million parts of buildings and over five million land parcels. The number of property owners is just over one million. Staff at the Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia expected citizens to submit the majority of their comments in electronic form, but this has not proved to be the case. Despite the spread of information technology, the level of computer literacy of the population is not yet high enough to mean that a majority of people are capable of submitting their comments electronically, and the result has been crowds of people turning up at Surveying and Mapping Authority offices.

The Slovenian economy has also achieved some notable international successes recently.

Elan 350 yacht, launched last year at the International boat show in Portorož, won the prestigious European Boat of the Year 2011 award at this year's Boot Düsseldorf international boat show.

Elan sees the award as further



proof that the Begunje-based company is among the most innovative in the yacht industry. The company, which is already building its fortieth Elan 350, created the award-winning yacht in collaboration with yacht designer Rob Humphreys. Boot Düsseldorf was also the occasion for Elan to present the Elan 210 to the global public. Orders have already started coming in for this new yacht and Elan expects to build 100 of the model this year.

Velenje-based domestic appliances manufacturer Gorenje is expanding into Serbia, where it already owns several production facilities. It has already switched boiler production to Serbia and is planning a new factory for washing machines and dryers. Gorenje's companies are seen as an opportunity for employment in these times of economic crisis in Serbia, and as a result an increasing number of locations are competing to be chosen as sites for new production facilities. One such competition developed recently between the towns of Valjevo and Zaječar. The winner was the latter and over the next 12 months Gorenje will be setting up several assembly lines in Zaječar's industrial zone to produce washing machines and dryers for the Serbian market and a number of other eastern European markets. Gorenje expects to create 300 new jobs in Zaječar over the next three years (including jobs in a plant producing washbasins from synthetic compounds), with the Serbian government providing support to the tune of €10,000 per employee.

Marko Pogačnik, Jože Poličar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, photo: archive

Twenty years of Slovenian foreign policy

In the 1990s the world witnessed a spring-time of the nations in central and eastern Europe. One of these nations was Slovenia. Yet the Slovenian story is different from the others. As one of the republics of the then Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slovenia was striving, long before the fall of the Berlin Wall, for the abolition of state totalitarianism, clashing with neo-communist dogmatism, openly advocating the establishment of democracy and, in September 1989, before the fall of the Berlin Wall but still within the context of the former Yugoslavia, it unilaterally introduced a multi-party system in Slovenia. It was in favour of the introduction of a market economy that would enable it to enjoy to

a greater extent the results of its economic activity. It strove for greater openness of borders with neighbouring countries, not least because of its desire for connections with its minorities, despite the fact that this was labelled in federal institutions as “nationalist tendencies”. Slovenia, which understood that reforms are necessary if there is to be development, advocated the inclusion of Yugoslavia in European integration processes and its more rapid technological development, but in the context of the sociopolitical system of the time, and in the face of the increasingly nationally oriented forms of communism appearing in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, this was simply not possible.



In 2004 Slovenia became a full member of the EU.



On 22 May 1992 Slovenia became the 176th member State of the UN.

Slovenia got its first Foreign Affairs Act in April 1991, followed in subsequent years by several amendments. The Act provides that foreign policy is determined by the National Assembly and implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Following the victory of the democratic opposition at the first democratic elections in April 1990, and above all following the plebiscite in December 1990 in which 88.2% of Slovenia's citizens voiced their support for an independent and sovereign state, with a victory of democratic forces over political and military opposition to independence and sovereignty, Slovenia proclaimed its independence on 25 June 1991. It proclaimed independence without any kind of support and even without the tacit agreement of any foreign power.

On 16 May 1990 Slovenia got its first democratic government, an autonomous Slovenian foreign policy and its first foreign minister. The emphasis is on the fact that this foreign policy

was autonomous for the first time, since although Slovenia had been accumulating foreign policy experience and knowledge since the 16th century (when Baron Sigismund von Herberstein became its first diplomat), it had never functioned as an independent state within the various political entities of which it had formed a part in previous centuries. In the centuries that followed we find Slovenian diplomats among the cultured and educated people of noble or even peasant origin at European courts or on periodic missions to the courts of Denmark, Switzerland, Spain, Bohemia, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Turkey, Russia, the Vatican, Prussia and numerous German principalities, Portugal, China and later the USA, Canada, Egypt

and South Africa. These diplomats brought back knowledge about nation-building, about the need to open up to the world and the need for international cooperation. All these experiences had to be combined, but since they were still inadequate it was necessary to add some original input and draw in all those who were able to help in some way in the realisation of what was then the most important task of Slovenia's struggle for international recognition as a state, since without the recognition of the international community even independence would be unimaginable.

As it grew increasingly apparent that it was not going to be possible to achieve a consensus for change within the Yugoslav federation, the first foreign policy focuses began to appear within the first democratic government of the Republic of Slovenia. One of the first risky actions was the appoint-

ment of individuals authorised to represent the Republic of Slovenia at the highest level. It was necessary to create as broad as possible a network of international connections. This network began with the neighbouring countries and spread to countries with a decisive influence in international relations. Within six months of Slovenia's proclamation of independence, the country's foreign policy priority – intensive integration with Europe – paid off with the recognition of Slovenia as a subject of international law on the part of the members of the European Community and certain other European countries. The door was now open for recognitions, which began to arrive from all over the world.

By the end of 1991 Slovenia already had eight diplomatic representations of the Republic of Slovenia, four joint representations of the government and the business sector, one

On 22 May 1992 the Republic of Slovenia became the 176th Member State of the UN.



Following the successful conclusion of Slovenia's term as non-permanent member of the Security Council, Mr Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation, appointed Dr Danilo Türk as Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

government envoy and more than ten special advisers to the foreign affairs minister. Slovenia's foreign policy and its efforts were at the same time directed towards the incorporation of Slovenia in Euro-Atlantic political, economic and security integrations and political and economic multilateral organisations headed by the UN.

The development of bilateral relations, in particular relations with neighbouring countries, was from the very beginning one of the key strategic focuses of Slovenia's foreign policy. Many countries had shown Slovenia political and moral support during the independence process. Although Slovenia had played a very active role during the period of the crisis in the republics of the former Yugoslavia, one of the tasks of Slovenian foreign policy in the early years was that of affirming Slovenia's identity as a country that was not a part of the crisis in the Balkans, even

though certain aspects of this crisis (refugees, the effects of the arms embargo and some consequences of the sanctions against the Federal Republic

of Yugoslavia) affected it directly. These efforts reached a successful conclusion in 1994 when Slovenia ceased to be included in UNPROFOR re-

ports. Slovenian foreign policy continued with the offering of assistance in the guaranteeing of security, stability, the introduction of democracy, the rule



With its membership of the UN, Slovenian diplomacy, committed to effective multilateralism, gained much more than mere recognition of its own statehood. It also gained the opportunity to consolidate those objectives and principles in international relations that are the key to the preservation of Slovenian sovereignty and, thanks to the UN principle of equal sovereignty of states, the possibility to express itself directly on all key issues affecting the international community and its security.



US President George W. Bush, PM Janez Janša and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso addressing the press after the EU-US summit in June 2008 at Brdo pri Kranju.

of law and respect for human rights. Slovenian foreign policy is still tied to these values today. Consistently committed to these principles and values, just six years after being accepted as a member of the UN, Slovenia took up a non-permanent seat on the Security Council (1998–1999), in this way assuming co-responsibility for global events and taking on functions of the greatest responsibility, from chairing meetings of the Security Council to participating in various committees and missions. Slovenia's proposal – subsequently realised – to establish an International Trust Fund for Demining, contributing to peace and stability in crisis ar-

reas and directly saving the lives of those living in areas affected by war, is still the recipient of broad approval today. One of Slovenia's most important foreign policy goals – NATO membership – was achieved in 2004 in the second round of NATO expansion. This was also the year that Slovenia became a full member of the EU, joining the group of democratic countries and successfully concluding all the most vital political and economic processes it had set as its goals on achieving independence. Just four years later, in the first half of 2008, Slovenia became the first of the new members of the European Union to hold the Presidency of the Council of

the European Union. Slovenia's EU Presidency was marked by three priority tasks: intercultural dialogue, the Western Balkans and the process of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. There were also challenges such as climate change and its connection with energy. These responsible tasks demanded the universal engagement of all the potentials of Slovenia's foreign policy apparatus. At that time Slovenia already had

experience as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and had already chaired the OSCE (2006) and various international organisations including the Human Security Network (2006) and the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (2006/07). In 2009 Slovenia successfully chaired the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for six months. Slovenia became a

In 2003 Slovenian foreign policy received an important recognition from the domestic public when almost 90% of voters in a referendum supported Slovenia's entry into the EU and NATO.



One of Slovenia's most important foreign policy goals - NATO membership - was achieved in 2004 in the second round of NATO expansion.

member of the Council of Europe, the oldest pan-European international organisation, in 1993 and was the first of the former Yugoslav republics to do so.

The opening of Slovenian foreign policy towards the world continues. Membership of the World Trade Organisation (1995) was followed last year by membership of the OECD, and economic diplomacy has become one of the most important priorities of Slovenian foreign policy. Slovenia is actively involved in current questions relating to multilateralism, the system of collective security and reforms of the UN, economic and social changes, human rights, development issues, climate and environmental changes, questions of security and energy and other urgent problems of the global community. Development aid, which is strengthening from year to year, was given an important place in Slovenian foreign policy very early on.

Slovenia was a member of the UN Human Rights Council in the challenging period from 2007 to 2010 and is active on numerous councils, commissions and committees: UNDP/UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDEF, UNIFEM, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the International Law Commission, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and elsewhere. As a member of the Human Security Network and the Friends of Human Security group, Slovenia promotes the rights of people to live without fear, without want and with dignity, and to have the same opportunities to enjoy all their rights. The over 5,000 Slovenian members of peacekeeping forces have to date participated in operations throughout the world including Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, Iraq,

Kosovo, Lebanon, the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, Sudan and Syria. Since Slovenia is also a Mediterranean country, it has also become the seat of the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI), through which it aims to encourage dialogue between young people and academics in the Mediterranean.

Today Slovenia has 650 diplomats and 88 honorary consulates-general and consulates. It has created a network of 57 diplomatic and consular representations, accredited in 89 countries on every continent of the world. In the last 20 years doubts about the abilities of our young country and its diplomacy have disappeared. The experience and recognition gained are a guarantee that we will continue in the future to take on responsible tasks for the protection of peace and security and international cooperation.



Brdo Congress Centre was purpose-built for the presidency, hosting most of the meetings held in Slovenia.



H.E. Sanja Štiglic, Permanent representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations

Slovenia is ready and willing to take up its share of responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security

United Nations is the world's most important, unique and universal body for multilateral cooperation. Slovenia is committed to the effective multilateralism as the key principle for addressing global challenges. It is based on inclusivity, legitimacy and transparency of decision-making as well as on mutual respect, solidarity, partnership, dialogue and the principle of sovereign equality of states. For small countries like Slovenia, multilateralism and membership in the United Nations has special significance, as it puts them on equal footing and allows them to take initiatives and play a visible, active role that may be disproportionate to their actual size and power.

Since its admission to the United Nations, Slovenia established itself as a peace-loving country and a responsible, constructive, credible and creative member of the international community. On the occasion of the first visit of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to Slovenia, he said that he has found Slovenia to have a reach far greater than its size and its diplomats in every UN forum a source of creative ideas and a strong voice for UN reform and progress.

Slovenia has been active in the discussions on the reform of the UN, in particular the reform of the Security Council which is long overdue and needs to address both enlargement of membership and improvement in its working methods. The complexity of today's peacekeeping operations requires continued adaptation to meet peace and security challenges and opportunities before the international community. Review of the work of the Peace Building Commission was an opportunity to further strengthen strategies and coordination for countries that have transitioned from war to peace. Establishment of an entity for gender equality, "UN Women", is crucial for a more coordinated and coherent approach to women's empowerment. The upcoming Human Rights Council review offers a possibility to make further progress in protection and promotion of human rights. Slovenia is a member of the Global Governance Group whose objective is to strengthen the central role of the United Nations in global governance and play a bridging role between the G20 and UN member states.

Based on the premise that peace and security, development and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, Slovenia traditionally devotes special attention to the issues of international peace and security, human rights and strengthening of international law and justice, protection of children and the advancement of women, the eradication of poverty and social injustice, the advancement of sustainable development and the protection of the environment.

Protection and promotion of human rights is one of the main elements of Slovenia's foreign policy. Slovenia was an active member of the UN Human Rights Council. We attach special importance to the most vulnerable groups, such as children, particularly those in armed conflict, disabled persons, minorities and others. Slovenia was elected President of the Executive Board of UNICEF for 2011. Slovenia is a strong advocate of gender equality and the role of women in promotion of peace, security and prosperity. Ms. Violeta Neubauer is Slovenian member of the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Slovenia is a member of the Human Security Network and contributes to the UN Trust Fund for Human Security. As a member of Alliance of Civilizations, Slovenia promotes cooperation, better understanding and tolerance among differ-



Photo: archive

ent cultures and religions. We are a main sponsor of the resolution on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Slovenia is dedicated to promoting and strengthening the rule of law at national and international levels. Slovenia strongly supports the work of the international criminal tribunals and the International Criminal Court as a powerful tool to address and deter the commission of the most serious crimes, such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Dr Ernest Petrič is Slovenian member of the International Law Commission and served as its Chairman. Slovenia supports combat against terrorism, drug trafficking and all other forms of international crime.

Slovenia believes that ambitiously tackling climate change is not an option, but a necessity, a historic opportunity and responsibility. Special attention has to be given to the most vulnerable to climate change, such as small island states. As a member of the Green Group we emphasize the important link between climate change and water. We are a strong supporter of the full and timely realization of the Millennium Development Goals. As a member of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Population Fund, Slovenia strived to contribute to the promotion of sustainable development. Slovenia is a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries. Slovenia has been increasing its development assistance and voluntary contributions to UN funds and programs and is providing support to countries hit by humanitarian crises and natural disasters.

Slovenia is a party to the NPT as well as other non-proliferation and disarmament mechanisms and regimes and supports the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. Slovenia held the Chairmanship of the Executive Board of IAEA. Slovenia pays particular attention to the serious threats posed by mines and other unexploded ordnance and has been active in the field of mine action, especially through the activities of the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims assistance.

From the very beginning, Slovenia has always worked in support of world peace. Slovenian armed forces, police and civilians have been regular participants in peacekeeping operations in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Slovenia attaches great importance to democratization, peace and prosperity in the Western Balkans and has contributed its share to the stabilization of the region. Beyond that, Slovenia took an active part in resolving all issues on the agenda of the Security Council during its membership in 1998-1999. We advocate for increased attention to be paid to prevention of conflicts and fully support strengthening of United Nations peacebuilding architecture.

We would like to build on our commitment to multilateralism and experience gained through our work in the United Nations and other international fora, including as Presidency of the Council of the European Union and Chairmanship of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Slovenia is ready and willing to take up its share of responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security and has again presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2012-2013.



H.E. Roman Kirn, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the United States of America

Slovenian – American relations are partner relations

The USA is an exceptionally dynamic society, and the country that has left the deepest imprint on the development of the international community in the 20th century, while maintaining its influence into the 21st century. There is in effect no field of work or life where the role of the USA has not been exceptional or even decisive. As such, the USA is of course not an unknown entity, neither to the world nor to Slovenia. Today there is also in effect no country in the world that would not expect concrete decisions from the USA regarding complex issues in individual countries or in the international community, yet at the same time public opinion in those countries is exceptionally critical regarding these decisions and their consequences. All this frequently generates mixed feelings in the world where relations with the USA are concerned. Nevertheless, if we stick to the European continent, with its direct influence on Slovenia, we should realise that without the active role of the USA, Europe would not be what it is today: democratic, economically successful and once again united. European relations with the USA are pursued on two levels: through the EU and NATO. These relations are given the single-word label of Transatlantic. And they are the result of specific political and historical circumstances, having been built on common values and mutual interests. The need for such a Transatlantic partnership remains to this day, while its substance will need to be adapted to the changes in the globalised world. So when we speak of the USA, we need to remember that Transatlantic relations are an important component of Slovenian-American relations.

In my endeavours across the USA I frequently trace the beginnings of Slovenian-American relations back to the example of Thomas Jefferson, one of America's Founding Fathers, who in writing the Declaration of Independence drew from the practices of the 9th century Carinthian princes, whose authority stemmed from the voluntarily transferred sovereignty of the Slovenian peasants. Deep and permanent ties with the USA have been forged by numerous Slovenians who settled there, with their numbers peaking at the end of the 19th century. Around 180,000 define themselves as being of Slovenian origin today, and according to some estimates between 250,000 and 300,000 persons of Slovenian origin live in the USA. The Slovenian community in the USA, grouped into numerous societies and organisations, remains dynamic and active not just in preserving the cultural traditions, but also in developing all-embracing bilateral cooperation between Slovenia and the USA. Their role was especially noticeable and important during the period when Slovenia gained independence and in securing international recognition.

Following a period of adolescence (the period from independence to membership in NATO in 2004), Slovenian-American relations developed into a period of maturity after 2004. The first period was characterised by us being mainly "users of American services and favours", like many European countries after the Second World War, and like the countries in transition after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Then the second period, which began with our membership of NATO, and especially in 2007/2008 during our preparations for and holding of the EU Presidency, has been characterised by us becoming what could be called "producers of security, and providers of services and favours". This transition also identifies a new phase of Slovenian-American relations, which have grown into a partnership. This is reflected particularly in the area of political relations with the USA, which remain a priority for Slovenia. Today Slovenia is cooperating effectively with the USA on a whole range of issues, from security and development in the Western Balkans to joint, allied efforts to stabilise Afghanistan, from the joint humanitarian ITF for Demining project to the rehabilitation of Palestinian children in Gaza and multilateral projects under UN auspices.



Photo: Tomaz Bertič

The other two priorities for Slovenian-American bilateral relations are strengthening economic relations and cooperation in the fields of science, technology and education. In both areas the USA remains a leading global power, and in both areas our cooperation is meagre, far too meagre. Our common challenge is to strengthen this cooperation in both areas in the coming years.

Trade with the USA does not even amount to 2% of Slovenia's total foreign trade. The same applies to investments and services. There are reasons on both sides for this situation. Both sides must encourage a search for ways and instruments to increase trade, investment and services. Slovenia is one of the rare European countries without any major US investment in its territory (the last investment of any significance was by Westinghouse in the nuclear power plant). Despite the fact that Slovenia has now hosted a US president three times, the country still lacks any high-quality hotel of the famous American chains such as Marriott, Hyatt, or Hilton. We realise that we must fulfil our part of the bargain to change the widespread impression of Slovenia as a country where foreign investors are supposedly unwelcome, and to change or adjust that part of our domestic legislation governing the area of foreign direct investment. We are also aware that we have on our side all the other factors of our country, which enjoys political stability, economic success and a high standard of living, so we also expect the American side to be more courageous and outgoing. A good start to this was made by the business conference "Invest in Green", which Slovenia held in September 2010 in New York, and there will be a strong continuation of these efforts with the conference for American investors planned for spring 2011 in Slovenia.

While we can name numerous individuals in the fields of science and entrepreneurship, as well as in programmes such as the Fulbright scholarships, the fields of science, education and technology remain inadequately developed in Slovenian-American relations. The number of undergraduates studying in the USA (around 140) has stagnated in recent years, although the number of post-graduates is growing, which is a positive sign. It is true of both levels of students that they prefer European universities, since they offer better – and especially cheaper – provisions for students than American universities. The governments of both countries should devote more attention to this. The Fulbright programme is of course greatly valued, and it should not just be maintained but enhanced. It is interesting to note that on my numerous visits to American universities, I perceive a strong interest in inter-university exchanges of students and professors. Here I would expect the Slovenian universities to be more responsive and outgoing. There are also a considerable number of Slovenians employed in various American research institutions or start-ups. We are trying to get them better connected to each other, since we have found that they sense a lack of such "networking". And we should not forget that the USA remains a driver of technological development and innovation. Silicon Valley is still a synonym for such development. Slovenia is seeking to pursue development along the lines of Silicon Valley, so we are planning a visit by the Prime Minister to Silicon Valley in early 2011, and this will be intended primarily to support numerous Slovenian entrepreneurs and the "Innovative Slovenia" project.

As we can see, we face tasks in the continued development of Slovenian-American relations that are both numerous and full of challenge, but they can be fulfilled. This involves the efforts not just of the Embassy in Washington, but also of the Consulates General in New York and Cleveland, as well as of a number of honorary consuls across the USA, the network of which we are expanding, since they represent an important and valuable support for our work.

Jože Osterman, photo: STA

Prešeren Awards in good hands

Slovenia's highest distinctions in the field of the arts were awarded at the main state celebration in the Gallus Hall of Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana on the eve of the national cultural holiday. There are actually two kinds of Prešeren Awards: a maximum of two awards a year (popularly known as the Grand Prešeren Award) for artists whose outstanding artistic achievements or life's work have permanently enriched Slovenia's cultural treasury, and a maximum of six Prešeren Foundation Awards for artists responsible for significant artistic achievements presented to the public in the last two years that represent an enrichment of Slovenia's cultural treasury.

Since the two Grand Prešeren Award recipients – the poet Miroslav Košuta and the conductor Anton Nanut – are presented separately in the People section, we shall confine ourselves here to the winners of the Prešeren Foundation Awards, merely pausing to draw attention to a fact that was immediately picked up on by the media, namely that both the winners of the Grand Prešeren Award are from the Primorska region, a circumstance that has been accepted without any particular objections, despite the “regional sensitivity” for which Slovenians are well known. If nothing else, this is proof that both the winners genuinely deserved their awards!

The winners of the Prešeren Foundation Awards are likewise figures from the world of the arts who are already well known to the public. This year the Foundation appears to have favoured slightly older names that have already received numerous accolades and are, in this sense, uncontroversial. In fairness to the award winners, we should point out that they include figures who have been responsible for revolutionary breakthroughs in their own particular fields, innovations that have sometimes not found confirmation until much later, and that in this sense the award is above all a symbol of their victory. One such case is the writer **Emil Filipčič**, one of the most interesting writers of the bohemian generation of the 1970s and 1980s, when Slovenian society was undergoing the biggest reorientation of its values towards a capitalist society, who with penetrating humour and sardonic boldness tore down the social axioms of the time – just as now, with the wisdom acquired through the decades, he deals with modern axioms in his novel *Problemi*, for which he officially receives the award. There is no denying the convincingly independent path followed by the brilliant writer and illustrator **Lilijana Praprotnik Zupančič** – better known as Lila Prap – who receives the award for the exhibition “A Space for the Artistic, Literary, Musical and Acted Stories of Lila Prap” at the Celje Gallery of Contemporary Art. Lila's literary and artistic world, which is not born of her own experience with children but formed somehow spontaneously, has attracted a sur-



prising amount of international interest for her work. Translations of her books have become bestsellers in many countries, notably in Japan, and are among the most popular books for children in an incredible 38 countries around the world. All of this suggests that this is a figure whom we actually have yet to fully understand and embrace. Another artist who finally sees her excellence acknowledged is the actress **Janja Majzelj**, who receives the award for several roles in productions of the Mladinsko Theatre, where she is now the company's lead actress. Her acting career is one of incredible range – from roles in children's productions all the way to the most demanding female roles in classic dramas, where dramatic artists really have to prove themselves, not forgetting her musical projects, one of which (*A Chrysanthemum on the Grand Piano*, the *Songs of Svetlana Makarovič*) is among the performances for which she receives this award. The industrial designer **Jure Miklavc** receives the award for achievements in the field of industrial design over the last two years, the best known of which are his shoe and ski boot designs for Alpina, for which he has already received several international design awards (including a Red Dot award). Awards also went to two artists from the field of music. The first is the tenor **Branko Robinšak**, who receives the award for some excellent roles that he has sung over the last two years in operatic and other works by Borodin, Schubert, Offenbach, Puccini and Bizet. Robinšak, who has spent many years working abroad, is now the first tenor of the Ljubljana Opera, dazzling opera and concert audiences at home and abroad with his charming, dramatically convincing and technically accomplished performances. The second is the celebrated percussionist and composer/improviser **Zlatko Kaučič**, an extremely important innovator in the field of jazz, to which he has introduced a unique and personal style of improvisation on a variety of percussion instruments, including one-off instruments. In a career lasting over 30 years he has recorded 30 albums, performed at the most important European and world jazz festivals and collaborated with many world-renowned musicians.

Jože Osterman, photo: Archive of Museum of Gorenjska

The cultural holiday in Prešeren's Town

Kranj, the traditional centre of the Gorenjska region and the fourth largest city in Slovenia, with a population of approximately 40,000, has worn the epithet of "Prešeren's Town" since 1983. The city government was among the first to realise that identification with a famous historical figure could only bring advantages and recognisability to the city. Prešeren, an undisputed Slovenian national icon, was in this sense an excellent choice, despite the fact that he only lived a relatively short time in Kranj – from autumn 1846 until his death on 8 February 1849. Kranj was his last place of residence and the old town cemetery, now converted into a park known as Prešeren's Grove, contains his tomb.

The most important Prešeren sites

Alongside Vrba, where he was born, Kranj is without a doubt the place that is most marked by the figure of France Prešeren. Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, although full of memories of Prešeren, who is linked to numerous locations which the city's cultural organisers faithfully enliven with pop concerts, and in particular to Prešeren Square, the central point of the city, is in fact too big and too tied to numerous prominent figures to be able to choose a symbolic connection with just one of them. Kranj, on the other hand, is the right city for this. Its beautiful old centre in particular – a fine example of old Slovenian civic architecture – is likely to find, in its search for a new function in what is now a sprawling city, its principal reference point in Prešeren. For the time being it contains the two main focuses of commemorations of the poet: the Prešeren Theatre and the Prešeren House (a museum dedicated to the poet's memory), both of which radiate positive energy to the city's other cultural and social institutions, although the city government has not yet managed to establish a true harmony of modernity and history.

For this reason the city centre still remains empty too often to be entirely reborn on the occasion of the annual cultural holiday when Kranj is visited – like some famous pilgrimage centre – by great crowds of people. If these crowds could be spread more evenly to other days of the year as well, attracted by interesting and topical cultural events and city centre shopping, this would of course be wonderful, and this is something that the city authorities are trying to achieve. Let us hope they are successful!

Despite these difficulties, it should be acknowledged that the people of Kranj have done a great deal and that the city increasingly deserves its Prešeren's Town sobriquet. The Prešeren House or memorial museum on Prešeren Street, where in 1846 the great man opened his law office, has been arranged with great dedication and love. Inside the house, a renovation in 2001 (the bicentennial of Prešeren's birth, an anniversary that appeared on UNESCO's calendar of the most important events of the year) was the occasion for experts from Gorenjska Museum to reinstall the wonderfully clear and highly informative presentation of Prešeren's life and work. Individual cycles of the presentation cover the most important stages of the poet's life and work, allowing every visitor to create a very complete picture of everything that happened to Prešeren and get a sense of the greatness of the man who placed the self-awareness of the Slovenian nation on brand-new foundations. Valuable examples of furniture and fittings from home and office – not exactly numerous but undoubtedly authentic – allow visitors to get a ma-



terial sense of the objects that surrounded the poet in his everyday life. Some of the fittings belong to the National Museum in Ljubljana, while others have been obtained with great ingenuity by the museum staff in Kranj – who have many an interesting tale to tell about them.

Besides this permanent exhibition, which on a single day last year drew over 4,000 people to the house (how this is possible in such a small space I am at a loss to understand), every year the lower gallery hosts a temporary exhibition on a theme connected to Prešeren. This year saw the opening of an exhibition entitled "The Great Poet of a Small Nation", created by Beba Jenčič, for many years the "mother" of the memorial museum. This exhibition presented a selection of books by Prešeren published in Slovenia and abroad in the years following the first edition of his Poems. Even the museum staff were surprised at the enormous quantity of titles bearing Prešeren's name, as a result of which, following a strict selection process, they were only able to present a fragment of the poet's contribution to publishing – though even this fragment is very sizeable.

A popular movement?

If we turn from the Prešeren House, which is undoubtedly the nucleus of commemorations of the great man, towards other events taking place in Kranj in the month of February, we have to admit that Kranj has succeeded in creating a kind of popular movement – we might call it a Prešeren movement. While it may be true that many of the over 20,000 people whom the cultural holiday brings to the city probably have no particular relationship with the poet and are responding more to banal commercial interests, it cannot be denied that the majority of them come to Kranj because of cultural interest. Whether they simply visit the memorial museum, watch costumed actors recreate the age in which Prešeren lived, visit one of the other exhibitions (for example the exhibition on Prešeren Award winners and famous citizens of Kranj from Prešeren's time, or the photography exhibition by Jon Grobovšek that attempts to conjure up the atmosphere of that age) or simply stroll among the stalls set up in the streets of the town – all of them are aware that France Prešeren is the reason that they have come together in this place on the occasion of the cultural holiday. And that must surely count for something!



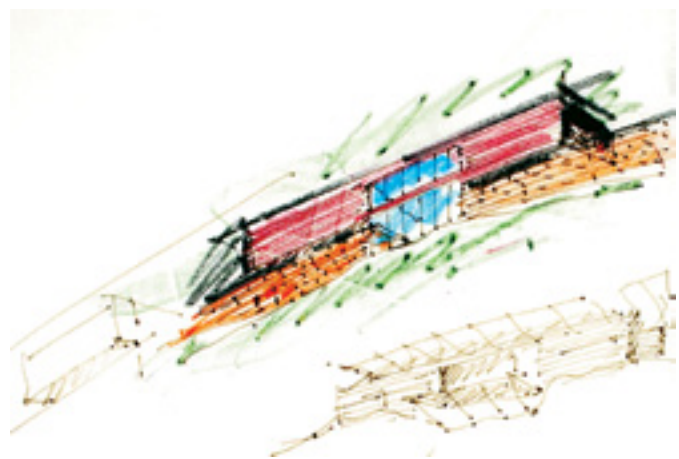
Hana Souček Morača, photo: STA

Maribor 2012 forges ahead!

Following the setting up, last year, of a public institute called "Maribor 2012 – European Capital of Culture", representing the organisational nucleus of this enormous project, and the commencement of work on the part of the artistic director Mitja Čander, it appeared that things could now proceed without major difficulties. But big projects are a complex matter, especially when it is necessary to coordinate as many partners as are involved in the Maribor project and, above all, satisfy their interests, at least provisionally. An economic crisis is not the best basis for this.

In mid-January Prime Minister Borut Pahor visited Maribor together with members of his government. The focus of attention was the agreement on funding between the state and Maribor, along with the other towns participating in the project. At the end of his visit the Prime Minister announced that the financial package had been successfully completed, adding that "this essentially means €75 million directly from the budget or from other budgetary sources." A little earlier Mr Pahor had visited the Maribor 2012 institute, where he informed management staff about the conclusions from the previous session of the government, at which the institute was guaranteed €13.4 million of programme funds, while €20 million was confirmed for the co-financing of construction of the art gallery and library. In view of the altered circumstances, the amount of funds available for the European Capital of Culture project is less than the amount indicated by the partner municipalities when presenting their candidacy, but, as culture minister Majda Širca pointed out, we need to be realistic.

The above decisions have now established a realistic picture of the financial basis on which it will be necessary to carry out the project. Those least happy with the situation were the Maribor organisers, because they will have to assume responsibility, at least for now, for the biggest planned investment – the Max performing arts centre. The mayors of the other participating towns were more satisfied, since in general they support the basic principle that for every euro provided by the state, the municipalities should contribute their own euro. A certain amount of dissatisfaction was felt in Murska Sobota, where the Ministry of Culture failed to approve some planned investments, but following the meetings the bad mood subsided there too. Generally speaking, the programme director has done a great job in reaching agreement on all essential matters, particularly money, in the course of his visits to the participating mayors. As a result, it now appears that the foundations have been laid for rapid and effective work, since the only problem currently remaining open is the issue of the new director of the Maribor 2012 public institute.



Polona Prešeren, photo: archive

Exhibition: in memoriam Vojteh Ravnikar

The Jakopič Gallery is currently hosting an exhibition of projects undertaken by the Ravnikar Potokar architectural practice between 2000 and 2010. The exhibition is dedicated to the architect Vojteh Ravnikar (1943–2010), one of the protagonists of Slovenian architecture of the last 30 years, and places on view the projects created by the practice over the last decade. Particular emphasis is given to the Zimski Dvorec project in Bloke, which was Vojteh Ravnikar's final commission.

Vojteh Ravnikar began work in 1977 in the planning office of construction company Kraški Zidar in Sežana, where he also founded the Kras group. Simultaneously, he founded his own practice in Ljubljana, where he was joined in 1990 by the architect Robert Potokar. Several generations of students and architects and countless associates have passed through the Ljubljana practice. The range of projects covered by the practice is very wide: from small commissions – single-family dwellings and renovations – to large-scale projects – schools in Celje, Grosuplje and Bled, a sports hall in Sežana, a series of office buildings on Masarykova Cesta in Ljubljana, cultural venues and a block of flats in Nova Gorica, completed in 2010.

Quite a number of joint projects are still waiting to be realised. Three of these deserve a particular mention: the new law courts in Ljubljana, three academies of art on Roška Cesta, and the new Ljubljana railway station.

Vesna Žarkovič, photo: STA

Boris Pahor Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres

Boris Pahor: “We have all the accomplishments that we need for the world to know us and respect us. That is why we must conserve our identity and our sense of self, and in this way set an example to other nations.”

Trieste-born writer Boris Pahor has been made a Commander of the French Order of Arts and Letters. “This is a recognition for the language in which I write, a language which was once prohibited and reviled,” commented Pahor. France has awarded him this distinction for his outstanding literary talent and for his ties with France, its language and culture. As French Ambassador Nicole Michelangeli noted in her address, Pahor embodies, through his work and character, the conscience of a young country that this year celebrates the 20th anniversary of its independence. She described him as one of the most important references of this independence, for its privileged image in other countries, where translations of his works have multiplied and further widened the circle of his readers. “Your life is characterised by courage and the insistence that your thought is the thought of one who rebels against every form of totalitarianism, and that your philosophy is called humanism,” said the Ambassador. She also expressed her belief that Pahor's book *Necropolis* will remain the most important literary account of exile and the atrocities of the Nazis. “Yet behind the gifted writer hides a man whose spirit is always on the alert, always ready for debate, attentive and sharp, a man whom neither history nor the present and future can contradict,” added the Ambassador as she bestowed the honour on him on behalf of the French Minister of Culture Frédéric Mitterrand. This is the third honour which Boris Pahor has received from France. He himself sees it as a recognition of the language in which he writes, a language which was once not only prohibited but also reviled, he explained on receiving the honour, pointing out that the French edition of his *Necropolis* published in Paris in 1990 was based on an Italian translation. He added that French culture and also French politics had helped in the affirmation of that part of the Slovenian cultural area that lives in the Primorska region. In this sense, noted Pahor, “the mistakes of history are being rectified.” As well as the French distinction, Pahor was also the winner of the 2010 Delo Person of the Year award. In his acceptance speech, he admitted that awards of this kind represent for him an opportunity to present his thoughts and views in public. In his opinion there is no need for Slovenians to see their identity as a nation dissolve in today's globalised world: “We have all the accomplishments that we need for the world to know us and respect us. That is why we must conserve our identity and our sense of self, and in this way set an example to other nations.” Readers of Delo voted for the Person of the Year from a shortlist of 12 notable, influential and positive people drawn up by the Delo editorial board. The shortlist was as follows: Ivo Boscarol, Japec and Jernej Jakopin, Roman Jerala, Matjaž Kek, Uroš Macerl, Petra Matos and Aleš Pevc, Neira Mikič, Boris Pahor, Renata Salecl and Dejan Zavec.





Hana Souček Morača

60 Years of the Slovenian people's theatre Celje

The Slovenian People's Theatre (SLG) in Celje was founded on 6 December 1950 when the Celje People's Committee issued a decision establishing a city theatre. From the historical point of view, the first beginnings of what was originally a German theatre dated back to 1791, when the majority of theatrical performances in the Celje area were put on by amateurs or travelling theatrical troupes and were purely intended for the entertainment of the burgher class. Tina Kosi, the manager of SLG Celje, explains that the theatre, like all institutions, has had its ups and downs. By the end of the 18th century there was an active German theatre in Celje, while after 1848 the town saw at least occasional Slovenian theatre productions.

The first play to be performed in the Slovenian language in Celje was the comedy *Županova Micka*, on the occasion of the arrival of the railway in the city in September 1849. The first play to be performed by the professional ensemble of the City Theatre in Celje was *Operacija*, which received its premiere on the 17 March 1951.

Since then, SLG Celje has staged 454 premieres on the Main Stage and the Oderpododrom ("Stage-below-the-stage"). In terms of the size of its auditorium, which can seat 360, and the size of the Main Stage, SLG Celje is ranked as a large theatre. The theatre company has grown from just one member to its present size of 23 professional actors, an in-house director, a dramaturge, an editor and a manager (who is also responsible for the theatre's repertoire). Over the last 60 years the theatre has become one of the more

recognisable theatre institutions in Slovenia, its productions have featured at domestic and international festivals and members of the company have won numerous awards. Two former members of the company, Janez Bermež and Anica Kumer, both now retired, are holders of Slovenia's highest acting award, the Borštnik Ring.

This jubilee year will be marked by a range of productions and an exhibition entitled "SLG Celje Through Time".

SLG Celje Through Time

This exhibition has been created to mark the 60th anniversary of professional theatre at SLG Celje. It consists of four equal sections that illustrate, in a beautiful manner, moments from past productions and are mute witnesses to SLG Celje's high-quality artistic development.

The first part of the exhibition, in the library, presents the period from 1950 to 1965. The second part is already hanging on the staircase above the gallery in SLG Celje and covers the period from 1966 to 1980. The third part, devoted to the period from 1981 to 1995, will be on view in the theatre from 18 March, while the fourth and final part, presenting the period from 1996 to 2010, will be on view from 13 May.

In the words of marketing and PR director Barbara Herzmansky, this exhibition was chosen because it was felt that this jubilee is an excellent opportunity to look back at everything that SLG Celje has already achieved. "In this way we remember all those who have helped ensure the theatre's survival to the present day and, even more importantly, contributed to the fact that our productions are still very well attended and we are still very successful." Many actors, art directors and managers have worked at SLG Celje over the course of the last 60 years, but the theatre's objective has always remained the same: a satisfied audience. "We are very aware that without them, we would not exist."



OUR EXCELLENCE



Vesna Žarkovič, photography: Mateja Potočnik Jordovič

The first safe house for students in Europe

If until recently a student's biggest problem was how to afford a computer or where to study abroad, today many students are struggling with the problem of how to survive.





This accommodation for six students and a family in need was fitted out with the help of approximately €2,000 and a lot of voluntary work. The house is an excellent example of what three people can do in a space measuring almost 300 m2 given a month, plenty of goodwill, and volunteers.

Of the 60,000 students studying at the University of Ljubljana, one in three sought help from the Student Advisory Service last year. Some were looking for a job, others needed somewhere to live or help in resolving problems with their parents. Others wanted money, help with legal difficulties, legal aid, and so on.

From now on, students will find an answer to some of these difficulties in a safe house for students which is the first of its kind in Europe. The house, which opened in the centre of Ljubljana at the end of January, is aimed at students with particular needs: student families, disabled students, victims of violence, those who find themselves in unforeseen situations of social hardship, those who have lost the support of their family or who no longer have student status and have therefore lost the right to subsidised accommodation, etc.

The SRCe Student House (also known as the Student Resource Centre) can accommodate up to 10 students, but even before it opened there were many inquiries from people hoping to move in, explained Student Advisory Service director Sanja Leban at the official opening. She hopes that in the future it will be possible to provide even more space for students in difficulties, since more students have expressed an interest in staying at the house than can currently be accommodated.



Help is also available for foreign students who come to Ljubljana and cannot afford suitable accommodation, and for students who are from Ljubljana or the immediate surrounding area and thus do not meet the conditions for subsidised accommodation but have nevertheless found themselves in difficulty and are unable to get help from the relevant state institutions.

“We welcome practical solutions like this house. We are counting in particular on young student families, who will be able to stay in the house. Help will be offered above all to students with physical disabilities, but also to students who have problems with their primary family and come to us for help, students who are the victims of violence and those whose parents refuse to give them their independence.” And how long can they stay at the safe house? “Up to three months, six months at the most.” We do not only provide them with a roof over their heads, we offer students as comprehensive as possible a solution to their problems. We prepare an individual plan for each student, in which problems and solutions are set out in detail. Every student is assigned a monitor, whose job it is to acquaint himself fully with the student’s problem and help him extricate himself from his difficulties as quickly as possible. We also help them find employment or a place to live, help them resolve issues with their parents, help them obtain money, assist them with legal difficulties and provide legal aid. We work according to the principle of students helping students under expert supervision. To date we have not been able to offer legal representation in court, but this will also now be possible. We are currently preparing a free legal aid project. In short, students who come to us for help are not only offered a roof over their heads, but comprehensive support in addressing their problems,” concludes Leban. The primary activity of the safe house, then, is not merely the provision of accommodation but, above all, the provision of legal, social and other advice.

The safe house is given considerable added value by the fact that it was completed and fitted out by volunteers. All the furniture was provided free of charge, while students from the College of Design provided stylistic refinements and interior design on a voluntary basis, with the result that the house is a genuinely nice place to stay.

The aim is to change the general social belief that students are generally “all right” and do not face major difficulties. That simply isn’t true, says Leban. Such views are a gross generalisation. “Those who seek

our help are genuinely at risk. If eight years ago we were still dealing with how to help a student buy a new computer, we are now dealing with the problem of finding food for a student who has ended up in hospital suffering from malnutrition. And these are serious matters. We are getting a growing number of requests of this kind. Many students seek help paying their bills. We are also seeing more and more students having to take care of their own parents.

It is true that we also get requests for help from those who are too lazy to look for information themselves. They simply do not take enough interest and are used to getting everything on a plate. Our motto is: when you leave the safe house, you leave it with a solution. We have equipped this house with a budget of zero but what makes us happy is that everyone feels good here. We look forward to hearing the happy shouts of the children of young student families to confirm us in our belief that we are doing a noble and socially useful job.”



Polona Prešeren, photo: Mateja Jordovič Potočnik

Organic farming

hand in hand with nature

Care for the environment and a healthy lifestyle are becoming two of the priorities of our modern way of life. Not many people, however, know the secret of getting close to nature and taking advantage of its resources while having the smallest possible negative impact on the environment and maintaining a sense of the natural balance. This is something that we find in organic farming, which stems from the realisation that only an approach to work that derives from a partnership with nature can be successful.

The organic method of cultivating the land is certainly not unknown in Slovenia – the number of organic farms is constantly growing and an increasing number of farmers are opting for this form of farming. According to figures from the Ministry of Agriculture, just 41 farmers were included in the organic farm control system in 1998. By 2009 this number had grown significantly, and there were already 2,096 farms of this type, while 1,853 farms had already successfully completed the reorientation period and obtained the relevant certificate and the right to label their products “organic”. Slovenia’s remarkable natural riches offer excellent conditions for farming – and of course for organic farming. A large percentage of these farms are mountain farms, but different landscape types enable various types of production.

Organic farming also has an influence on the sustainable management of non-renewable resources. It is a method of management in accordance with natural cycles. It is based on practices that take into account the relationships between all forms of life, on equilibrium within the system (soil-plants-animals-man) and a closed cycle of organic material on the farm. This means returning to the soil whatever is taken from it, in this way ensuring that agriculture is genuinely sustainable. In order to preserve and enhance the fertility of the soil, organic farmers use fertilisers and cultivation methods that respect the original structure of the soil and the useful work of many of the organisms living in it. This also means that they choose autochthonous plant species and animal breeds, or ones that are adapted to local conditions. These are more resistant to disease, and this is important, because organic farming – whether crops or livestock – places the emphasis on preventing problems rather than curing them.

The farm as an organism

Organic farmers say that the ideal organic farm functions like an organism. This means that the farmer who commits himself to organic production also works hard to ensure that his holding functions as a complete whole and that the energy flow is a closed loop. Since organic farms usually also produce the majority of the fertilisers, feed and other materials that they need, this kind of farming is in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Organic farming proves that it is not necessary to use chemicals and gene technology in order to produce sufficient quantities of food with a high nutritional value. It also guarantees food of higher quality.

Even when it comes to the suppression of diseases, pests and weeds, organic farmers use natural methods and natural fertilisers and pesticides, never chemical/synthetic pesticides and artificial fertilisers. Likewise, the use of disinfected seeds, genetically modified organisms and ionising radiation is prohibited. In livestock farming, the use of blood and bone meal or other feeds of animal origin is prohibited, as is the use of hormones and the preventive use of antibiotics to treat animals. Animals must be allowed out of barns and sheds and must be allowed to graze freely in mountain pastures or other pastures for at least half the year (180 days).

Modern organic farming follows high ethical, social and economic standards. It derives from the experiences of past generations but does not exclude advanced environmental technologies or the techniques of scientific agriculture. As well as respecting relationships in nature and contact with it, it provides jobs and brings people back to the countryside, while at the same time cherishing and respecting tradition and cultural heritage. All of this means that organic farming helps preserve the environment and the variety of the cultural landscape, while at the same time providing food of outstanding quality which, in addition to valuable nutrients and antioxidants, can also boast genuine fullness of flavour.

The organic food market

It is generally true of organic production that it seeks to establish as direct as possible a connection between the farmer and customers. This is also the way to assure the consumer of the organic origin of the product. This is not hard to do in Slovenia, because of the small distances involved, and it is easy for customers to find out for themselves where, how and by

whom the food that is destined for their plate was produced. The only valid guarantee that food genuinely comes from an organic farm is an organic farming certificate. Consumers in Slovenia can buy organically produced food from the producers themselves or at organic markets, while recently the online organic market has become an increasingly popular way of buying organic produce and products. The online market is an interface between consumers and farmers. The consumer simply submits an order via a website and a package of seasonal and regional organic products, all with an authenticated organic certificate, is delivered to his home.

The range of organic food available is getting bigger every day and an increasing number of farms are choosing to switch to organic production. Slovenia’s entry to the European Union and, of course, the demands of the market have contributed to this. Today’s consumers know what they want: high-quality, full-flavoured food. Even if it costs a euro or two more.

In 2009, 2,096 agricultural holdings were included in the organic farming control system (this figure represents 2.6% of all farms in Slovenia), with 29,388 hectares of farmland in use (6.2% of all farmland in use in 2009). Of these farms, 1,853 have already completed the reorientation period (and obtained an organic certificate). This period lasts a minimum of 24 months from first registration. There is still an urgent need for bigger quantities of produce and an organised presence in the market place that includes the provision of information for both consumers and producers. Livestock farming predominates in terms of production, although the biggest consumer demand is for fresh garden vegetables, fruit and processed non-meat products (milled products and dairy products).





Jože Osterman, photo: STA

Miroslav Košuta

Minority Poet

Miroslav Košuta received the Prešeren Award for a lifetime of literary work just one month before his 75th birthday.

It was worth living

The literary oeuvre of the new Prešeren laureate, including two recently published new collections, covers 21 collections of poetry (including juvenilia), two dramatic works and seven radio plays, although his significant work in other fields also deserves to be honoured. Following a degree in comparative literature, he found his first employment as an editor at RTV Slovenia. More than a decade later, following his return to Trieste, he became the dramaturge

of the Teatro Stabile Sloveno in Trieste, an editor at publisher Založništvo Tržaškega Tiska and, finally, a theatre director. A man who has always worked for the common good.

In this context, the Prešeren Award is not only important to him, but perhaps even more so to the whole of the Slovenian community in Italy, since it may be seen as an affirmation of a vital cultural strength and literary creativity that in no sense lag behind those of the mother country. Košuta now joins Boris Pahor and Alojz Rebula as one of the great Slovenian writers working in Italy. Interestingly, all three

have received the Prešeren Award since Slovenia became independent, in other words in the last 20 years, even though the origins of the award date back to 1947, a time when the Slovenian minority in Italy was significantly stronger than today, both numerically and in terms of economic, and probably also institutional, strength. It should be remembered that the Slovenian minority was the owner of institutions and companies such as the Banca di Credito di Trieste/Tržaska Kreditna Banka (as was) and a number of powerful economic groupings, and the founder of cultural institutions such as the Teatro Stabile Sloveno in Trieste, the Glasbena Matica music

society and Založništvo Tržaškega Tiska, the publisher of the Primorski dnevnik newspaper, which at least in financial terms were in a much better state than today. Košuta is one of those people who were most active in the period when the minority was objectively at its strongest and had the self-confidence to match. If we look more closely, we see that the largest part of his oeuvre in fact dates from the period 1975–1990.

The man

These facts are important because they represent a different basis for life and work from that which we find in the case of the majority of artists. It is a question of the special position of the person who for the most part lives and works in a different – we might even say foreign – cultural environment and introduces different elements to it. There is no doubt that this has an effect on a person. While on the face of it Košuta's literary work does not have a direct connection to the fact of living outside the borders of Slovenia, since both his intimist poetry and his social poetry have a more universal stamp and are not tied to any specific subject matter that could be described as relating to life on the other side of the border, the eruptiveness of the author's energy, the fruit of his exposure to such a specific environment, is nevertheless something that the reader senses as soon as he immerses himself in the waves of Košuta's poetry. The spirit of this poetry is imbued with the solid perseverance of his two illustrious predecessors, who have already set out the principal coordinates that have been the basis of their development. Even the artist's physical appearance is perfectly congruent with this feeling: with his slightly stocky physique, radiating solidity and stability, the sharply defined and handsome features of his face, and the sparkling yet penetrating eyes above a thick moustache, full of the optimism and friendly humour characteristic of the people of the Mediterranean, Košuta always gives the impression of a man full of energy and activity, a man capable of many things.

My own personal impression from the time when Košuta was still director of the theatre in Trieste supports this view of the simultaneously gentle and sharp character that is Miroslav Košuta. Never in my life have I met a man as capable of telling an interlocutor with whom he disagrees that he is wrong with such directness, such implacability, yet at the same time with such a degree of likeable sin-

The relationship between Slovenia and the Slovenian minority in Italy is of course something that still marks Košuta strongly today, and he is without a doubt one of those great figures from the other side of the border whose voice is sufficiently strong to be heard a long way off.

cerity mixed with just the right amount of humour. We used to laugh at Košuta's knack of commenting on arguments that he found disagreeable with the statement that he would not have expected anything else from the person who made them and that it was in fact a pity that he had been allowed to speak. And yet the way Košuta said it meant that it did not sound offensive at all, but more like a kind of mild criticism to which the person concerned usually did not object. I myself was occasionally on the receiving end of such comments and for some of them I was even grateful to Košuta. Oh yes, people were less touchy and sensitive in those days. Above all, we were able to accept Košuta as a genuine authority, because the man asserted this status with wisdom, perseverance and – if there was no other way – even stubbornness.

The thinker

At the moment of the conferral of the Prešeren Award, and in the context of the events surrounding the ceremony, Košuta, somewhat forgotten in recent years, revealed himself to us in the fresh light of spontaneous sincerity, incredibly optimistic vitality and humorous self-criticism – this last a quality that is actually quite rare in people of his stamp. He articulated a number of things that surprised us because of his sincerity and his lucid perception of the age we live in. What words these were! Anyone who attended the presentation of his two latest collections of poetry, *Mavrična školjka* (The Rainbow Shell; published by Mohorjeva Družba of Celje) and *Drevo življenja* (The Tree of Life; published by Mladika of Trieste), will have laughed at the author's anecdotes about living and studying in Ljubljana, his time as director of the theatre in Trieste and various other episodes of his life, and at the same time winced at the lucid and deeply moving reflections of this poet who is capable of reacting with such a troubled spirit to those current events that affect his social sense or sense of justice. One such event was the strike by the betrayed but by no means despairing workers of the Mura textile factory in 2009 that represented the basis for his poem *October Revolution*

Day, which contained the following lines: "There was despair and salvation, there was faith and ruin, and so in December in March in April, I recall it to mind: the October Revolution took place!"

I would like to single out the following words from the speech he gave at the awards ceremony itself, a speech that moved in particular the more demanding and more reflective section of the audience, who responded with richly deserved spontaneous applause to words that seemed to relate not only to the destiny of the Slovenian minority in Italy but also and in equal measure to the mother country: "Sometimes I am filled with the feeling that we are sliding on a giant avalanche, further and further down, and yet still we plot, still we swagger with Alpine blitheness, until the avalanche covers us and swallows us. One day an archaeologist will try in vain to understand whether this was natural necessity or collective suicide..." If words such as these are pronounced by a notorious optimist such as Košuta, serious reflection is called for. At the same time, however, it is impossible to forget his grateful words for the mother country, perhaps little deserved: "I am happy because this is an award for all of my work in the field of culture, in the field of Slovenian poetry, and in the context of the Slovenian minority beyond the border. It is gratifying to receive this award. Especially if you know that you have a very hard life behind you, that you have sacrificed even your family to your cultural mission and that in the end, because of this mission, you also abandoned Ljubljana and returned to Trieste. I was very happy in Ljubljana and I have always acknowledged that it is the centre of the Slovenian nation in all its activities."

If we add to this the moving words that Košuta, grateful and humble, dedicated at the very end of the ceremony to the public that had bestowed on him Slovenia's highest honour in the field of the arts – "My life is behind me. A hard, steep and pitiless journey. Thank you for this award that confirms that it was worth living it" – the winner of this year's Prešeren Award becomes even more likeable. Sincere congratulations, Miroslav Košuta!



Vesna Žarkovič, photo: STA

Anton Nanut *conductor*

Maestro Anton Nanut is one of the best known and most successful Slovenian musicians and a constant presence on concert platforms around the world.

His career has seen him work with a great many orchestras, particularly in Europe. His musically full interpretations and fruitful collaborations with world-renowned orchestras and soloists are the result of a clear awareness of the mission of the classical repertoire and the heritage of symphonic and, more generally, concert music both in Slovenia and the wider world. His character as a conductor is strong, artistically complete and always convincing, and has also produced fruitful work in the studio, the results of which can be heard in almost 200 recordings. Anton Nanut has been part of the musical life of Slovenia for 60 years and in international terms is the country's best-known

conductor. He has conducted over 200 orchestras and made at least as many recordings.

He has been nominated for a Prešeren Award on several occasions in the past, before finally winning it this year. When asked what the award means to him, he replies that for a Slovenian and in Slovenia the Prešeren Award is the most important award there is. He received a Prešeren Foundation Award in 1979. In the professional sense, other awards may seem more important, for example the (Yugoslav) Lira Award, the Slobodna Dalmacija Award for his performance of the Mozart Requiem, and the Milka Trnina Award. He

has conducted from Moscow to New York and Buenos Aires, a total of more than 200 orchestras. Is there any occasion that has remained particularly impressed on his memory? "I have always connected my successes with successes that have been important for Slovenia. In this sense it seems to me that one of the most important concerts was when the orchestra of the Slovenska Filharmonija performed at Carnegie Hall in New York for the first time. Several tours followed, but one always remembers the first time. Later on there were many guest performances with Slovenian orchestras, and I have also been a guest conductor. It is hard to say what seemed most important: perhaps the con-

He has conducted from Moscow to New York and Buenos Aires, a total of more than 200 orchestras.

certs with the Staatskapelle Dresden, or the concerts with the RIAS Symphony Orchestra of Berlin or the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra. But I have been happiest when I have succeeded with our own musicians, or even earlier, when I was at the Dubrovnik Festival. There have really been a lot of these guest performances."

With a repertoire consisting of works by a great number of chronologically and stylistically very different composers, he is the only Slovenian conductor to have conducted and recorded all of Mahler's symphonies. Is Mahler his favourite composer? Not exactly favourite, he says, but certainly one of them, especially since listeners everywhere have given the performances a rapturous reception and have persuaded him that he is the right interpreter for Mahler's symphonies. So it was two years ago when the Academy of Music invited him to conduct a performance of Mahler's Second Symphony as part of its anniversary celebrations. He is particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to conduct Mahler's Eighth Symphony twice, with two different orchestras. The first time was at Cankarjev Dom in Slovenia in 1990. Later he inaugurated the new concert hall in Udine, where he was artistic director and principal conductor of the Orchestra Filarmonica, with a performance of the same work. It is true that all these symphonies have been recorded, but the recordings have mainly been released outside Europe, most of them by the New York-based Stradivari Classics, while some have been released by other labels in Europe.

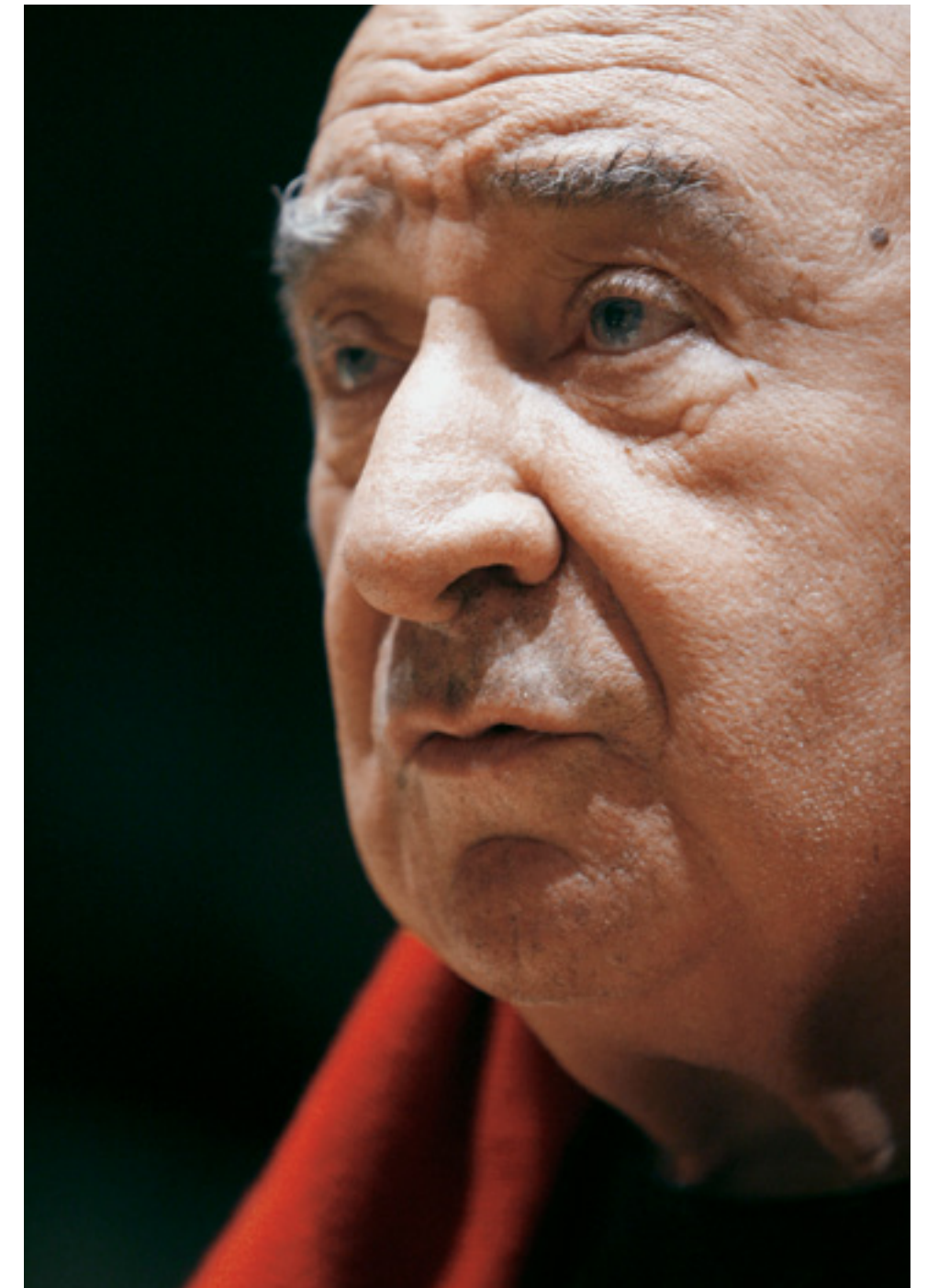
For 30 years Nanut has directed the "Kogoj Days" festival of contemporary music in his hometown of Kanal ob Soči. There is no doubt that creating a festival of classical music – of contemporary classical music – in such a small place was a bold decision.

"My feeling is that this was the right decision, if only because we named the festival after Marij Kogoj. We are proud of this. We can see that the festival has found itself a place in Slovenian culture – and not only in Slovenian culture, since this festival also gives us visibility elsewhere – and that we are on the right course for the festival to continue to survive."

In recent times it has become more common for symphony orchestras to collaborate with pop and rock musicians. What does Anton Nanut think about this kind of synergy, and would he conduct such a concert? "If I found the score interesting, certainly. Back when I was conducting the radio orchestra I used to say that a symphony orchestra should play such things outside working hours. It seemed to me a pity for musicians to collaborate in that way, because it is a different approach to music. By playing that kind of music, orchestral musicians let themselves go a little."

Nanut is firmly convinced that Slovenia can boast excellent choral composers capable of matching the finest foreign composers. "We already have Gallus, who is famous all over the world. Our choirs are also progressing in that they are getting stylistically involved in this music, perhaps even more successfully than we did with, for example, the Slovenski Oktet, with which we performed a lot of Gallus' music around the world. I believe that choral music in Slovenia is at its height. Just look at choirs such as Ave, Vokalna Akademija Ljubljana and Carmina Slovenica."

He is the only Slovenian conductor to have conducted and recorded all of Mahler's symphonies.



Andrej Stare, photo: STA

COLLECTORS OF MEDALS

Tina Maze wins gold in the giant slalom in Garmisch and Dejan Zavec successfully defends his IBF world title.



Many sports lovers ask: where does little Slovenia, with its population of just two million, get such a fantastic team of athletes, competing in almost all disciplines and winning numerous medals? Particularly in winter sports, Slovenia is incredible. Alpine skiing, biathlon, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, ice hockey – in all these sports Slovenia is right at the top.

Tina Maze, the 27-year-old skier from Črna na Koroškem, has once again proved herself a specialist in big competitions. Following her successes at the World Championships in Val d'Isère and the Olympic Games in Vancouver, she has returned home from Garmisch-Partenkirchen with two medals. This time she won her first gold medal and became the second Slovenian skier (the first was Mateja Svet in Vail in 1989) to become World Champion. The giant slalom course on the famous Kandahar run brought her world glory and the ultimate achievement in Alpine skiing. Following her victory in the giant slalom her silver medal in the super com-

bination was almost overlooked, but with her two medals Tina Maze ranks as one of the top individual competitors at the 41st World Championships. Downhill specialist Andrej Šporn scored an excellent sixth place but Maze's two medals put all the other fine achievements of Slovenia's Alpine skiers in the shade.

This year, 2011, is a special one because there are world championships in all the winter disciplines, and Slovenia expects to play an important role in all of them. The first of these competitions, the FIS Snowboarding World Championships, was held in La Molina in Spain. Slovenia came home with two medals. Rok Marguč astonished the snowboarding world by taking medals in two Olympic disciplines: silver in the parallel giant slalom and then bronze in the parallel slalom. An outstanding start to the winter medal table!

After La Molina came two championships which, though they may not attract the same level of interest, nevertheless

belong in the highest categories. The city of Erzurum in Turkey became a winter sports venue for the first time when it hosted the 2011 Winter Universiade, a competition for the world's top university athletes. Slovenia has a particular connection with Turkey because the infrastructure of the event was planned by Slovenian experts (Janez Gorišek with the ski jump team and Janez Vodičar with the biathlon course team), while Slovenian coaches also helped prepare local athletes who had no previous experience of winter sports. Matej Dobovšek, the young ski jumper from Kranj, took the gold medal on the large hill with a new official hill record of 143.5 metres. The success of the young Kranj athlete was complemented by the bronze medal won by Žiga Mandl. The winter world university games are of course all the more important for Slovenia because Maribor is due to host the Winter Universiade in two years' time. This will be the largest sports event ever held in Slovenia.

The FIS Nordic Junior World Ski Championships are always a good chance to see future champions. Five years ago Slovenia hosted the world's top young Nordic skiers in Kranj, and the champions from that event are now among the best in their disciplines. Justyna Kowalczyk and Petter Northug in cross-country skiing, and Gregor Schlierenzauer in ski jumping. This year it was Estonia's turn to host this meeting of the best young winter athletes, at its wonderful winter sports centre in the little town of Otepää. Slovenia was among the most successful participants. Marjan Jelenko took gold and silver medals in the Nordic combined disciplines, and the young ski jumper Špela Rogelj won the silver medal on the small hill. Unfortunately the women's junior team competition had to be cancelled because of the weather. If the competition had gone ahead, the Slovenian squad would probably have celebrated another medal.

As soon as the 12-day Alpine skiing competition finishes, it is the turn of the Nordic disciplines (ski jumping, cross-country skiing, Nordic combined). Petra

Rok Marguč



Majdič, the first lady of Slovenian cross-country skiing, will attempt to win her second World Championships medal in Hollmenkollen above Oslo in Norway (she took the silver in the individual sprint at Sapporo in 2007). This season Majdič is the best sprinter in the world, with three victories (Oberhof, Toblach, Otepää), one second place and one third place. Now 31, she has reached competitive maturity and it would be no surprise if she were to win more medals in Oslo in her battles with local star Marit Bjørgen, Justyna Kowalczyk of Poland, Arianna Follis of Italy and Charlotte Kalla of Sweden. Slovenia's other two outstanding cross-country sprinters, Vesna Fabjan and Katja Višnar, are also hoping to give them something to think about.

Slovenia's ski jumpers, meanwhile, have met with varying fortunes in the world competition. As usual, it is Robert Kranjec, last year's winner of the Ski Flying World Cup, who has achieved the best results. In Hollmenkollen our eagles Kranjec, Prevc and Damjan will attempt to return to the positions they have already occupied: among the world's top ski jumpers. It is a pity that the World Championships do not include ski flying. If they did, Robert Kranjec would be one of the favourites for the gold medal.

The last world championship event this winter, the Biathlon World Championships, takes place from 3 to 13 March, with the Russian town of Khanty-Mansiysk hosting the event for the second

time. As regards the men, the Slovenian team has been strengthened by Croatian-born Jakov Fak, who has already stood on the winners' podium in World Cup competitions as a member of the Slovenian biathlon team. He came third in Östersund and also scored two fourth-placed finishes. Our other two aces, Janez Marič (ninth in Östersund) and Klemen Bauer (fourteenth in Östersund) are also aiming to attack the world's top biathletes from behind. The Slovenian relay team could also have a good chance of skiing and shooting its way to a medal at the World Championships.

Slovenia has already scored three victories, two second places and four third places in World Cup events this winter, but a medal from the World Championships would mean much more.

When our athletes return from Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Oslo and Khanty-Mansiysk, it will be the turn of the ice hockey players to start preparing for their own world championships, as they set off for Slovakia and take their place in the elite division of world ice hockey for the sixth time. In the opening stages of the competition, Slovenia's opponents will be Russia, Slovakia and Germany. On the wings (let us hope) of NHL players Anže Kopitar and Jan Muršak, we can expect stunning new achievements from our players at the 2011 IIHF World Championship.



Petra Majdič (left)

Source: STA

BOXING: ZAVEC KEEPS IBF BELT WITH KO OF DELGADO

Slovenian boxer Dejan Zavec celebrates his win against Paul Delgado of the US.

Slovenian boxer Dejan Zavec retained his IBF world welterweight title with a fifth-round knockout of Paul Delgado of the US in Ljubljana on Friday to swing the door open to a much-awaited showdown in the US.

The 34-year-old Zavec took the 31st victory of his professional career in dominant fashion, knocking the American to the floor three times in front of a crowd of more than 12,000 in the Stožice Arena. Although starting off slow, Zavec (31-1) found his rhythm in the second round, when he first connected on a strong uppercut and then on a jab to send Delgado to a count twice.

"He surprised me a little in the beginning...starting off more aggressively than I expected," said Zavec after the fight. The American closed his guard after that, but Zavec's perseverance paid off as he found a way around the defence in the fifth round.

In the final minute of the round he unleashed a series of powerful punches, including a vicious hook that opened a cut under the American's eye. Bleeding from the cut, Delgado (25-10-1) took a knee and failed the count just before the bell.

Afterward, Zavec said the quick victory was deceiving. "This fight was tougher than it looked and tougher than I had expected."

The win is Zavec's third successful defence of his International Boxing Federation title since he first won it in December 2009 in a knockout win over South Africa's Isaac Hlatshwayo.

More importantly for the Slovenian boxer,



the impressive victory is almost certainly going to open the door to a showdown in the US for Slovenia's best boxer.

This was highlighted by Zavec after the fight: "I really hope this will be it - a green card to America."

As a result, Zavec expects little time for rest after today. "A lot of work awaits," he said in anticipation of his flight across the Atlantic.

NIKA BARIČ – THE BEST YOUNG BASKETBALL PLAYER IN EUROPE

Nika Barič from Trbovlje is the best female basketball player under 20 in Europe, having been named by FIBA Europe as the winner of the 2010 Young Women's Player of the Year award. This is an extraordinary achievement - the first of its kind in the history of Slovenian basketball.

"Nika is a bright example of what happens when a great natural talent is nurtured within an excellent youth development system, such as the one the Slovenian federation has in place," commented FIBA Europe President Olafur Rafnsson. Further praise for Nika came from FIBA Europe Secretary General Nar Zanolin: "This is a worthy recognition for a sublime young player such as Nika. I wouldn't be surprised if it serves as the start of a monumental career full of awards and trophies. Having watched her play, I have enormous expectations of her."

Nika Barič has already won many awards and trophies in her sporting career to date, but certainly none as prestigious as this.

Most recently she was named Most Valuable Player of the U18 European Championship Women 2010 in Poprad (Slovakia), where the national team coached by Damir Grgič scored an unexpected fourth place, even though their original target was simply to stay in Division A, after the

girls reached the top division for the first time. Much of the credit for Nika's excellent career undoubtedly belongs to youth team selector Grgič, who has been Nika's trainer since the beginning of her basketball career.



Hana Souček Morača, photo: Mateja Jordovič Potočnik and archive

From nature to your plate

Organic farming is based on a long-term strategy and effort to maintain a balance between the land, plants, animals and humans. It makes use of natural methods without using chemical agents, easily soluble mineral fertilisers, genetically modified organisms or synthetic additives in feed, and without any kind of chemotherapy-based treatment of animals.

The products of this kind of farming are foodstuffs with high-quality nutritional value, which can be bought from the producer, on Wednesdays and Saturdays at the organic farming stands of the main Ljubljana open market, every Friday at Glavni trg in Maribor, on Saturdays at Stari trg in Celje and at the Koper market, every Tuesday at the market of Naklo near Kranj, in specialised health food stores and most recently also in self-service stores.

This kind of food is especially tasty in the comfort of an organic

tourist farm offering views of unspoilt nature and a wide range of cuisine. Where the Karst region meets the Vipava Valley, close to the village of Štanjel, hidden away on the western side of the Gornja Branica is the idyllic hamlet of Kodreti, which harbours in its interior a truly special estate. Through an orchard of at first sight untended, and thus presumably organic apple trees, a path leads to the Hiša posebne sorte, or House of a Special Sort, which offers a rainbow of delights and diversity.



House of a Special Sort

The apple trees, which are 40 years old and more, offer an insight into the mission of the Sorta family. This is a family of seven children, of whom one brother, Vid Sorta, is involved in tourism, while another, Martin Sorta, pursues organic farming. The village of Kodreti is still home to five children of this family, so in some way the entire community is involved in the working of the tourist farm and organic food production. Martin Sorta, head of the Sorta organic farm, points out that their valley, the valley of the Branica, is famous for its old tall-trunk meadow orchards, where the stands can be 80 years old and more. As for the apple trees adorning the homestead, he says "the loveliest thing is when they blossom, every other year". He stresses, however, that he does not spray them, and the poorer quality fruit is eaten by the livestock, while ripe fruits are picked and made into juice or spirits. In 2001 the Sorta organic farm acquired certification for its organic production of fruit and beef, and its vineyards can boast a certificate of integrated production. "We opted for organic farming in order to preserve our valley, and also so we can offer healthier products to our customers". Despite the fact that in practice, organic farming means lower but higher-quality yields, we don't regret the decision, stresses Vid Sorta, adding that the aim of a tourist farm is nature preservation. They focus their attention on obtaining and using renewable energy sources, the sun, water and air, and also on separating their waste. The main concern is tourism with minimal environmental impact. Meanwhile, owing to the increasing sensitivity of consumers regarding health and environmental protection issues as well as the subject of animal protection, demand for organically produced food is growing strongly. The organic range of products is also stimulating local producers to produce organic food and raw materials.



The main attractions at the Hiša posebne sorte are the organic local cuisine, its fantastic setting and the tendency to offer guests something more. "We want to show them part of our spiritual culture, and we organise folk music evenings and folk dancing and singing workshops". The well-maintained and furnished building, apartments and surroundings are also ideal for persons with disability or families with developmentally challenged children or those with learning difficulties, since they also offer the therapeutic services of various workshops for people with special needs. The typical vaulted cellar provides a unique dining space, where they offer a selection of culinary delights that characterise the Karst and Vipava areas.



Tastes of the past today

This is the guiding motto adhered to at the Hiša posebne sorte in the handing down of local culinary traditions. The menu involves primarily dishes of the coastal Primorska region, and in addition to local authenticity with a dash of the modern, the majority of this fine fare is characterised by organic production, so the range of tastes is constantly changing with the seasons. As Vid Sorta underlines, the difference between food of organic and non-organic origin is clear. "Organically produced food is significantly richer in taste, more dis-



tinctive in colour and has a more intense flavour. These differences are noticeable both for meat, for instance with my brother's beef, and for fruit and vegetables".

All the raw materials destined for the menu come from the Sorta organic farm, and whatever they cannot produce themselves they get from other organic farms with which they are associated. With this kind of organic range of products your appetiser can be homemade cured ham and Tolmin cheese, and for those keen on trying something special they recommend boiled sliced pig's ear salad with olive oil and balsamic vinegar, spices and vegetables. As for spoon food, they offer beef and vegetable soups, with particularly outstanding pumpkin soup, jota (beans, potato and pickled cabbage), stews and goulash. Main dishes include their home-grown beef in a salad nest, pig's cheek with home-grown grapes and chestnut puree, nettle gnocchi with a sweet herb topping, pot barley with leeks and vegetable specialities prepared in several ways. Then come the desserts of apple pie, persimmon specialities, baked seasonal fruit and pancakes with homemade marmalade. They also offer outstanding wines from their own vineyards or from those of neighbouring wine growers, including Cabernet Sauvignon and Rebula, as well as apple or plum brandy and natural fruit juices. Everything on the table can also be seen outside in its natural setting, but you won't have any luck asking for mustard. There is none, because they do not make it themselves.

DRY POT BARLEY FOR TWO À LA SORTA:

Organic ingredients:

8 dg barley
6 dg homemade slightly smoked bacon
6 dg leeks
Onion
Butter, olive oil, bean herb, bayleaf, salt and pepper to taste.

Preparation:

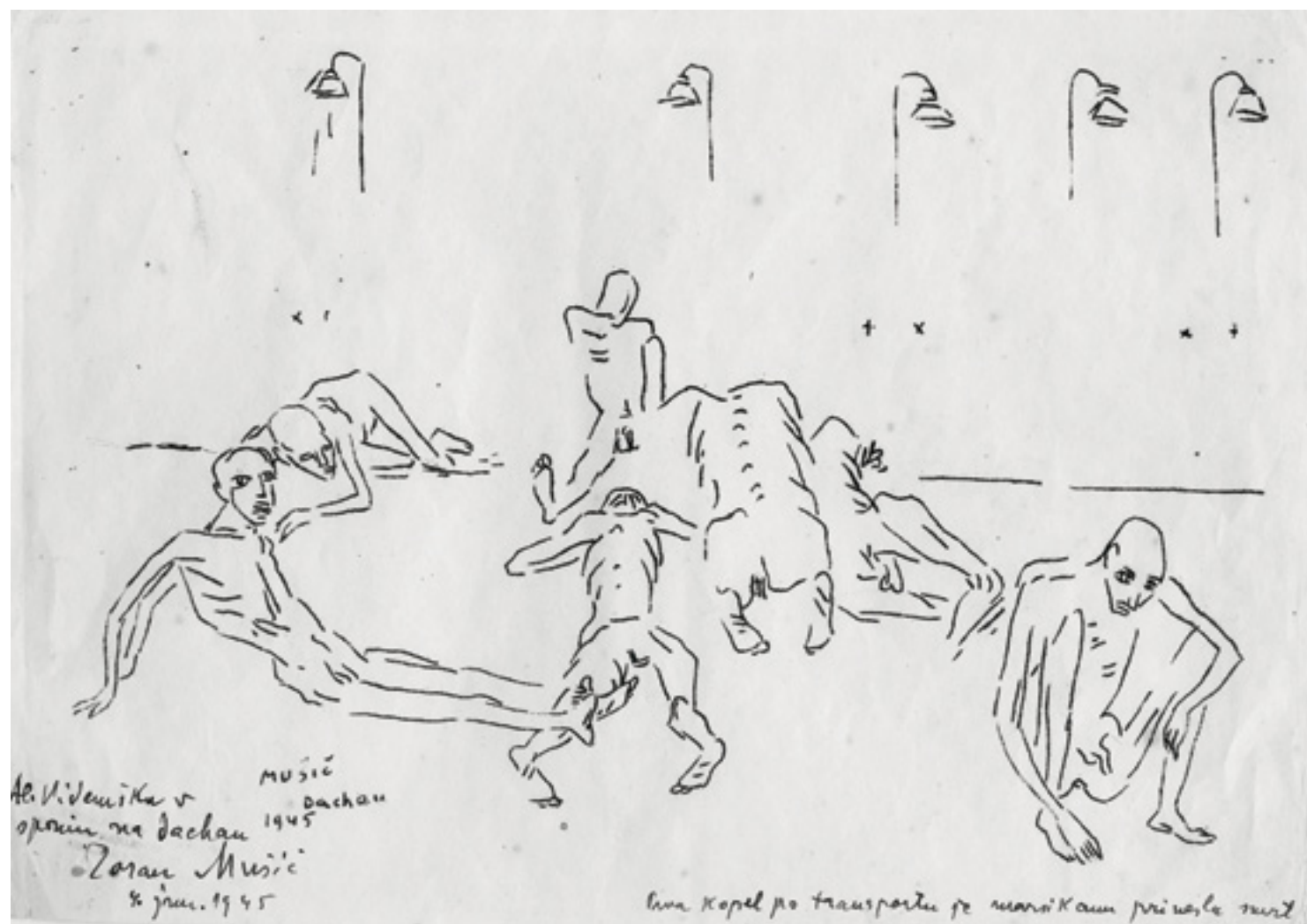
Soak the barley for one day in cold water. Next day boil in salted water with bayleaf. Then chop up the onion and sautee in olive oil, add the leek and bacon and finally the cooked barley. Cook all together, then add butter, salt, pepper and bean herb. Before serving you can also add some grated Nanos cheese.



Dr Iztok Durjava, photo: archive

More powerful than a factory of death

(ON THE HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY)



Zoran Mušič

Being locked up, interned and imprisoned are circumstances that people react to in different ways. Thousands, hundreds of thousands and millions detained in the Second World War prisons and concentration camps created by the Nazi machinery of destruction accepted their fate as a cruel fact, against which they could do little, since open resistance was virtually impossible.

Yet some internees and prisoners did manage to kindle a resistance that was quiet

and unnoticed, although it became very important later on. We are talking about the artistic works of interned painters, who made a major contribution to the charge of Nazi destruction of everything human.

It is understandable that there is little photographic material from the period when the camps were operating, but fortunately other visual testaments survived, and these are primarily works of art created in the camps. An exceptionally important role in this was played by interned

Slovenian painters, as can be seen in the preserved testaments.

In the German concentration camps, creating artwork was strictly forbidden. So those artists that produced work during the operation of the camps were very brave people who fought against the Nazis with their own specific weapons.

I think that even today, we still do not have all the answers to some questions relating to the artistic work of interned artists. They were producing art in what

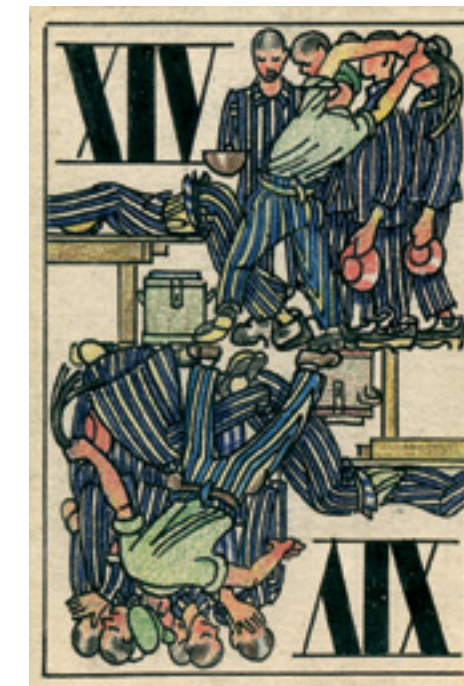
was for them extremely difficult, degrading and existentially almost impossible conditions, in which people were exposed to violence, contempt and annihilation. Those who see in this creativity the resistance and defiance of subjugated people are no doubt right, but it is also beyond doubt that this creativity had a therapeutic effect. Indeed it enacted the principle of active engagement, which countered any resignation and surrender. The artists probably also harboured a desire to document this inordinate evil. This phenomenon is part of the history of European fine art, in which a prominent place is taken for instance by the horrific images of the war painter Francisco Goya and his *Los desastros de la guerra*.

Some time ago I was browsing through a Polish exhibition catalogue detailing objects made from bread in the concentration camps. This is an incredible story, since for their artistic objects the artists made use of food material that was actually vital for their survival. So their art was a kind of primordial human response to extreme dehumanisation, where a person bent on affirming his humanity will even try to suppress the instinct for self-preservation.

Among the academy trained artists, the creative fervour was exceptionally intense. This can be seen in the painter Vladimir Lakovič, who was involved in the Partisan movement. He was arrested as a Partisan by the German police in some action and locked up in the notorious prison at Begunje in Gorenjska. There, in a cramped cell he secretly created a portrait of a fellow-sufferer in a highly unusual way. Since it was impossible to get hold of painting materials or even some measly pencil or scrap of paper, the painter found a different way of doing things: he drew the portrait on a pocket handkerchief (using charcoal, which he made by means of a lighter smuggled in), which he had first affixed to the floor using nails pulled out of his hobnailed boots. But this did not mean the work was completed, since he also had to somehow protect the sensitive charcoal on fabric drawing, reinforce it and in this way preserve it. The canny artist managed the task with garlic juice, which he used to protect and conserve the drawing. Upon his departure from the jail, the subject of the portrait carried the handkerchief out in his pocket, and thus the unique work of art was preserved to the present day.



Vladimir Lakovič



Boris Kobe

Owing to the special situation and conditions in the concentration camps where some great art was created, a great deal is still unknown about that art. In this respect there was a highly fascinating conversation between Zoran Mušič, a Slovenian painter living in Paris, who had been interned in Dachau, and Jean Clair, director of the Picasso Museum in Paris and commissioner of some major European fine art exhibition projects. The conversation is a component part of the book that Jean Clair dedicated specifically to Mušič's drawings, the subject of which was the bodies of internees ready for burning in the crematorium. A summary of the conversation was published in the report of Brina Švigelj Merat from Paris. To the author's question "Did you know that you would be providing a testament in this way?" the painter replied: "No, I wasn't thinking about that. I was a painter who could do nothing other than draw. For it was huge, grandiose... I was in a complete fever about being able to express what I saw. Today I still ask myself how I could have drawn so well. An important thing for me, for example, was to draw all the fingers, not in a mannerist way as Cocteau might have done or Picasso did. No, this was about wondrous shapes, fingers, the shapes of the face. It was unprecedented. Nothing artificial. All the details. I don't dare say this, I shouldn't say it, but for a painter this was unbelievable beauty... Beauty because all the suffering was felt inside. Everything that the people suffered. It was dreadful." And in response to the other question from Jean Clair: "Did you want to do something beautiful?" the painter replied "No. I wanted to do something accurate. Those who died in that

* cultural trails *

way, suffered up to the last second... There are things you can't express."

Lakovič's handkerchief portrait of a fellow-prisoner and Mušič's drawings of the bodies of internees, which he later enhanced artistically in his famous oil paintings, are joined by another extraordinary work of art, the camp tarot cards of Boris Kobe. In the first analyses of this artistic cycle we had in mind the traditional sense of this ancient card game, and were seeking primarily the symbolic meaning of individual cards. But that analysis was only partly relevant. The fact is, we did not know all the details of camp life. Kobe's fellow-prisoners revealed to us that his tarot cards are in fact an incredibly accurate chronicle of the life and work of internees in the three camps of Dachau, Allach and Überlingen. The new interpretation can be credited mainly to Kobe's fellow-prisoner Anton Jež, who dubbed this extraordinary artistic achievement a trail of bitter memories or a "Via Dolorosa".

Kobe's camp tarot cards are thus a narrative presented in the formal tarot style of frescoes relating to real situations experienced by internees in three German camps in the period from April 1944 to May 1945.

The character of a chronicle recorded in the artistic idiom of realism can be seen in the camp scenes of architect Vlasto Kopač, and they have a special value since they were created during the operation of the camp at Dachau. The artist produced these works in the refuge of a book-binding shop in which he was put to work. The works of art, drawn on tiny sheets, had to be concealed from the camp authorities, and he therefore inserted them between pieces of waste cardboard and hid them in the book-binders. There the tiny works of art resided until liberation.

For us dealing with the wartime artistic heritage, these little sheets signify an uncovering of the bitter life of the camp, in them we can sense its tragedy, and with the help of witness testimony we can also deduce the precise procedure and regime that ruled in the camp. These works affect us, but ultimately in a different way from those who experienced it. It is therefore worth leaving the description of some works to the former Dachau internee Dr. Stane Mikuž, art historian and former professor at the Art History Department of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. The professor's words lend Kopač's tiny drawings the true human and histori-

cal weight. Dr. Mikuž described thus the work of Vlasto Kopač in the camp: "His 'employment' there in the camp book-binding shop afforded him easier access to drawing materials, and at the same time through the window he could observe parts of the camp's bustle in his characteristic strokes." Stane Mikuž also comments on two characteristic drawings, Going to Market in the Bathhouse and Zugang: "Here the drawer captured in all its suggestiveness the fatal captivity of the mass, which the inhuman regime had turned into some swarm of insects following like automatons the orders of the monstrous masters. Depicted in the background of the verminous horde of people is the dark camp fence with its threatening towers, and I do not know if there is preserved anywhere else a scene in which such convincingly tragic content would prevail over the technical and formal issues facing the drawer. This is above all an atmosphere that could be conjured by our painter, and in the world of free art and of course in different circumstances, only by the painter and drawer Alfred Kubin."



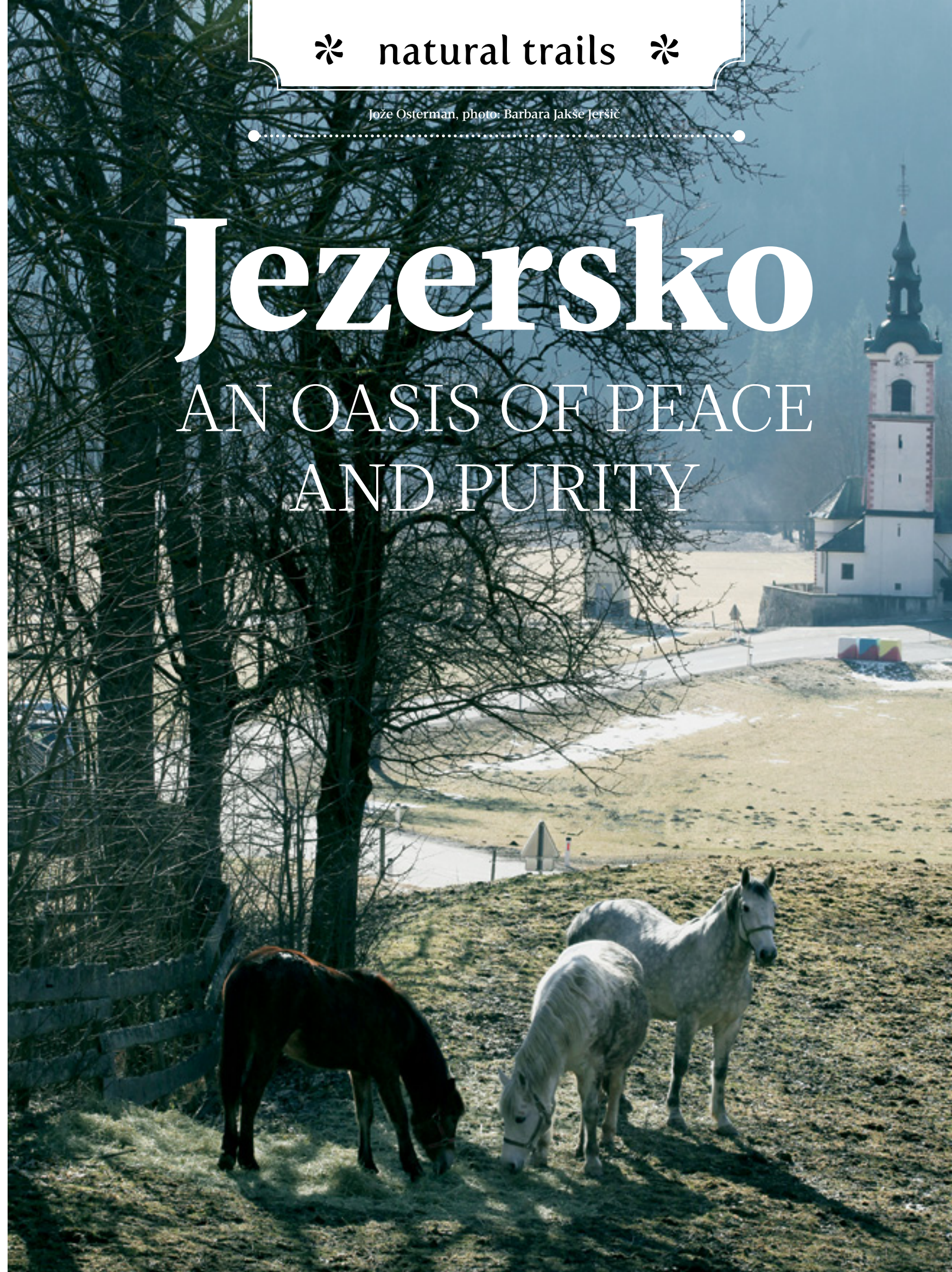
Vlasto Kopač

* natural trails *

Jože Osterman, photo: Barbara Jakse Jeršič

Jezersko

AN OASIS OF PEACE AND PURITY





The gravelly Sava plain, which begins immediately after the Sava Bohinjka and Sava Dolinka merge – just beyond Radovljica – to form Slovenia’s longest river, the Sava, and continues all the way to Litija, is bounded to the north by the imposing chain of the Karavanke mountains, a kind of natural barrier between Gorenjska and Austrian Carinthia. Here and there this chain is broken by gaps, mountain passes, through which roads were built centuries ago to create a route between north and south. One of the best known passes is Jezersko, representing the shortest – though not the most comfortable – route between Kranj in Slovenia and Bad Eisenkappel in Austria. In the days before the motorway ran along the valley of the Sava, and before the Karavanke road tunnel was built, this was a relatively busy road. Though not to be compared to the Ljubelj Pass, the shortest route between the two countries, it was by no means unimportant. Today, because of its many bends, this road is mainly taken by tourists, and as a result Jezersko appears to have been somewhat forgotten over the last decade, which is, of course, a shame. After all, given its natural beauty and unspoilt environment and the wonderful mountains that surround it, it is without a doubt one of the most beautiful corners of our country. There are also clear signs that the people who live here are keen to restore

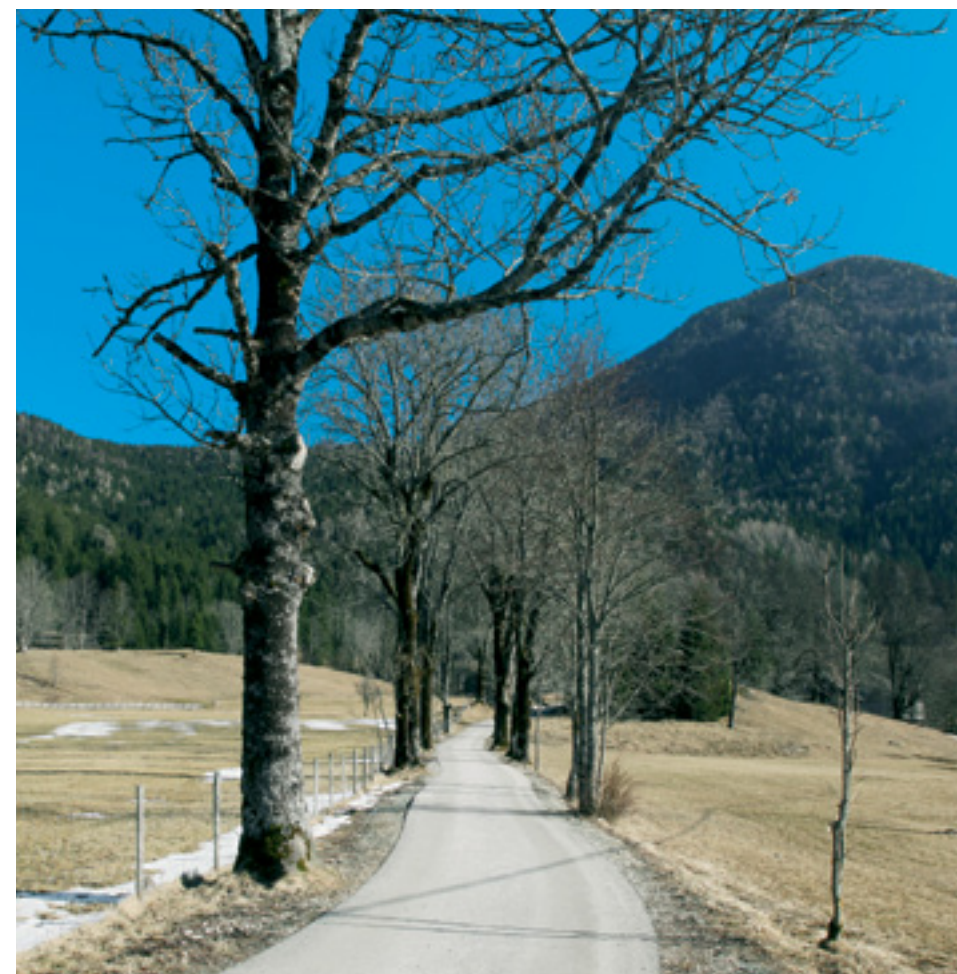
Jezersko to the place it once occupied on the map of Slovenia’s most beautiful tourist destinations.

The route to Jezersko leads the visitor across an open plain, past the large and prosperous farms north of Kranj, until he is swallowed up by the narrow gorge of the river Kokra, through which the road climbs up to Jezersko. The mountains on either side of the road suddenly become tall and steep, so that the visitor more senses than sees the sky above his head. More than 500 metres above him he catches sight of the beginning of the massive chain of the Savinja Alps and, in winter, on the snow-covered slopes, part of the Krvavec ski resort, where skiers teem like tiny ants. Soon the ravine grows even narrower and the winter sun barely penetrates. After some especially narrow sections and a series of steep hairpins, the landscape suddenly opens out and the traveller catches sight of Jezersko in a bowl-shaped hollow in the middle of a forest. It is said that until the end of the 14th century the whole of this glacial valley was covered by a lake. Then, following an earthquake, much of the water drained away to reveal a fertile land suitable for human habitation. Today the centre of habitation in the valley is the settlement of Zgornje (Upper) Jezersko. The lake (jezero) also gave Jezersko its name: originally known as “the parish by the lake”

(“župnija pri jezeru”), it later adopted its current appellation.

Life here was not easy

History also tells us that the basin got its first inhabitants, who for the most part were hunters, in the first millennium AD. Interestingly, the population grew considerably in the 14th century, at the time of the great plague, when people moved to more remote areas where the possibility of infection was less. This in itself is an indication of the fact that Jezersko, a village in the midst of the mountains, has always been attractive because of the tranquillity and direct contact with nature that it offers, something that is still true today. The tourists who come here tend to be nature-lovers, hillwalkers, biologists and the elderly, although Jezersko also attracts a certain number of skiing or cross-country skiing enthusiasts. The peaceful surroundings and wonderful mountain air have given the place a special identity and have always been the principal generator of tourism here. Particularly from May to the end of October, the hotel and other establishments offering accommodation are full of guests from Italy and Austria who can no longer find such peace and quiet beauty in their own countries. This is something that has practically never



changed here, although the timber industry, based above all on the Jezersko larch, widely renowned as an excellent wood, once prospered on a very small scale. It is also worth mentioning the former eye hospital, which earned Jezersko a reputation as a health resort and a considerable part of its renown, before it was closed down in 1982. This was a considerable blow for a small place like Jezersko. Then, when even the road (which, by the way, is a very poor state of repair) lost its former importance, the people of Jezersko began to move away in increasing numbers. Some might object that the people of Jezersko have failed to exploit their potentials, but such a generalisation would be unfair. They have tried many things, but have only been successful in part. These days one notices quite a number of abandoned small houses along the road. Even their architecture is evidence that these places – unlike the showy houses a few kilometres further down in the valley – have always been relatively poor. This is an eloquent demonstration of the fact that there is not exactly an abundance of opportunities here. But changes are happening. With the creation of the municipality of Jezersko in 1999, people here have taken a good part of their destiny into their own hands. They now have one of the smallest municipalities in Slovenia, home to just 702 people – but it is theirs. They

say that since the creation of the municipality things have improved considerably and the exodus from the area has stopped. Young people want to stay here and raise families in the place where they grew up.

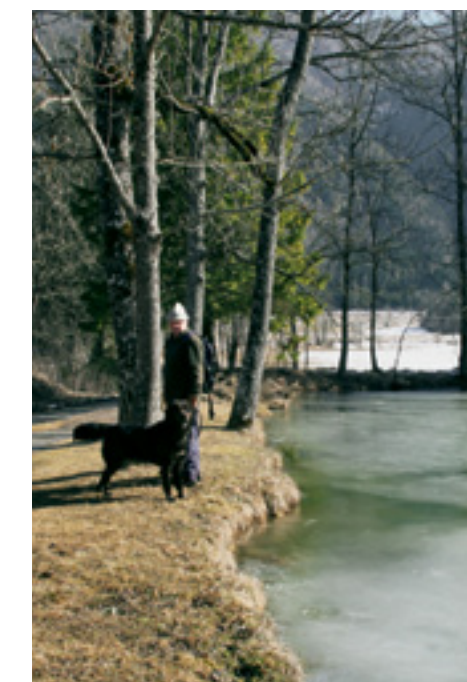
An oasis of peace and purity

At the same time it is true, thanks to the non-aggressive behaviour of its inhabitants, that the basin remains one of the most untouched nature reserves in the country. The pure water of Planšarsko Jezero, perhaps the biggest attraction for tourists, is perfectly safe to drink. This lake, a remnant of the lake that once covered the entire valley, is one of the most beautiful examples of an Alpine lake, its calm surface reflecting the green crowns of the pines that cover the slopes of the mountains surrounding the valley. There are probably only a few places in Europe that can still offer such a sense of romantic tranquillity amid mountain peaks – and Jezersko is one of them. The area boasts many other natural riches too. The wide, sunny pastures are ideal for livestock farming, although this potential is still far from being fully exploited. There is plenty of space and the air is incredibly pure and literally fragrant. It is no wonder that the climate here has a better ozone rating than Davos in Switzerland, and is

therefore healthier for the eyes and for tuberculosis sufferers.

At the same time, however, nature can sometimes be capricious. Until a few years ago tourist guides would mention Čedca, at 132 metres the highest waterfall in Slovenia, and the Skuta glacier as notable natural curiosities, but today they practically no longer exist. The collapse of the unstable rock face over which the waterfall once poured, and changes in the climate, have consigned both to history, with the result that the only interesting natural phenomena worth mentioning are two geological curiosities: a tuff quarry and a spring of mineral water with a remarkably high magnesium content. The loss of these two attractions is a shame, but Jezersko offers so much unspoilt beauty at every step that it will perhaps be possible to substitute them with something else.

When you ask young people living here what they think of Jezersko, you are surprised by their sense of belonging and by the pride and optimism that they show. They may not be satisfied with the situation here, but they accept it without anger and without apathy. They know that they themselves hold the key to improving it. Thus, for example, a group of four young people have taken over the running of the largest hotel, the Planinka, revitalising it and making it the centre of the settlement. Likewise the friendly little roadside guesthouses, which are evidently run with care and attention, are in some cases managed by young people. Young people even account for more than half the members of the municipal council, and they do not hide their ambitious plans. One of the first signs of improvement should be the road that will bring growing numbers of people here. Good luck, beautiful Jezersko!



**I FEEL
SLOVENIA**

