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The latest from Slovenia



ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA INTERVIEW: **Miroslav Mozetič, MSc**
IN FOCUS INTERVIEW: **Dr Bojana Rogelj Škafar** HERITAGE: **Slovenian Potica**

I FEEL
SLOVENIA



Let this New Year be the one, where all your dreams come true, so with a joyful heart, put a start to this year anew. Wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year 2014.

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Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



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Photo: Personal archives



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Photo: Tomo Jesentčnik/Rokus Klett

**SINFO – SLOVENIAN INFORMATION**

Executive Editor and Editor – in – Chief:

Tanja Glogovčan, tanja.glogovcan@gov.si

Editorial Board: Vesna Žarkovič, Irena Kogoj, Valerija Obu, Anja Polajnar,

Polona Prešeren, MSc

Photo Editor: Bojan Pernek

Production: Irena Kogoj

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Photo: Bruno Tokč

Tanja Glogovčan, editor

A few of this year's events to inspire you for the year to come

Our December issue being focused on Slovenian ethnological characteristics, we are delighted to present below the work and success of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, viewed through the experience of its Director, Dr Bojana Rogelj Škafar, and its permanent exhibition entitled “The Relationship between Nature and Culture”. The forthcoming year will mark the 600th anniversary of the beginning of the enthronement rituals of the Carinthian dukes, which has since been one of the most important distinctions of Slovenia in the European area and is also one of the topics dealt with in this issue.

There is no holiday in Slovenia without the traditional Slovenian festive cake potica. Two years following the publication of the successful monograph *Mojstrovine s kranjsko klobaso* (Mastering the Art of Preparing Carniolan Sausage-Based Dishes), the Rokus Klett publishing company is back with a new culinary book on a traditional Slovenian dish.

The socio-political section of this issue includes a presentation of the new President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia, Miroslav Mozetič. The interview highlights the role of the Constitutional Court at a time of economic and financial crisis. Other features of this issue include a cartoon strip with illustrations by Damijan Stepančič, taken from his picture book *Zdravljica*.

The New Year will also bring about changes to the magazine, though these will be introduced gradually. The Editorial Board would thus like to extend its sincere thanks to all who send in their ideas and suggestions. In the upcoming year, our focus will be more on the presentation of all Slovenian regions; moreover, changes will be made to the visual form of the magazine and some of its sections. The magazine will soon also be available in electronic format in e-bookstores. In addition, preparations are underway for a special and more topical e-Sinfo edition featuring short video clips. We are thus opening a new chapter for you to savour in the forthcoming year, page by page.

Reading helps us to discover ourselves, the world around us and our life companions. This is yet another reason why it is such a privilege to be an author of the stories herein. On my own behalf and on behalf of the Editorial Board, I extend to you all best wishes for the year ahead. Please let yourselves be inspired by positive stories, which I am sure will help make your New Year's resolutions and wishes come true.



Photo: GCO

And yet it moves

Despite the high numbers, the results of the stress tests of Slovenian banks have brought some relief. Slovenia will manage without the “bailout”, financial help which did more harm than good in the countries that received it. The stress tests and asset quality reviews, conducted by Oliver Wyman, Roland Berger, Deloitte and Ernst & Young (incidentally, these tests and reviews were fairly expensive, costing EUR 21 million), have revealed that the Slovenian banking system has a capital shortfall of EUR 4.778 billion and that EUR 3.012 billion will be needed to recapitalise the three biggest Slovenian banks. What is most relevant to Slovenian taxpayers, however, is the amount needed to recapitalise state-owned banks or banks for which the state provided guarantees, this totalling EUR 3.6 billion. This is a huge amount for Slovenia, whose annual budget totals only some EUR 8 to 9 billion, but it is manageable: the state will secure two-thirds of these funds in cash and one-third in marketable government bonds. European Commission Vice-President Olli Rehn also commented on the results of the stress tests of Slovenian banks, saying that the response of the Slovenian authorities was convincing and robust and that it demonstrated the fact that the overall economic recovery of the eurozone is now underway. This sends an important message both to the international public, in particular the financial markets, and to the Slovenian public, whose self-image is seriously fragile after years of economic downturn and which urgently needs a boost to its self-confidence.

Yet for sure the total capital shortfall of “only” EUR 4.7 billion is still nothing to boast about, as this figure proves that the current situation is the result of poor bank management and a number of amateurish mistakes in the management of banks and, ultimately, the entire state-owned assets management system. In this regard, we should certainly find out who is responsible. Slovenia and, in particular, its politicians are characterised by their inability or unwillingness to solve economic and political problems which, swept under the carpet of coalition deals and agreements, piled up to such an extent that they were impossible to conceal at home, let alone abroad. Looking at it from this point of view, however, the economic and financial crisis in Slovenia may actually

prove a welcome wake-up call, as it has compelled politics to act and manage the state in a more responsible manner. The Government of Alenka Bratušek is aware that it does not have much leeway in seeking solutions for the problems that have piled up over the years and that it can no longer count on the people to be understanding. After five years of economic recession, people are losing patience and, quite rightly, expect politicians to lay their cards on the table and present a credible plan for the future. The Government did just that, providing an objective assessment of the Slovenian banking system, although this is only the first step towards recovery. Slovenia reasonably expects that the international financial markets will respond to this favourably and that interest rates for borrowing will be brought down to tolerable levels, enabling it to repay costly loans with less expensive money and secure economic growth. That is behind the title “and yet it moves”.

This also holds for measures taken by the Government to curb the shadow economy. Stricter controls by the Tax Administration and market inspectors and an intense media campaign conducted in recent months have borne fruit: this year, 16.5% more tax revenue has been collected than in the comparable period last year, which is very encouraging, as is the fact that people are becoming more understanding of the stricter measures. There have been, however, a few comments about the Government only going after the small fry – the caterers, hairdressers, florists, tyre mechanics and the like – rather than the big fish, but this is changing too. New Government measures require the introduction of certified cash registers for everyone, including those in well-paid professions, such as dentists and lawyers. Moreover, legislation is being passed to introduce a 70% tax rate on assets of unknown origin. If it turns out that assets were obtained illegally, the competent authorities may even confiscate them.

The most important thing for the future of Slovenia is regaining credibility and the trust of its citizens. The objective analysis of the Slovenian banking system and consistent implementation of laws are both part of the start of this process.

Visit to Moscow

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, met the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, in December. Their talks focused on the economic cooperation between the two countries.

The two Prime Ministers agreed that "Slovenia and Russia have developed very good political relations and strong economic cooperation." They expressed their belief that the South Stream project, developed by the Russian energy giant Gazprom, will be carried out. Besides the pipeline, the Russian Prime Minister pointed to tourism, information and communication technology, and pharmaceuticals as areas offering ample opportunities for cooperation. The visit was also devoted to the Russian-Slovenian investment conference, at which Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek met some 60 businesspeople, most of them from Russia.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Bearing in mind that Slovenian investments in Russia exceed Russian investments in Slovenia, Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek said that there was still ample room for more Russian investment here. Pointing to the opportunities available, she drew attention to the planned privatisation of several state companies.

President Mandela, an icon of the previous and this century

Slovenian leaders have paid tribute to the deceased former President of South Africa. Slovenian President Pahor attended a Memorial Service for Mr Mandela.

The President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, wrote: "Nelson Mandela had a dream that cost him more than a quarter of a century of imprisonment. He then made the dream become reality without taking revenge on those who had tried to rob him of it. With his commitment and loyalty to his nation and ideals of a better and fairer society, President Mandela has inspired the whole world." In her message of condolence, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, wrote: "It is difficult to imagine the 20th century without President Mandela's inspiring efforts to fight racism in his homeland and Africa as a whole or without his support for oppressed people throughout the world. President Mandela will always stand as a prominent and peaceful fighter for freedom, equality and democracy. We trust that future generations will continue his fight until reaching the ultimate goal – a world free from injustice."



Photo: Xinhua/STA

Hundreds of world leaders gather in Johannesburg's FNB Stadium for Nelson Mandela's memorial service

In Memoriam: Jože Trontelj

The President of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Jože Trontelj, died in December. Paying tribute to Professor Trontelj, the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, said that his scientific work and valuable contributions both at home and abroad had set high standards not only in the field of science but also in ethics and values.

Jože Trontelj was elected to the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts in 1991, becoming its Vice-President in 2002 and President in 2008. He chaired the National Medical Ethics Committee and served as a Slovenian delegate in the Steering Committee on Bioethics of the Council of Europe; he also participated in the preparation of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and the Dignity of the Human Being with Regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine and its Protocols, particularly the Protocol on Biomedical Research.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

The President of the National Assembly, Janko Veber, and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Alenka Bratušek, also expressed their deep appreciation of the work of the late President of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts.

European Year of Citizens

The campaign placed special emphasis on young people

The Government Communication Office (GCO) was the national coordinator of the European Year of Citizens (EYC) campaign in Slovenia

this year. Promotional activities were diverse in content, with some continuing next year.

Project entitled "Europe in school" was undertaken by the Friends of Youth Federation of Slovenia



As part of the Management Partnership mechanism, the GCO, in cooperation with the European Commission, the European Parliament and various contractors, organised at 15 venues across Slovenia more than 30 events targeting different groups and topics associated with European citizenship. The campaign placed special emphasis on young people. According to the organizers' data, more than 10,000 people participated in person or virtually in these activities.

RIGHTS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

In their projects co-financed with tendered funds, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focused on raising awareness of vulnerable groups' rights stemming from European citizenship. Vulnerable groups include people living below the poverty threshold, young job-seekers, young people without education, people older than 65, persons with special needs and those without compulsory health insurance. NGOs carried out 13 projects, with co-financing totalling 61,000 euros.

EUROPE IN SCHOOL

A separate EYC project entitled

"Europe in school" and devoted to pupils and secondary school students was undertaken by the Friends of Youth Federation of Slovenia. As many as 263 education institutions, 590 mentors and 6,973 children and young people entered 6,120 creations for the competition with the slogan "European citizenship gives me opportunities and rights but how well do I know them?" A joint project of two primary schools and one secondary school linking different creative topics won this "connecting" competition, held for the first time this year.

SLOVENIA AND EUROPE ON TELEVISION

EYC topics in television broadcasts contributed to the success of awareness-raising among citizens. Special credit for this goes to the broadcast "Slovenians – Europeans" on RTV SLO channel 3. In addition, videos were posted on social media and web portals. The broadcasts highlighted the everyday problems of European citizens in the area of the single market. The practical aspects of the citizen's rights were described and the actual situations and personal stories of European citizens

used as starting points for problem solving.

NEW ACTIVITIES OF MINISTRIES AND YOUR EUROPE

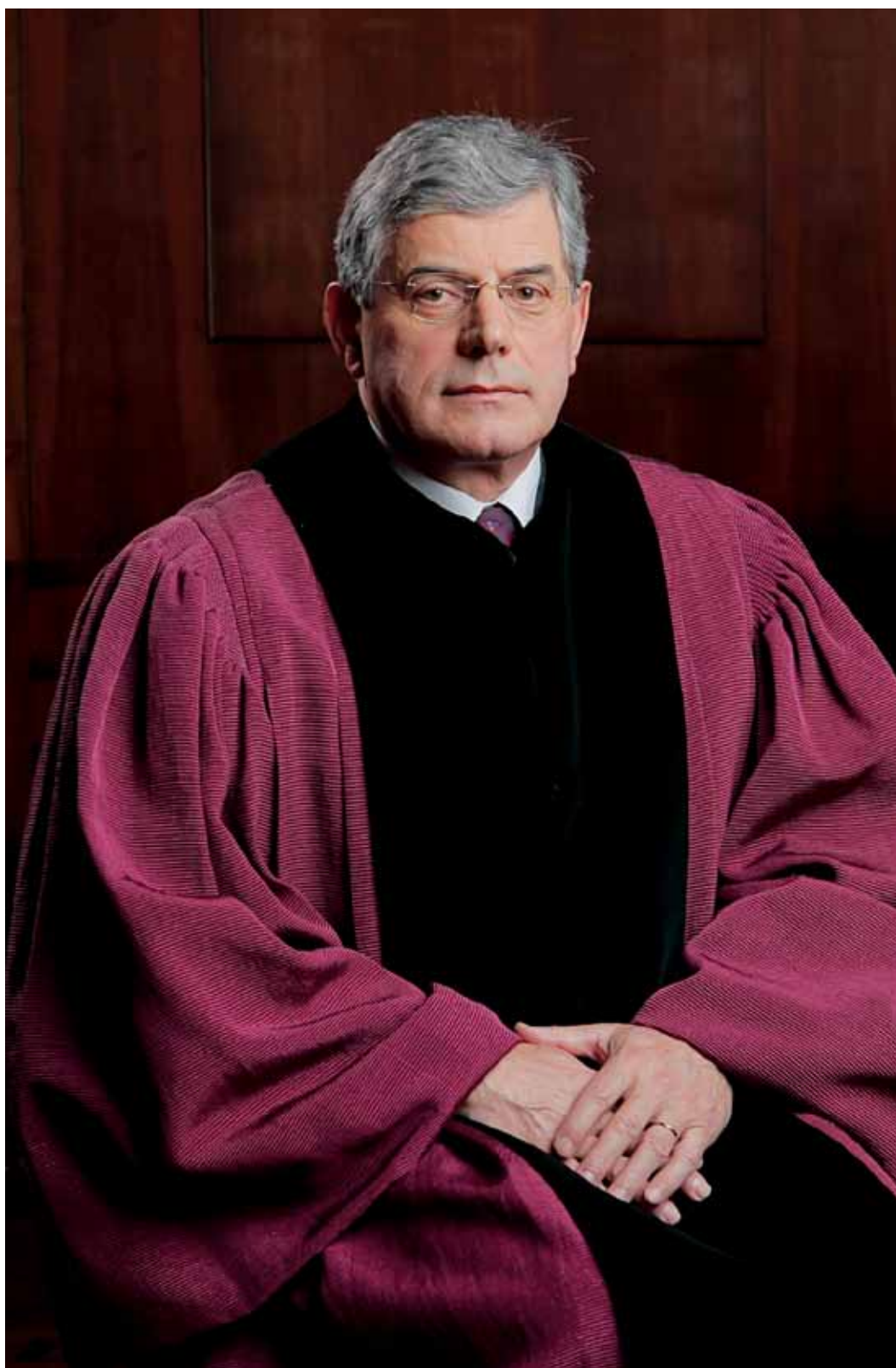
The campaign's mission, of course, would not have been accomplished without a web presence and attendance at festivals, fairs and conferences. National contact points, info centres and NGOs also played an active role in these activities. In line with their objectives, the ministries and government services also made an effort to implement at least one project. The Interior Ministry, for example, informed EU citizens from other Member States who are now residing in Slovenia about administrative procedures, the Finance Ministry provided essential information on Slovenia's tax system to EU citizens who are not Slovenians, and the Education Ministry introduced a new subject on patriotic and civic education in the curriculum. Special focus was on the promotion of Your Europe, a web portal where two clicks will take you to the relevant institution that can help you resolve your problem or conflict.

The campaign placed special emphasis on young people. According to the organizers' data, more than 10,000 people participated in person or virtually in these activities.

Miroslav Mozetič, MSc
President of the Constitutional Court

In these times of financial and social crisis, the Constitutional Court faces new challenges

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



Miroslav Mozetič was employed by the Constitutional Court as a senior advisor in February 2000 and was appointed deputy secretary-general of the Court in 2001. In mid 2005 he was appointed director-general of the Directorate for Legislation of the Ministry of Justice and at the beginning of 2006 as head of the Legislative and Legal Service of the National Assembly. He is also currently deputy president of the state legal examination commission and an examiner for constitutional law and the foundations of EU law for the civil service examination. His master's thesis, entitled *Parlamentarna preiskava v pravnem redu Republike Slovenije* [Parliamentary Inquiry in the Legal System of the Republic of Slovenia], was published as a book. He is one of the authors of the *Commentary on the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia*. He commenced his duties as a judge at the Constitutional Court on 31 October 2007. He was Vice-President of the Constitutional Court from 11 January 2010 until 10 November 2013 and assumed the office of President of the Constitutional Court on 11 November 2013.

The Constitutional Court is composed of nine Constitutional Court judges, elected on the proposal of the President of the Republic by the National Assembly. Any citizen of the Republic of Slovenia who is a legal expert and has reached at least 40 years of age may be elected a Constitutional Court judge. Constitutional Court judges are elected for a term of nine years and may not be re-elected. The President of the Constitutional Court is elected by the judges from among their own number for a term of three years.



Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA

Mr Mozetič, after six years of working as a judge, on 11 November you took over the leadership of the highest judicial body in the country. Will your style of leadership introduce any changes?

I have been part of the Constitutional Court since 2000, when I started here as an adviser, and I dare say I know this institution well. As president I am the first among equals. The judicial function is the same for everyone, and the president has no special powers or privileges. I will lead the Constitutional Court in a democratic way and in cooperation (and agreement) with all the judges.

But you did arrange the furniture in your office differently from your predecessor, Dr Petrič.

I wanted to have more light at my desk, so I had it moved closer to the window.

Do judges sometimes reach deadlock when deciding on a case?

Of course it happens, and quite often, that we do not conclude the case in one session. Any substantive decision has to be adopted by at least five judges. The number of sessions required for one case depends on its complexity. We decide on simple cases after one session, but for more difficult ones we generally hold more sessions, until we achieve the required major-

ity. Some decisions we wish to adopt with the greatest possible majority or, if possible, unanimously. Of course, such cases require many sessions.

The ideological diversity of the judges undoubtedly affects your decisions. To what extent should Constitutional Court judges declare their political views to the public and how much does that influence the decisions of the Court?

Political views do not affect our decisions. However, it is true that each judge has his/her values that influence his/her decisions. But I see this as an advantage, as in this way we develop a tolerance for different values and beliefs. This is particularly evident in cases concerning the most sensitive constitutional issues, and rightly so. You see, the Constitution itself is based on values. Human dignity and freedom are the Constitution's basic premise for the regulation of social and political relationships. This is also the basis for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which the Constitution declares and protects. So I say again, the fact that we are different is positive. As a result of this, different aspects of a constitutional issue are considered, discussions have greater depth and decisions adopted at the end are more carefully thought out and therefore more convincing, not to say more just. However, declaring politi-

cal views, especially on current issues, is a different matter. I believe that judges should avoid such declarations.

Expectations are that heading the Constitutional Court will be particularly demanding in these times of crisis, and will pose new challenges for you. Do you expect the number of constitutional challenges to acts related to resolving the crisis to rise during your term of office?

Definitely. This has already occurred during the term of office of the previous president. Particularly in the last two years, we have received requests and motions concerning acts that were adopted because of the economic situation in the country. Such acts generally affect a range of social rights, labour rights, salaries and social-security benefits and taxes. We have already encountered these issues (acts) and will certainly face them in the future.

For example?

The Real Property Tax Act. At the moment we are considering the Fiscal Balance Act, two years ago we decided on referendums on the acts concerning the pension system, bad banks and the sovereign holding. I don't know what is currently being drafted in the National Assembly. Any one of such acts could end up on our table, if only because they affect so many people.

The Constitutional Court is and will remain the guardian of constitutionality and legality and the guardian of human rights and fundamental freedoms. To responsibly fulfil this obligation is important for the respect and functioning of the rule of law. We are aware that only we ourselves can build our reputation by making sound and convincing decisions.



Miroslav Mozetič, MSc, replaces Dr Ernest Petrič, who served as the head of the country's top court since November 2010. Petrič remains at the court as a constitutional court judge. His nine-year term expires in 2017. In the photo: Dr Ernest Petrič, President of the Republic of Slovenia Borut Pahor and Miroslav Mozetič, MSc.

One of the problems you encounter in your work is that some matters submitted for your consideration do not fall within your jurisdiction.

If they are not within our jurisdiction, the solution is quite simple. We dismiss them. However, many matters that do fall within our jurisdiction are often charged with political elements, which shows that the National Assembly does not always devote enough time to discussion in order to settle as many open issues and dilemmas as possible. The governing side sometimes adopts an act too quickly. This can lead to politically very sensitive discussions in the public. It would certainly be better if politically sensitive issues were resolved in the National Assembly, as the National Assembly is the legislator. It must adopt acts that are in accordance with the Constitution. The responsibility of the Constitutional Court is to assess their conformity with the Constitution. We have to make decisions on the basis of the Constitution and in accordance with the rules of our profession, and not based on politics, even when we receive a request or motion for the review of constitutionality of a politically very sensitive act.

When does this most often occur?

When the National Assembly is unable or unwilling to reach an agreement, when consensus is

not reached or when the public is not included in the discussion but should be. We must remember that 30 deputies can submit a request for review of the constitutionality of an act. They may be from the "voted-down" minority, the opposition. If the matter concerns a threat to the rights of employees, unions may also submit a request. There are a lot of possibilities for trying to resolve issues that have not been resolved in the National Assembly at the Constitutional Court.

You are one of the rare judges of the Constitutional Court who were once politicians. You were a deputy from the Slovenian Christian Democrats for eight years and you were also an attorney. How does your past experience affect your current work?

Much like any experience a person acquires through work. It is true that in the current composition of the Court I am the only one with experience of how the National Assembly functions, or rather, how deputies and their groups function, which helps me in my work. I am familiar with certain backgrounds, with how procedures are run, how things are coordinated. This is why I can sometimes more or less feel why the National Assembly adopted a certain decision, despite the strong probability of it not being in accordance with the Constitution or even when it had been warned that this was

the case. But then the National Assembly adopts it despite the warnings of specialist services. It is a useful experience.

Did you ever have problems as a deputy because of that?

I did. I knew that some solutions were being adopted contrary to the Constitution, but other than voting against it, there was nothing I could do. The parties had made an agreement, the coalition had coordinated its views and no longer wished to listen to the warnings of the legal services.

Which raises the concern whether the Constitution is respected enough in this country. Is Slovenia a state governed by the rule of law?

It is difficult to answer that. You see, the Constitution regulates all institutions and elements of the modern rule of law in a modern way. At this level Slovenia is definitely a very constitutional state governed by the rule of law. However, the problem is that it appears that we do not apply the Constitution in practice. Many things do not work or work poorly. This is probably the cause of the strong feeling among the public, both lay and expert, that we do not have the rule of law or that we have two "rules of law", one for the privileged and another for ordinary citizens. Whether these feelings or in some cases convictions are right or not is difficult to assess,

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Photo: Staniko Grudner/STA



Because the National Assembly limited or even scrapped the possibility to call a referendum in some cases (such as fiscal matters), Mozetič expects to see more issues related to crisis laws to be referred to the Constitutional Court.

particularly from the position of the President of the Constitutional Court. This feeling that we have two rules of law certainly arises every time individual people are treated differently. Some are privileged and are not punished even when they break the law, while others are prosecuted even when they are supposedly innocent. I cannot tell you if it is really a case of different treatment, discrimination and arbitrary decisions. However, I can say that we have encountered such conduct in some cases. All this, of course, gives the impression that we have a dual rule of law or that not everyone is treated equally. The judiciary is the most frequent target in this respect, despite being only one of the authorities, but it is the most important one for the formation of convictions on the existence or non-existence of the rule of law. It is difficult to say if all the allegations are justified. It is very difficult for me to assess that. I, personally, also have mixed feelings about the subject. But I do not accept generalised statements that the judiciary is incompetent, corrupted and biased. I agree that we are only half way through the process of implementing the Constitution, and that there are many things that do not work well. Therefore, it is the responsibility of us all, and particularly the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of power, to really implement the Constitution, so that everyone, or at least the great majority, will be convinced that Slovenia is ruled by the law and not people.

What instruments does the Constitutional Court have at its disposal when the legislator does not respect your decisions?

The Constitutional Court does not initiate procedures of its own volition. It only decides on the basis of a request or motion and on the basis of a constitutional complaint. If it establishes, in proceedings initiated in this way, that an act or provision thereof is not in accordance with the Constitution, it abrogates it or, in certain specific cases, it can merely establish unconstitutionality. When a provision is abrogated, there is no problem, as it may no longer be applied. However, in the case of a declaratory decision, the Constitutional Court imposes on the National Assembly the task of remedying the established unconstitutionality within a specified period. If the National Assembly does not comply with the decision of the Constitutional Court, the Court may, in exceptional cases, by way of execution “prescribe” a statutory norm in new proceedings. The Constitutional Court also adopts interpretative decisions.

There was much controversy over the Constitutional Court decision of December 2012, whereby it declared that the referendums on the acts concerning bad banks and the Slovenian Sovereign Holding would have been unconstitutional. The judges assessed that the failure of the acts to pass the referendum would have posed a threat to the smooth operation of the state. Do you, as the new president of the Constitu-

tional Court, consider that the Constitutional Court should respond to controversy sparked off by any important decision of the Court and explain such decisions in more detail?

It is right for the Constitutional Court to be open to the public and to offer additional explanations, if necessary, for example on what constitutional issue was considered in the decision and what the decision means. Decisions are often quite complicated and sometimes unclear and hard to understand. However, the Court should not become involved in arguments about why it adopted a certain decision, why it did not interpret a certain right further or why it did not “overlook” a procedural restriction and consider the substance of the issue.

Do you think that the Constitutional Court enjoys enough respect in the public?

I think it enjoys a fair amount of respect, although we do not carry out opinion polls in this regard. I am aware that our reputation to great extent depends on our decisions and it probably changes accordingly. Sometimes it is better and sometimes a little less good. Sometimes one side criticises and the other praises and vice versa. But we never dismiss critical opinions from the profession. We carefully examine them with great interest. Notwithstanding the criticism or praise, the rule always applies that we judges decide as we have pledged in our oath – in accordance with the Constitution, the law and our conscience. The Constitutional Court is and will remain the guardian of constitutionality and legality and the guardian of human rights and fundamental freedoms. To responsibly fulfil this obligation is important for the respect and functioning of the rule of law. We are aware that only we ourselves can build our reputation by making sound and convincing decisions.

We wish you every success in your work as the President of the Constitutional Court.

Thank you very much.

It is right for the Constitutional Court to be open to the public and to offer additional explanations, if necessary, for example on what constitutional issue was considered in the decision and what the decision means.

Traces of Slovenian identity viewed through museum collections

Between nature and culture

A museum exhibition is an interpretive visual medium for the theoretical model of a particular sector. This applies especially to permanent museum exhibitions, whose permanence is only illusory. They are the illusion of something permanent in time and

space, tales of the past and the present. One of the permanent exhibitions at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the main ethnographic museum in Slovenia, is titled *Between nature and culture*.

Photo: Marko Habič/SEM



Cradles had been used by the nobility and wealthy townspeople at least until the late Middle Ages. Cradles were not only used for sleeping – babies spent whole days in them. They were carried in cradles to the fields, to christenings and if a baby died, it was also buried in it.

This exhibition is about the dynamics between the natural and the cultural. It informs visitors about the tangible and intangible heritage of Slovenians and certain cultures outside Europe. The oldest objects exhibited are from the 16th century, and alongside them are quite modern objects. The exhibition is supplemented by audiovisual presentations, i.e. a multivision, an ethnographic film and audiovisual collages. The multivision “Who am I, who are we” in the introductory part of the exhibition presents Slovenian ethnological areas and their

characteristics, as reflected in the types of settlements, architecture, music, dance and language.

THE OBJECTS OF LIFE AND DESIRE

The introductory story at the entrance to the permanent exhibition is a collage representing relationships between people and objects and views of tangible heritage, which reveals to us its various objects. But when does the story begin? Is a human without objects really just a vulnerable being? This story is a possible answer – but not the only one –

offered by the exhibition. One of the curiosities of this introduction to the exhibition that certainly attracts our attention is the skis from Bloke. Slovenians are still considered a nation of skiers. A Slovenian as a mower with a scythe and his awareness of his own individuality are represented, for example, by the whetstone holder. This small marginal object, a scything tool, and its owner, were an exceptional part of the rural culture of that time. Other important identification symbols include a headdress, national costumes and a hayrack.

This exhibition is about the dynamics between the natural and the cultural. It informs visitors about the tangible and intangible heritage of Slovenians and certain cultures outside Europe.

Regional distinctions in basic cuts of national costumes were noticeable until the mid-19th century. A couple from the rural milieu of Bohinj (after a watercolour by F. K. Goldenstein, Carniola, 1844). Peasants from the surroundings of Prem in the Karst region (after a watercolour by F. K. Goldenstein, Carniola, 1844). Country wedding procession in Poljane Valley along the Kolpa River (after a watercolour by F. K. Goldenstein, Carniola, 1844).

Photo: Archives of SEM



Foreigners, people overseas, Turks, Jews, Huns and Mongols have traditionally aroused negative feelings in Slovenians. The Slovenian folk tradition of 'unknown' foreign peoples survived not only in fairytales, sayings and folk songs, but also in folk art, such as in painted beehive panels with motifs of Turks. In the photo: a Turk with a pipe on a beehive panel



Photo: Marko Habič/SEM

Highly notable among the decorative objects are chests, which were the most common piece of furniture in the Slovenian lands from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. As for the method of manufacture and decoration, chests were hewed, carved, inlaid or painted.

WATER AND EARTH

To live and survive. With what? Our ancestors have always picked edible forest fruit (blueberries, strawberries, mushrooms, chestnuts, hazelnuts), collected birch, elm and maple sap, gathered medicinal herbs and plants and fruit used in animal husbandry (e.g. bundled branches for ovine and caprine animals, beech nuts, acorns and horse-chestnuts for pig feed), plant material for fuel and construction materials. Slovenians are particularly known for beekeeping. Beehive panels combine the industry and artistic sense of Slovenians.

NECESSARY AND UNNECESSARY

Most certainly one of the more notable exhibits is lace. Lace is a fabric made of textile or metal thread with patterns of holes. The function of lace has always been related to status. For a long time it was a privilege of the nobility and Church. Because of its rarity and high value it was mostly used as a trimming or a visible part of a garment. However, prestige in Slovenia was reflected not only in lace and embroidery; we must not overlook the costumes. There are three main types of national costume in Slovenia – the Alpine, Primorska and Pannonian.

A RESIDENCE, A HOME, A DWELLIN

There are two types prevalent in Slovenia – farmhouses and bourgeois villas. Castles are not so frequent. In this part of the exhibition there is fireplace equipment, cutlery, chairs, chests and cradles. Highly notable among the decorative objects are chests, which were the most common piece of furniture in the Slovenian lands from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. As for the method of manufacture and decoration, chests were hewed, carved, inlaid or painted. The lid was usually flat or gabled and the decoration was geometric.



Photo: Marko Habič/SEM

Carved chests were mostly used in western Slovenia.

Photo: Marko Habič/SEM



Wheel plough, Poljščica near Bled, in use until 1910.

SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL

This part of the exhibition is about humans as social creatures and about those aspects of their lives that exceed the material needs of survival. It presents the human wish to communicate with the supernatural, in Slovenia mostly through Christianity, and the need for music and art. The Christmas and New Year customs overshadowed the pre-Christian celebrations of winter bonfires, a time favourable for doing magic and foretelling, when fire and evergreen plants were considered to have special power. In the past,

rural families decorated a “God’s corner” with evergreen plants or hung a spruce under the ceiling. They made ceremonial pastry and dishes, sprinkled homes and fields with holy water and burnt incense. Before the Second World War, there were mostly two figures bearing gifts to children, St. Nicholas (Miklavž) and Father Christmas. After the Second World War, Grandfather Frost took over their role. A nativity scene is usually a three-dimensional miniature representation of the birth of Jesus Christ and the shepherds and Magi paying tribute to him. In Slovenia, the first

Nativity scene was set up in the Jesuit church of St. James in Ljubljana in 1644. Slovenia’s regions are also rich in manners and customs related to Easter, Shrovetide and patron saints.

REFLECTIONS OF DISTANT LANDS

In the concluding part of the exhibition, the historical reflection of other lands (Australia, Oceania, Asia, the Americas, Africa) offers a concise presentation of objects from museum collections outside Europe.

A nativity scene is usually a three-dimensional miniature representation of the birth of Jesus Christ and the shepherds and Magi paying tribute to him. In Slovenia, the first Nativity scene was set up in the Jesuit church of St. James in Ljubljana in 1644.

Photo: Marko Habič/SEM



Photo: Marko Habič/SEM

Cabinet nativity scene, probably from the Selca Valley, mid-19th century.



Photo: Marko Habič/SEM

Dr Bojana Rogelj Škafar

Research and communicating our knowledge of the wealth of ethnological heritage are of key importance

The Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) has fairly deep roots, reaching back beyond 1923, when the Royal Ethnographic Museum was established. The Provincial Museum of Carniola established in 1821 already stored ethnographic collections.

Dr Bojana Rogelj Škafar is an ethnologist, art historian and sociologist; she is employed as a curator of folk art and pictorial sources at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM), of which she has been the director since 2005. Her research fields are the interpretation of Slovene sources, visual culture, the museum's history and the symbolism of national identity. She was awarded the Valvasor Prize for the exhibition *Love is in the Air – Love Gifts in Traditional Slovenian Culture*. She is the co-author of the permanent museum exhibition *Between Nature and Culture*. Her major publications are *The Slovene Ethnographic Museum: A Journey through Time and Only Partly through Space*, *Painted Beehive Panels and Depicted Traces of National Identity*.



Photo: Personal archives



The majority of funding for the SEM's activities comes from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia. Additionally, the museum is also involved in European projects. Admission fees, the renting of premises for lectures, coffee shop and pottery atelier are additional sources of income. The museum strives to acquire sponsorships and donations for individual projects.

As the director of the museum, you must have certain priority tasks. What are they?

Research and communicating our knowledge of the wealth of ethnological heritage are of key importance; on how Slovenians struggled to survive, in what way and how we realised our everyday and festive occasions, what values we nurtured and how we created the symbols of our identity. I believe that such knowledge is also important for our identity today; it is a source of confidence and the creation of excellence for the future. Therefore, our priority task will be further research, and the presentation and communication of ethnologically relevant topics in the discourse between past and present.

The 90th anniversary of the museum was celebrated this year. How did you mark these nine decades?

We decided to celebrate the anniversary actively throughout the year. The festivity was the central theme of all events. At the scientific symposium, 'Praznovanja: med tradicijo in sodobnostjo' (Celebrations: between tradition and modernity) with our fellow ethnologists we tried to establish what ethnology means today in the context of celebrations. We also used the Summer Museum Night to present the 'Passages' project, because we think that a museum is constantly being transformed

or in transition, for which we joined forces with the Academy of Visual Arts Ljubljana, whose students contemplated transitions visually and devised several installations and constructions. We created a copyright film entitled 'Time of Aliquot Parts', which was made by video-maker Miha Vipotnik, who used our film material and new footage to create a cinematic synthesis of symbolic harmony and the life of the museum. The central event was the opening of the exhibition on doors, which was more than just a comprehensive ethnological interpretation of the ethnological content, but also symbolised the continuous opening of the SEM's doors to the public.

What is the story behind the museum's establishment?

The actual beginning of the ethnographic museum dates back to 1923, when Dr Niko Županič, an ethnologist and anthropologist, was appointed director. At the time, the collection included 3,502 exhibits. Soon after its establishment, Dr Stanko Vurnik, the first curator, came to the museum and introduced planned field work, research and collecting. He focused particularly on researching Slovenian houses, painted beehive panels and peča (kerchief) as part of national costumes in terms of their development, typology and history, using the methodology of art history. He died in 1932, still rel-

atively young, but he managed to collect many artefacts for the museum collection during his active expert period. His collection was a good foundation for the museum's development. Dr Rajko Ložar, who managed the museum during the World War II, made a particular impression on it, and as the editor, saw to the publishing of the monograph Slovensko narodopisje (Slovenian Ethnography), one of the fundamental works in Slovenian ethnological literature. After the war, he went into exile, and then moved to the United States. The management of the museum was taken over by Dr Boris Orel, who developed a system of group research in Slovenian ethnic territory. The teams included ethnologists, students, art historians, sketchers, and others. They particularly researched the folk culture of Slovenian people. Over thirty such teams were formed between the post-war period and the 1970s, and it was these teams that collected the majority of the museum's material, with regard to artefacts and documentation. The items were also recorded and photographed, and descriptions of the items were drafted. The period of Dr Boris Orel was truly a turning point and very active in terms of the development of museum work at the SEM. Dr Boris Kuhar continued Orel's work. His period saw numerous temporary exhibitions, which were thematic and dedicated

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Photo: Archives of SEM

The actual beginning of the ethnographic museum dates back to 1923.

to crafts, national costumes, architecture, etc. They also focused on professional groups, such as the wood-workers and sawyers of the Southern Pohorje and rafters on the Savinja River. At the time, these were important new subjects, which also saw the opening of the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane near Medvode, which focused on non-European collections and hosted numerous exhibitions with non-European themes. So that was a very active time also in terms of promoting ethnological content and materials.

However, it is true that there was always a desire to have an independent ethnographic museum in Slovenia in one location.

That is true. We were able to do that in the 1990s. Two buildings of the former barracks on Metelkova were renovated. One is now the office building and the second serves for exhibitions. We were also able to arrange storage facilities here, which were previously located at the premises of the Ursuline Convent in Škofja Loka. We were thus able to develop a programme with two permanent exhibitions and many temporary exhibitions, public programmes for children, youth and adults, and various workshops. We publish books and

periodicals and organise various projects funded from European funds. I can say that we have become a modern ethnological museum with diverse museum activities, which focuses on our mission of researching, presenting and communicating ethnological knowledge, and integrating contemporaneity with tradition in the culture and way of life of Slovenians in their homeland, spanning its borders and further abroad and their dialogue with the world.

What were the first collections?

The non-European collections were the first that initiated the collection of ethnographic material. The first was the so-called Baraga Collection of artefacts from the Ojibwa and Ottawa tribes of North America, which missionary Friderik Baraga sent to Ljubljana in the 1830s. Another important non-European collection was that of Ignacij Knoblehar; it came from Southern Sudan, where he worked as a missionary in the mid-1800s. He studied the people along the White Nile and collected material evidence about their lives. It was only towards the end of the 19th century that the collection of ethnographic material relating to Slovenians living in Carniola actually began. The first collections of the ethnographic museum began to emerge, such as the collection of painted bee-

hive panels, a collection of national costumes and their components, embroidery, various small craft products and the like. At this point, I should also mention the efforts of archaeologist Walter Schmid at the beginning of the 20th century, since he dedicated his time to collecting ethnographic artefacts at the Provincial Museum of Carniola and also organised the presentation of collections in Vienna.

In your opinion, what is the relation between museums and the formation of Slovenian national identity in the past and today?

We know from the past that our museum predecessors tried very hard to influence the formation of Slovenian national identity. Unfortunately, they did not have such good conditions and the means that we have today. Our goal is actually the same. We wish to share our knowledge about the ethnological heritage as the reflection and expression of the national identity past and present, and pride in its richness of content and expression, with Slovenians and visitors from abroad. We also strive to establish intercultural dialogue and emphasise the wealth of cultural diversity. I think that we have an excellent museum, which serves as a means to attain these goals with every new project. We have also noticed that the

Certain visitors to the SEM are still interested in the 'classical' ethnographic heritage. However, our expert efforts are directed towards putting exhibits in context, i.e. to modern ethnological and museum approaches.



“We wish to communicate more about the artefacts to our visitors – who used them, when and why; what relationships developed towards these objects, their significance, and so on. We want visitors to learn more about these objects and to think about their own experience with similar objects and phenomena”, said Dr Bojana Rogelj Škafar.

crisis has caused something of a decline in the number of visitors. But we still pursue our objectives and wish to continue to attract visitors with high-quality and content-rich projects. We hope that a visit to the museum will give them a memorable experience and make them want to return.

Where did Slovenians obtain most knowledge and artefacts for ethnological collections? Which artefacts and fields of ethnography were most interesting to Slovenians in the past and which now?

Field work and study form the basis for expert and research work. If we look back at the work of our predecessors, who are still our ideals, we see that collections, knowledge about them and the theoretical bases produced by comparative studies are the results of their intensive expert efforts, which can be realised today particularly by participating in international trends and organisations and by transferring best practices to our environment. In recent decades, the need – which must also be our commitment – has been growing for knowledge about ethnological heritage that is acquired through expert work is passed on to the public. About the interest of Slovenians in ethnographic themes in the past, we could say that they

were more interested in spiritual culture in the 19th century, in the form of folk songs, tales and sayings, for example; towards the end of the 19th century, their attention was drawn to material culture, particularly to its aesthetic components, as symbols of national identity: more precisely, to national costumes, decorated furniture, architecture, and painted beehive panels. In the 1930s, some people tried to integrate these components into a distinctive Slovenian national style. Certain visitors to the SEM are still interested in the ‘classical’ ethnographic heritage. However, our expert efforts are directed towards putting exhibits in context, i.e. to modern ethnological and museum approaches.

How do Slovenians who do not live in their homeland contribute to museum collections?

The project ‘Ročnadelo.org’ must be mentioned here; it is an online archive organised in cooperation with Slovenian women living in Australia who helped to collect, evaluate and contextualise handicrafts important for their identity. The project’s website enables it to continue. We also cooperate with foreign collection holders and publish a special series called ‘Zbirke s te ali one strani?’ (Collections from This or the Other Side?). The catalogue of the collection

of exhibits from the new Museum of Fishing in Križ near Trieste is to be published soon.

A permanent exhibition is important for every museum. You have two of them.

In 2006, we opened the first exhibition, entitled ‘Between Nature and Culture’. We wanted to showcase the wealth of our collections; until then, most of the collections were kept in storage due to the lack of exhibition premises. The material, social and spiritual culture of Slovenians relating to nature and tangible objects used every day or on special occasions were our starting points. The second permanent exhibition, ‘I, We and Others – Images of My World’, focuses on individuals and their identities. We are continuously improving it by inviting individuals to showcase their life stories relating to this exhibition. This is not a static exhibition; it lives on. In this respect, we could say that the SEM is an inclusive and participatory museum.

And other interesting exhibitions?

The most topical exhibition at the moment is ‘Doors. Spatial and Symbolic Passageways of Life’ which commemorates the 90th anniversary of the museum.

We decided to celebrate the anniversary actively throughout the year. The festivity was the central theme of all events.

Photo: Archives of the Museum of Ethnology Vienna, Austria



In the photograph: Paul Schebesta. His missionary and anthropological work focused particularly on Pygmies.

What is your cooperation with foreign museums like?

We cooperate, for example, with the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art in Vienna and the Italian Museum of Uses and Customs of the Trentino People in San Michele all'Adige near Trento. We also cooperate with ethnographic museums in Sofia, Warsaw, Marseille, Skopje and Zagreb, with whom we have researched our common traditions of carnivals, organised a travelling exhibition and conducted joint field work. The European Roma Route project connected us with the British, Germans and Romanians in order to raise awareness on the wealth of Roma heritage in Europe. Among the projects dedicated to Roma culture, I should also mention the project, 'I See You – You See Me', which we organised in cooperation with the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana and Slovenian photojournalists. Under their mentorship, the Roma children photographed people in their community and others. The exhibition of their photographs was showcased at the Council of Europe in Brussels, in the Palace of Nations in Geneva, and elsewhere. In the field of non-European collections, we particularly collaborate with the Museum of African

Art in Belgrade, and on online exhibitions with museums with Asian collections. The cooperation with foreign museums is very broad, also within the framework of exhibition projects. In 2004, when opening the exhibition premises, we invited 14 ethnographic museums from 14 countries to introduce themes that they considered important to the identity of their own nations, thus making a collage of very interesting European stories.

Which of the world's museums do you find particularly inspiring?

In terms of its concept, the new museum in Marseille is very interesting. It incorporates a broader Mediterranean aspect in its presentation and thus many historical factors, influences and ways of life in the wider Mediterranean region. Some museums with non-European collections are also very innovative. One of these is the museum in Leiden in the Netherlands, which has a very rich collection, particularly from the colonial period, and it successfully interacts with the countries of origin of its collections. A new permanent exhibition is taking shape at the World Museum in Vienna (formerly known as the Museum of Ethnology Vienna),

where non-European collections will be presented from the viewpoint of the Austrians. This is the same principle that we follow in the SEM in the relation between Slovenians and other cultures. Among ethnographic museums with national collections, I do not have a favourite. If I had to choose one, it would be our SEM in Ljubljana.

Do you also cooperate with embassies?

We nurture contacts with foreign embassies in Ljubljana. These contacts are occasional and include celebrations of their national holidays, when we try to combine them with exhibitions and thematic events which display their cultures and characteristics. One such example is our cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Italy. A few years ago, we organised a very successful exhibition, 'Marimekko', in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Finland. As an example of best practice, I can also mention our cooperation with the Consulate-General of Nepal, with which we share important national identity themes such as mountains, mountaineering and alpine climbing. To commemorate the anniversary of the first successful climb of Mt Everest in 1953, we are planning to organise an exhibition and hold an official ceremony in cooperation with the Museum of Gorenjska.

What are you preparing for your visitors in 2014? Any new surprises?

Our central exhibition in 2014 will be dedicated to the magic of amulets. However, we want to continue to promote the exhibition on doors. We are planning a special exhibition to mark our cooperation with designer Mojca Turk, who has been involved in creating the visual image of the SEM for many years. We also plan an exhibition of illustrations by painter Huiqin Wang, which she is publishing in a book format; it will be dedicated to the life and work of Avguštin Hallerstein, a missionary and astronomer born in Mengeš, who worked at the Chinese imperial court in Beijing in the second half of the 18th century.

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Marking the 600th anniversary of the last enthronement of the Dukes of Carinthia

Commemorating an ancient national ritual

In the year ahead, 600 years will have elapsed since the last enthronement of the Dukes of Carinthia on Gosposvetsko polje (Zollfeld). This was an ancient Slovenian ceremony at the state level, not known elsewhere in Europe.

Photo: Archives of Lipa Maribor institution



The Prince's Stone is a carved stone, the upended base of a Roman pillar which originally stood in the vicinity of Karnburg. The name Prince's Stone is a translation of the German Fürstenstein.

The enthronement of the Dukes of Carinthia was a special feudal rite originating from the ancient enthronement of the Dukes of Carantania and continued until 1414. The last to be enthroned by a peasant was Duke Ernest the Iron.

To mark the 600th anniversary of the enthronement, the Slovenian World Congress prepared an introductory symposium, which was held under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, with speeches given

to large audience by several prominent Slovenian historians who have researched the enthronement ceremony, subsequent aspects of events in Austrian Carinthia and the attitude towards this part of the Slovenian ethnic territory.

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The history of the Slovene nation from the slavic colonisation to this day' is the title of the epic mural by Slavko Pengov in the vestibule of the Large Hall of the Slovenian Parliament.

Photo: Archives of National Assembly



Dr Peter Štih

The history and features of this unique ceremony were studied in depth by the Slovenian historian Dr Peter Štih, who is a professor of medieval history and auxiliary historical sciences at the Department of History of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana. Professor Štih is also an associate member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the author of a number of scientific and professional publications in the field of Slovenian medieval history.



The enthronement was a ceremony in which the Duchy of Carinthia symbolically surrendered power to the new Duke.

The Enthronement of the Dukes of Carinthia is associated with a special ceremony, which was not known in Europe. What is it about?

The enthronement was a ceremony in which the Duchy of Carinthia symbolically surrendered power to the new Duke. The ceremony, dating from the late Middle Ages, when it was first documented, was conducted in the following way: the enthronement took place on a hill named Krnski grad (Karnburg), where a peasant mounted the Prince's Stone and before him appeared a new Duke wearing rustic dress. After receiving affirmative responses in Slovene to the questions of whether the Duke was worthy of becoming a ruler, the peasant surrendered the Prince's Stone to him and symbolically handed over power. The second part of the ceremony was then held in the church of San Maria in Solio, where the new Duke received blessings at the mass; its third part continued at the Prince's Stone at Zollfeld, where the Duke bestowed the fiefs. The part of the ceremony held at the

Prince's Stone drew particular attention since it completely differed from the then customary feudal investiture. Because of its archaism, it was "unique" – as defined by humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II, after the discontinuance of the ceremony. Owing to his description, the ceremony also became known in wider circles of European humanist intellectuals.

How was it that the ceremony came to be held in the territory of the Duchy of Carinthia?

The ceremony took place in the territory of the Duchy of Carinthia because it originated from Slavic Carantania, to which the Duchy was a successor. And it is the Carantanian origin that explains the Slovenian part of the ceremony at the Prince's Stone. But at the time, the ceremony was not yet "unique", as similar rituals are known to have been held elsewhere in early medieval Europe, where rulers were enthroned on various stones.

How relevant do you think this ceremony is for Slovenian his-

tory, given that it took place in the territory of the Duchy of Carinthia (but originated from Carantania)?

The ceremony is interesting rather than important. However, it led to the birth of the myth in Slovenian historical interpretations that we are talking about the monument to the ancient Slovenian statehood and the ancient Slovenian democratic arrangement. This is also the reason why the Prince's Stone has become one of the most important Slovenian historical symbols. In the early Middle Ages, at the time of Carantania, the Slovenian identity did not yet exist, and Carantanians, although Slavs, were still not Slovenians; furthermore, the successor of this ceremony was not a Slovenian nation, at the time still non-formed, but the Duchy of Carinthia. Also, the ceremony does not constitute a symbol of democratic arrangement, since the Middle Ages and its political theories did not know any democratic concept and the power of the Duchy in Carantania was inheritable only within a single family.

ERNEST THE IRON WAS THE LAST CARINTHIAN DUKE TO BE ENTHRONED

One fact which merits a mention is that the ritual enthronement of the Dukes of Carinthia on the Prince's Stone was conducted in Slovene. This is evident from medieval written documents. The ceremony originates in the period of Carantania, the Slavic Duchy. Slovene, or rather an older version thereof, was the language spoken by the majority of the Carinthian

population, and in the late Middle Ages it became a prevailing language not only in the area of the ceremony but also in the wider territory. For this reason, the participants in the ceremony sang Slovenian songs and the enthroner received replies to his questions in Slovene.

Ernest the Iron was the last Carinthian Duke to be enthroned, this in 1414. An interesting fact is that his mother, Duchess Viridis Visconti, a daughter of the Duke of Milan and the wife of Leopold III, Duke

of Austria, Styria and Carinthia, spent the last years of her life in a small castle at Pristava nad Stično. In 1397, she instructed the monks to include her and her predecessors among the great benefactors of the monastery – among the so-called founders. The Duchess is buried in the basilica at Stična, where even today we can see the stone built into the wall bearing the interesting coat of arms of the Visconti family. Slovene museum of Christianity prepared a special exhibition about her.

One fact which merits a mention is that the ritual enthronement of the Dukes of Carinthia on the Prince's Stone was conducted in Slovene.

Photo: Personal archives



Anja Doležalek

Historian Anja Doležalek tells us how the 500th anniversary of the enthronement was marked in Slovenia 100 years ago.

In what way was the 500th anniversary of the last enthronement of the Duke of Carinthia marked 100 years ago? What were the plans and why were some of the planned events not held?

In the first half of 1914, Slovenians devoted much attention to the memory of the last enthronement of the Dukes of Carinthia 500 years before. From March onwards, numerous events – mostly lectures and celebrations,

festivities and pilgrimages – were organised by various societies and were therefore primarily limited to the local environment. The major celebration, estimated to have been attended by around 1,000 visitors, took place in April in Maribor. The planned all-day event in Ljubljana was to include a visit by representatives of Carinthian Slovenians, a people's gathering, a religious service and a great celebration, but this was cancelled after the assassina-

tion in Sarajevo and the resulting outbreak of the first world war. This was also the reason for cancelling the pilgrimage of believers from Carinthia to San Maria in Solio, including a visit to the Prince's Stone in Klagenfurt, which had earlier been rescheduled due to severe ethnic conflicts. The 500th anniversary actually and unexpectedly took place in March, owing to students in Ljubljana, who organised a memorial strike.

The 600th anniversary of the last enthronement of Dukes of Carinthia will be marked by a number of events. On the occasion of the Days of Slovenian Culture, the Lipa Maribor institution for public presentation of Slovenian Culture will organise various events to be held from 20 to 29 June 2014 on Dravsko polje.

THE 600TH ANNIVERSARY

The 600th anniversary of the last enthronement of Dukes of Carinthia will be marked by a number of events. On the occasion of the Days of Slovenian Culture, the Lipa Maribor institution for public presentation of Slovenian Culture will organise various events to be held from 20 to 29 June 2014 on Dravsko polje (the Drava field) between the towns of Maribor, Ptuj and Slovenska Bistrica. The events will start with the Midsummer's Eve celebration of the summer solstice at Vurberk

Castle, reaching its highlight on Statehood Day with the envisaged shooting of a documentary film entitled *Ustoličevanje in izvirna slovenska ljudovlada* (The Enthronement and the Original Slovenian Rule of Democracy). Every day an outdoor theatre performance will be held, with a staging of the enthronement, which will be the common thread running through performances marking the Days of Slovenian Culture. Furthermore, an exhibition has been envisaged with the announcement of the winners of an international painting com-

petition to illustrate and present the enthronement. The organisers also intend to issue a book, with the same title as the documentary film, providing a compilation of all principal historical sources on the enthronement and translations of the original texts into Slovene. In honour of the 600th anniversary of the enthronement of the Dukes of Carinthia, the Postal Service of Slovenia will issue a memorial stamp. In March 2014, in Velenje, the Slovenian World Congress will organise a lecture on the enthronement by historian Igor Grdina.

The Duke's Chair, or throne, is a translation of the German Herzogstuhl. The throne played an important part in the third part of the ceremony installing the Dukes of Carinthia: sitting on the stone, the new Duke bestowed fiefs to vassals.

Photo: Gojmir Anton Kos / Archives of National Gallery of Slovenia



The Slovenian Innovation Forum

Awards for the best innovators in Slovenia

There is no shortage of innovativeness in Slovenia: it is found predominantly in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, whose most innovative products and services are generally ecology-oriented.

In mid November, Ljubljana hosted the eighth Slovenian Innovation Forum. This is the central Slovenian event in the field of innovation and one which promotes the best and most innovative products, services and business models. This time, it presented 47 innovations, while the business-innovation and international part of the forum were complemented by lectures and round-tables.

Among the presented innovations were 82 products, 39 services and 6 business models. The majority of entries were received from micro, small and medium-sized companies (80) and individual innovators and innovator groups (34). Key criteria for the selection of the best innovations were: usability, innovativeness, potential impact and importance (relevance), practical feasibility, marketing attractiveness, social and economic effects, and adequacy of approach.

The winner of this year's forum was the ATech elektronika company for its Florian appliance. The second prize went to the RC eNeM

Novi materiali for their process of transparent glass staining with ecological pigments. Production of coloured transparent glass poses a major challenge, as with ever more stringent chemical and environmental legislation, there are more and more substances used in glass staining being declared unfit for use. In products that come into direct contact with food, the challenge is even greater. The third prize, for a suction unit in the capsule of vacuum cleaner, was awarded to the companies Dormel and Nela. Aiming to create appliances that are as quiet as possible, manufacturers of vacuum cleaners practically choke the suction unit with filters and liners. The designers here presented an innovative solution to this problem by arranging the way that the air flows through a capsule around the suction unit, thus effectively reducing noise.

FLORIAN

The best and most innovative product of this year's Innovation Forum was deemed to be Florian, a smart device that ensures

that the same amount of firewood keeps you warm for longer. This, a unique product for draught control in flue pipes, is an innovation of global importance. By installing Florian into their wood-burning stoves, users will save in two ways. First, they'll increase the efficiency of the stove by 20% and second, they'll achieve considerable savings in fuel consumption. The environmental aspect is not negligible either, since the installation of Florian means reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

In recent years, heating is undergoing change, with a general shift towards the use of renewable energy sources, mostly pellets, wood chips and firewood. This, among other things, is attributable to the development of electronic controllers that facilitate achieving high efficiency and ecologically adequate emissions. Based on their own research of the market and the perceived needs, the Slovenian company ATech elektronika concluded that there was plenty of room for innovation, particularly in wood-burning stoves, which so far have lacked an automatic control.

Born from the twin aims of cost-efficiency and environmental protection, Florian is a superior product and innovation that will change the habits of users. It is intended for end-customers, since its installation is simple and independent of the type of stove. A key advantage is in that it can be mounted on an existing wood-burning stove. In the European Union alone there are over 30 million wood-burning units whose efficiency could be improved by Florian, thus bringing cost savings to their users.

The best and most innovative product of this year's Innovation Forum was deemed to be Florian, a smart device that ensures that the same amount of firewood keeps you warm for longer. This, a unique product for draught control in flue pipes, is an innovation of global importance.

"The award for the best innovation at this year's Slovenian Innovation Forum is a confirmation for us that we are on the right track and an encouragement for the future. There's no doubt that you're going to hear a lot more about Florian and its benefits." Matija Geržina, Head of Sales at ATech elektronika

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



CEO and owner of the ROTO group of companies Štefan Pavlinjek

Growing the company's own knowledge and development

ROTO, a Slovenian manufacturing company from Murska Sobota, last year generated EUR 30 million in turnover, of which some two million remained as profit. This year, their sales have increased by two to three percent, while next year the company aims for ten percent growth. The Slovenian market accounts for 12 percent of the company's product sales with 190 employees – in total, the company employs 260 people. This year, they have made substantial investments in working capital; as a result of these strengthening measures, their aim for next year is to achieve significant growth.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



The Managing Director of ROTO GROUP d.o.o., **Štefan Pavlinjek**, was born in 1950 in Murska Sobota. In 1974 he opened the Kovinoplastika Pavlinjek workshop, where he manufactured plastic advertising boards and polyester products for agriculture. When the demand became too great for one person to meet, Mr Pavlinjek employed others and started using rotomoulding technology. Since then – which was sometime around 1985 – the company has used this technology to manufacture plastic products. Mr Pavlinjek is a successful entrepreneur, active in many institutions related to the economy. He is the main driving force behind tool, product and technology development in the company. He oversees the performance and introduction of new technological equipment and integrates it into the entire operations of the company. He and his wife, Irena Pavlinjek, are the joint owners of ROTO GROUP.

Mr Pavlinjek is a successful entrepreneur, active in many institutions related to the economy. At one time he was the President of the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia, while currently he is the President of the Supervisory Board of the Regional Development Agency Mura and a member of and the Slovenian representative in the Association of Rotational Moulders (ARM); he is also an organiser of partnering events and a sommelier.



Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA

Our own strong development and knowledge. In the global market, our products are sold under our own brand, and I truly believe that Slovenia must look for niche products and offer them to the world. Our advantage lies in small-size enterprises that can manage innovative products and global marketing.

What is the secret to your success?

Our own strong development and knowledge. In the global market, our products are sold under our own brand, and I truly believe that Slovenia must look for niche products and offer them to the world. Our advantage lies in small-size enterprises that can manage innovative products and global marketing. I learnt this from our neighbours – from the Austrians. I bought a competitor from them and learnt to sell around the world. Our company also markets products that go along with contemporary ecological trends. We started to develop our products 20 years ago in cooperation with Austrian partners, at a time when Slovenia was not so familiar with treatment plants. Well, over time we have outpaced them and reached the level of our systems being better and accompanied with European certificates. We have also equipped our new logistics centre this year, worth half a million euros; thus we have strengthened the part of production where we manufacture our products, since in this, as I've said, we see our future. If you have your own product, you perform autonomously on the market and, for sure, you can sell high enough to meet the plans.

You manufacture plastic products in 12 companies, four of

them manufacturing companies. You have increased the number of employees, taken over competitors, most recently the Italian firm Zero Attivo, now renamed Roto Attivo. A Slovenian company taking over a foreign one. This is commendable.

Slovenia has got many good companies and much potential.

You remain optimistic in these difficult times?

I certainly am. Companies that are privatised work very well and are strong in global terms.

How did you take over Zero Attivo, which was a manufacturer of boats, kayaks and canoes?

We had had our eyes on the company for two years, trying to take it over. When you have greater potential, more knowledge, more markets, it sometimes happens that a company, rather than going down, is offered to you. With this particular takeover, we have upgraded and expanded our offer of boats, kayaks and canoes, aiming to win a European market and to become the second largest manufacturer operating under this programme for some time into the future.

But how did you manage to bypass the crisis?

In 2008, we did feel the crisis, since we had products that were

designed to target the luxury market. Then we again turned to the development of our own products, to independent performance on the market, and already this year our efforts have resulted in gaining a strong position despite the domestic crisis. Remember that we also manufacture various parts for combine harvesters, tractors and snow groomers and fuel tanks for motorbikes, and in these areas there has been no slowdown in the Western market; on the contrary, their sales have stabilised and even begun to grow. This is another reason why we feel we are making progress. It is true, though, that there is no more 20 to 30 percent growth, as we had previously. We have also renovated three factories in the south. If the possibilities for expansion are provided in Slovenia, more demanding products will be manufactured here; if not, we will be forced to transfer more work to our other factories.

In which other countries are your manufacturing facilities located?

We have strong production in Croatia, where we manufacture boats, shafts and waste treatment plants for the Croatian market and partly also for the western market. Until recently we exported via Slovenia, but now, Croatia being an EU mem-

Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA



In 1996 he received the award of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia for exemplary business and entrepreneurial achievements, and in 1998 the Chamber of Craft and Small business of Slovenia awarded him its Silver Plaque and the title of Best Manager in South-Eastern Europe.

ber, we export directly from there to Switzerland and other countries. Another company is located in Serbia, manufacturing products for agricultural machinery. We also have a new factory in Vinica in Macedonia, where we manufacture flower pots and export them from Macedonia to Bulgaria, Turkey, Israel, Albania and Kosovo. This programme covers the surrounding countries. On the other hand, our company in Italy will be gradually transferred to Slovenia, since work in Italy is not economical. Of course, we would like to manufacture in Slovenia and have Slovenian production; we have kept a part of the brand that is known worldwide but we have also taken over the customers of this company and therefore expect that with their recreational boats we will penetrate and gain a proper position on the global market.

And what are the differences in labour costs?

The difference in manufacturing price between Croatia and Slovenia is about 15 percent. In Serbia, manufacturing costs are 20 percent lower and in Macedonia they are as much as 40 percent lower than in Slovenia. This is the reason why we were able to penetrate markets through the Macedonian company, because these markets do not respond to higher prices, and this was our goal. Certain products simply

cannot be manufactured in Slovenia because of the price. Consequently, we manufacture them in Macedonia and import them and sell them in Slovenia.

Your sales have reached markets worldwide, from America to North Africa to India, and you are trying to penetrate Russia and Azerbaijan.

We are indeed trying to break into the Russian market, which means working with project design engineers. We participate in tenders and provide services to their contractors and construction companies. In Azerbaijan there is currently a very large amount of construction, and, since the money comes from oil, they are not affected by the crisis. We are therefore trying to penetrate their market as a group of Slovenian companies – from those manufacturing windows and wood products to us who manufacture waste treatment plants. The equipment has already been purchased in Baku. And yes, we have also been making some sales in India and have started selling waste treatment plans in America.

How do you view the current situation, the sales of assets? What are the solutions in your opinion?

I am most concerned with the sales of assets that we have accumulated because of being good managers. We have not

privatised those companies that should be privatised. But the ones we have are well established in the European market. Slovenia will have to reduce costs in the public sector and back up the economy to kick-start growth. Only ten percent of Slovenians bring added value, and I do not see a country where ten percent would do to satisfy all needs in the country. My suggestion to the current government is to make cuts in the costs of administration. We need to stay within realistic frameworks; new loans do not lead anywhere, nor would they be fair to future generations. We need to clarify today how much money and what kind of financial injection we can afford to give an economy that has gone to the dogs. As the CEO of the Roto group, I would like to see that Slovenia has a reputation, is stable and has a regulated banking system. Because when abroad, it is of vital importance that you come from a country where internal affairs are in order.

Of course, we would like to manufacture in Slovenia and have Slovenian production; we have kept a part of the brand that is known worldwide but we have also taken over the customers of this company and therefore expect that with their recreational boats we will penetrate and gain a proper position on the global market.

The best-selling products under the WATER programme are our ECO BOX wastewater treatment plant, which is designed to treat wastewater from households of four to six people, and our rainwater tank, which holds 12,000 litres and is installed underground.



The Joys of Prekmurje in Tešanovci

Country Chocolaterie Passero

The Lipič-Passero Estate in the village of Tešanovci in the foothills of Goričko is an excellent starting point for exploring the wealth of Prekmurje. The Estate's winning cards are tradition, high-quality home-made food and sincere homeliness.

The Lipič-Passero-Sotošek family from Tešanovci can without any special immodesty sign their names under the presentation of their joint offer of the Joys of Prekmurje, in which they claim that while their estate is old, they are young. And furthermore, "From generation to generation, we have passed on diligence, hospitality and values. We take what we have acquired with love and care. We change to preserve, and like to pass it on. We know that it is good to share good things."



Photo: Archives of Passero

Their love story actually began with chocolate. When Tomaž was still courting Jasmina, he gave her chocolate pralines for Christmas which he had made especially for her. The thoughtful and heartfelt gift not only ignited her passion for him, but also the passion to make chocolate.

Guests and casual visitors to the Passero Estate will be treated to a diverse culinary offer. Those with particularly sensitive taste buds can enjoy Prekmurje ham, meat, pâtés, sausages, and spreads with unique flavours, pumpkin seed oil, home-made bread, juices, spirits and awarded wines that can be collected from the shelves of the small Farmers Shop Passero.

A winery, a small farmer's shop, a farmhouse inn, and a country chocolaterie that opened this year are all part of the farm, which has left a significant imprint on supplementary agricultural activities not only in Prekmurje, but throughout Slovenia. Their products are marketed under the Passero trademark. The Italian surname Passero means sparrow and serves as the logo for their trademark.

CHOCOLATE PRALINES KINDLED LOVE

The Country Chocolaterie Passero is part of their offer. The story of the chocolaterie is being written by two young people, Tomaž and Jasmina, who met while studying at the Biotechnical Faculty in Ljubljana, where they both graduated in food technology. Their love story actually began with chocolate. When Tomaž was still courting Jasmina, he gave her chocolate pralines for Christmas which he had made especially for her. The thoughtful and heartfelt gift not only ignited her passion for him, but also the passion to make chocolate. Imagination and playfulness came to the fore and interesting chocolate ideas were born. The first was a chocolate wedding, then the joint business venture and a country chocolaterie and, along the way, a decision to tell chocolate stories was made. Each new story becomes eternal.

Photo: Archives of Passero



Tomaž Sotošek and Jasmina Passero Sotošek

Photo: Archives of Passero



Tomaž and Jasmina told us that the chocolate pears with stalks were inspired by the importance of dried pears when sugar was unknown in these parts: "The pears are put into the box in the form of an alley, in memory of the pear-lined alleys which used to form our cultural landscape. These are beautiful and inspiring stories and we tell them in a way that also makes them delicious."

A CHOCOLATE STORY ABOUT PREKMURJE

Tomaž and Jasmina get the flavours for their masterpieces from Prekmurje, since it is the region they know best. Who could resist the rich flavour of home-made pumpkin seed oil? Pumpkins are an important product of the region. Housewives prepare various pumpkin soups, sauces and spreads, roast pumpkin, pumpkin pies, rolls, cakes and dumplings. On the other hand, Jasmina and Tomaž make chocolates with pumpkin filling. Pralines with pumpkin filling are really incred-

ible. And when I wonder how they make the filling so thick, they only smile mysteriously. That is their secret.

Nevertheless, the Chocolate Joys of Prekmurje, fruits of the imagination of both young people, are flavoured not only with pumpkin, but also jurka grapes, pears, elderflower and Traminer wine. They are particularly proud of their chocolate pears with stalks. Well, they really do melt in the mouth. It is not only the chocolate that is delicious; the pear is perfectly dried and still soft. These dried pears are not from a

shopping centre where, too often unfortunately, Slovenians buy vegetables from foreign producers. Here in Prekmurje, people are aware that Slovenian farmers have to be supported.

When I asked them if they missed the hustle and bustle of Ljubljana, since they are young, and Prekmurje is on the margins of Slovenia, they looked at each other and said, "Well, it is true that we have to take the car everywhere we go, but we are never bored anyway. If we are not making chocolate goodies, we help with other chores on the farm."

Tomaž and Jasmina get the flavours for their masterpieces from Prekmurje, since it is the region they know best.

Photo: Darinka Mladenović



All their products include their logo, a sparrow, which is the meaning of their surname Passero in Italian. If you take a closer look, you will see that the sparrow's wing is in the shape of a linden leaf, which symbolises Slovenia.

The taste of tradition

Slovenian potica

My first and earliest memory of holidays is associated with potica. As a child, I watched my mother carefully knead the dough, make the filling, and peacefully wait for the cake to rise, and I patiently waited until it was baked. Potica has always been some kind of a prize. It has

always been a synonym for festive events, and this certainly still holds true today. Generations of Slovenians have grown up experiencing the exciting festive expectation of potica, which is undoubtedly Slovenia's most festive dish.



There is something festively natural and traditional enshrined in the conscience of the Slovenian people. Now a new monograph *Potice iz Slovenije* (Poticas of Slovenia) has been published on this sweet (or salty) specialty, as the only in-depth monograph on this subject to date. Its author, the distinguished Slovenian ethnologist Janez Bogataj, Ph. D, has spent many years studying potica varieties. Potica is the second Slovenian national dish to have been studied so extensively, following the publication of the monograph *Mojstrovine s kranjsko klobaso* (Mastering the Art of Preparing Carniolan Sausage-Based Dishes) two years ago. Both monographs were published by Rokus Klett.

made in Slovenia's various gastronomic regions and the significance of potica in everyday life, since its earliest mention in the works of Slovenian writers of the 18th century.

The book also offers practical advice and recipes for making both sweet and salty potica varieties. Cake baking has always presented a challenge for housewives, as traditional recipes did not specify exact quantities, but only ingredients. Housewives were forced to use their own creativity, which resulted in a wide variety of culinary delights in all areas of Slovenia. Potica baking is associated with a series of minor yet very important details, including the obligatory preparation of the dish in a specially designed baking mould. Or, using the words of Valentin Vodnik, the author of the first cook book in the Slovenian language, "experience is the best teacher".

The book *Potice iz Slovenije* provides information on everything one wants to know about potica: from interesting facts about its origin and evolution, different potica varieties by gastronomic regions, details about potica

Potica dough can also be made with buckwheat, corn, rye or wholemeal flour. The most frequently used is buckwheat flour, whereas corn flour is used primarily to make the dough for špehovka or ocvirkovka (the bacon or crackling variety).



Potica is baked in clay or metal baking moulds. They are round with a cylindrical protrusion in the middle

Professor Janez Bogataj, Ph. D, the author and conceptual designer of this monograph, and the distinguished photographer Edi Berk have created a truly exceptional presentation of potica in Slovenia. Janez Bogataj spent years studying comprehensive archival materials and combined them with other pictorial sources to create a book that will be read with interest by many amateur bakers of potica, either sweet or salty, and by all connoisseurs and amateurs of Slovenian culinary heritage.

To mark the book's publication, we conducted an interview with its author, the distinguished Slovenian ethnologist Janez Bogataj.

What is the status of potica today? Does it have the EU protected food product status like several other typical Slovenian culinary products?

No one has yet embarked on a project to protect the geographical origins of potica, which I think is a great pity. The situation is perfectly clear, and the structure of this book also answers how and why it is important to gain protected status for potica. The subject of protection should be potica's basic recipe, with a selection of 40 typical and primary fillings, subdivided into sweet and salty varieties. This is the whole, but quite simple story. Essential for obtaining protected status are historical sources, which we certainly have. Potica was first mentioned by Primož Trubar, and a recipe for its preparation can also be found in the works of Valvasor. We already have experience in seeking protected status for food products on the basis of historical sources: in the case of Carniolan mead our application was based on Valvasor's records.

Potica through the year

In his book on potica, Janez Bogataj also provides a table containing twelve different potica varieties for each month of the year. In the past, people ate seasonal and locally produced food grown in their own gardens.

Here are twelve potica varieties for the twelve months of the year:

January: carob potica / February: potica with cracklings or bacon / March: potica with honey / April: potica with tarragon / May: željčevka or potica with chives / June: potica with cottage cheese / July: potica with poppy seeds / August: potica with carrots / September: potica with raisins / October: potica with dried plums or dried fruit / November: potica with Carniolan sausage / December: walnut potica

I see less difficulty in protecting potica than other food products.

Since cakes similar to potica can also be found in some neighbouring countries, could you please explain what makes the Slovenian variety so special?

One should take into account that we once lived in the same country with neighbouring peoples. There is a thin line between what customs we took from them and vice versa. It is more important that the cuisine of Danube basin area saw the development of a certain type of flat cakes that eventually evolved into regional variants. This was the case with potica. The region with the highest concentration of a particular food variety is also important, and in the case of potica, this is undoubtedly Slovenia.

The book also gives an account of some very atypical potica varieties, such as the vegan and the uncooked vegetarian potica. Does this mean that tradition is giving way to modern trends?

I do not think so; it is merely an expansion of the range of potica varieties. Man's knowledge of healthy food has changed and it is quite normal that his diet has been adapted to new findings. However, we should be careful here. We need to ask ourselves whether some innovations of the original potica, can still be called potica. It should not be the subject of some vague innovation without limits, as potica also has its own identity. Potica is genuine only in so far as it can be referred to as a roll of dough baked in a round, grooved or smooth baking mould, with a



Professor Janez Bogataj, Ph.D.

hole in the middle. This is still potica. The basic recipe for the dough is clear, while the filling can be either sweet or salty. Anything that does not fit this pattern is not potica. Even a cake baked according to this recipe in a flat baking tray cannot be called potica, but is referred to as baked štrukelj (rolled dumpling). It is true, however, that it is also referred to as potica in various regional dialects. A general feature of Slovenian cuisine is that there are different names for the same dishes and different dishes with the same name.

The baking of potica has always required specific skills, and today housewives seem to avoid learning them. Do you agree?

Making a good dough, not the filling, has always been the most important and the most difficult part of the process. The thick-

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Walnut potica



Poppy seed potica

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ness and the quantity of the filling should always be taken into account when making the dough. But, I should stress that it is the dough that is essential. However, there has been an advance in technology in this area, as well, and there are now two basic methods used to bake potica: warm and cold. In the warm method, the dough is left to rise in a warm environment and is then rolled out, spread with the filling, left to rise again and finally baked. The use of the cold method means that all ingredients are prepared cold. Yeast is added to the dough without allowing it to rise. It is then rolled out, spread with the filling, rolled up and left to rise slowly in the refrigerator overnight and not baked until the following day. Advances in cooking technology have also been made in potica baking. However, potica continues to be based on the

same dough recipe and has the same flavour; only the preparation technique is different. In my opinion, more apparent than the knowledge of how to bake potica is some kind of fear of its complex preparation. The way recipes are written has also contributed to dispelling such fears. Modern recipes are very detailed, which is good. But, as a result, much of the charm of creativity has been lost. The first cook book in the Slovenian language by Valentin Vodnik (1799) only specified the ingredients and rarely the quantities. Nowadays, all recipes include detailed ingredient information with precisely measured quantities. Older cook books left such things open, meaning that cooks were more creative. They were compelled to gain some experience themselves and use their own creativity. These are also the reasons why Slovenian regional

cuisine is so varied: Slovenian cook books never offered final recipes, but always left room for creativity by indicating, for the most part, only ingredients and not quantities.

One should also mention here the socio-economic aspect.

That's true. The nutrition of families varied depending on their financial standing. Thus we find differences between potica varieties. Potica has always been a festive cake that is not eaten every day. Our ancestors wanted to celebrate festive occasions with an abundance of food, but in line with their financial circumstances. In wealthier families, potica was filled with walnuts, cream and a variety of other ingredients. At any rate, people tried to create or imitate the atmosphere of festive abundance. In these circumstances, pisani kruh, marbled mixed-grain



Crackling potica



Sausage (kranjska klobasa) potica



Honey potica



Buckwheat potica with raisins

bread, which is typical of poorer areas (Dolenjsko), was invented when trying to imitate the various fillings by mixing different types of flour. Or, what is particularly interesting today, is potica with dried fruit, such as dried plums. There are also potica varieties with herb filling, such as chives, lovage, etc. They used to be typical of the poor, but today are served at the most distinguished social events, as they are in line with modern trends in nutrition.

So, potica is an important part of the Slovenian national heritage and identity. It has actually become a symbol of Slovenia.

Precisely so. I find it unfortunate that Slovenians are not sufficiently aware of its importance. A genuinely euphoric attitude towards potica is most frequently encountered outside of Slovenia's borders or in foreign tour-

ists visiting our country. We take it so much for granted that we are unable to comprehend the constants of our visibility and recognise the tangible components of our identity. And potica certainly is one such component. That is also why I decided to write this book, because I feel we lack education in self-awareness. I firmly believe that potica is one important component of self-awareness.

And what about consumerism? Does tradition give way to consumerism in Slovenia, as well?

Potica can be found in any shopping centre, but it is the way it is served that is important. Consumerism is a very aggressive phenomenon. It is a pity that we do not follow the example of some other region or country and its method of marketing local and regional traditional specialties. I find it regrettable that

potica is somehow pushed into the background in the shops, and that supermarket shelves stacked with potica sometimes have a gritty appearance. It is therefore no wonder in this world of consumerism that we prefer buying products that are not typical of our local environment. We should ask ourselves whether we want to give precedence to foreign brands or do something to preserve and enhance our own traditions. I have also noticed that potica has not been advertised at all so far during this holiday season. Do we really have no idea about traditional giving and how to celebrate in a different, specific way of our own? We could do more to promote potica. And it doesn't require much work. Small steps can lead to big changes. And, remaining faithful to our tradition will improve our international visibility.

Potica with tarragon tops Slovenia's gastronomic pyramid as the most distinctly Slovenian specialty. Slovenia is one of the few culinary environments in Europe and worldwide where tarragon is used in sweet pastry dishes.



Almond potica



Tarragon potica

Miklošovo senje

A story of Prekmurje craftsmen

Fairs are the oldest form of occasional mass trading where displayed goods are sold and purchased, appearing in Europe in the 10th century. The oldest records of fairs in Prekmurje date to 1366, when Lendava was granted the right to hold fairs, and from 1479, when a fair was held in Murska Sobota.

Fairs are important for producers. In the past, local craftsmen would make up a large part of the fair. Numerous potters, sometimes even up to thirty, would gather at each one; only a handful of potters came this year. Potters used to persuade people to buy their products by knocking on their dishes to convince them that they were well fired and did not break easily.



Photo: Darinka Mladenović

Miklošovo senje, a traditional small retail and handicrafts fair in the centre of Murska Sobota saw several thousand visitors in the morning alone. Various craftsmen were selling their products; the sellers and buyers were swarming around and the abundance of goods on sale seemed endless. The fair was also attended by Roma people.

Until 1932, Murska Sobota had seven small retail and livestock fairs; three were organised at random dates and four on fixed dates. Fašinsko senje was held one week before Shrovetide (usually in February), Čarno senje two weeks before Easter (March), Jurjevo senje four weeks after Easter (May), Ivansko senje on 24 June, Bertalansko senje on 24 August, Trezino senje on 15 October and Miklošovo senje on 6 December. Only the latter two have survived. We attended one that was visited by none other than 'St Nicholas' himself.

On Friday, 6 December, Miklošovo senje (St Nicholas Fair), a traditional small retail and handicrafts fair in the centre of Murska Sobota saw several thousand visitors in the morning alone. Various craftsmen were selling their products; the sellers and buyers were swarming around and the abundance of goods on sale seemed endless. The fair was also attended by Roma people.

LEGENDARY PREKMURJE SHOEMAKER

The oldest craftsman selling his wares at the fair for sixty years is a shoemaker from Rogašovci in Goričko who still makes all his shoes in the traditional way. He said that the fair used to be smaller, and that shoes, farm tools, pottery and clothes sold best. The products were displayed on the ground, as there were no stalls. The sale of sheepskin, cow pelts and leather was customary at this fair, and also of gingerbread products. The old shoemaker told us an anecdote about a woman who is now a regular client. Supposedly, she stole the first pair of shoes that she got from him and they argued. But after she had tried on his shoes, which were made from cow leather, she returned to apologise and pay for them, and has been buying his shoes ever since, either at the fair or at his workshop. When I asked him if he had always wanted to be a shoemaker, he began to laugh.

He said that after leaving high school, he had almost become a Protestant priest, in accordance with his father's wishes, but did not like the profession. He also wears only his own home-made shoes. "They are the warmest and softest, and custom-made," he says. He sells many shoes to various folklore groups. He also mentioned that in addition to Slovenians, he has clients in Croatia, Hungary and Austria. His son, a graduate in economics, lost his job recently and is now helping out in the workshop.

HONEY CAKES AND GINGERBREAD

Jožica Celec, a producer of honey and gingerbread, has been continuing this noble tradition for over two decades and is discovering new and modern creative possibilities and challenges in the rich heritage of honey production. Her work is connected not only with Prekmurje and North-eastern Slovenia; she also participates at various events and exhibitions

Photo: Darinka Mladenović



St Nicholas Fair is an opportunity for visitors to buy new decorations for their Christmas trees and nativity scenes, which have a place in every Slovenian home.

in Slovenia and abroad. The fair featured gingerbread makers who sold gingerbread with dark and white chocolate, honey cakes with pumpkin seed and unusual flavours like chilli or pepper, honey cakes in the shape of men or women, and gluten-free honey cakes with cinnamon, cloves or ginger. Most honey cakes are red and heart-shaped and decorated with love poetry and greetings, or in the shape of St Nicholas and his companions, the Krampuses, and gingerbread dolls.

In addition to the Celec family, gingerbread makers from Croatia also came to the fair. "We are in the EU now, and it is not difficult to come." I spoke to a woman from Croatian Zagorje in Slovenian; only every third or fourth word was in her language. The Zagorje dialect is very similar to Slovenian. She told me that it was her first time at the fair, but not the last. "Things are selling mar-

vellously in spite of the recession," she said. I asked her if the inscriptions on the gingerbread hearts for Christmas tree decoration were in Slovenian. Somewhat embarrassed, she told me that she had been unable to do that this year, but certainly would next year. "My granddaughter is learning Slovenian in school. She says she is going to marry a Slovenian boy," she laughed heartily. Well, who knows? The paths of love are mysterious. But she will certainly be able to make the most beautiful gingerbread heart for her chosen one with her Zagorje grandmother's recipe.

TO KEEP WARM IN WINTER

"Buy a sheepskin to keep you warm in winter. You can choose between snow white or light honey white colour. Only 20 euros. You will not find a better bargain anywhere else. Sheepskins! And brown cow hides for

the floor. We also have fur caps and sheepskin headbands. Buy, buy, buy!" This is how a tanner from Prekmurje addressed passers-by. I asked him if he'd had any buyers. "Not many. It was better a few years ago. The economic crisis has left its mark, you see," he explained. I complimented him on his products and was tempted to buy one of his lovely fur caps, but decided to do that next time.

The crowds gathered around stalls selling mulled wine and sausages with horse radish. Everyone said that the sausages were excellent and that wholemeal bread and horse radish make a perfect combination. The mulled wine was irresistible; it tasted of cinnamon and was very sweet. It was nice to get warm when the cold had already reached my feet.

Clay wine cups are made in Prekmurje. We could say that Prekmurje is the home of pottery in

The mulled wine was irresistible; it tasted of cinnamon and was very sweet. It was nice to get warm when the cold had already reached my feet.

Shoemakers in the past were selling their products always on the floor. In the left photo: winter 1950 In the right photo: the oldest shoemaker from Rogaševci in Goričko region.

Photo: Jože Kološa - Kološ/Pomurski muzej



Photo: GCO



Photo: Danika Mladenović

St Nicholas and children at Mikloševo senje in Murska Sobota.

Suddenly, the crowd swelled even more, and we were barely moving. I can see them. Little white angels and big black frightening Krampuses. Their procession seems endless. People make way for them; children tremble at the sight of the men in black and hide behind their mothers. And then comes St Nicholas.

Slovenia. In certain regions, soil mixed with clay was the source of the basic raw material. Pottery guilds were organised in many Prekmurje villages and several tens of potters sometimes worked in a single village. The villages particularly known for their many potters were Filovci, Kobilje, Bogojina, Tešanovci, Lončarovci, Sebeborci and some others. Prekmurje is known for black ceramics, which are not glazed and usually not decorated. Useful dishes and containers were made, such as plates, pitchers, baking dishes, and jugs known as pütre. The craft of pottery can nowadays be seen only in the Pottery Village of Filovci and in Pečarovci in Goričko. As a point of interest, several tens of working pottery workshops remain in the village of Magyarszombatfa, only a stone's throw from the Hungarian border.

EMBROIDERY AND METAL

Several Hungarian traders came to the fair, not only to sell pottery products, but also embroidery. A woman from Hungary does not speak Slovenian or English, but she has been selling her embroidery at the fair for many years. This is St Nicholas Fair, so handicrafts people must be there. People in this region still appreciate traditional handicrafts. "A horse-shoe is a must have. It's for good luck. For health and fertility," the blacksmith called to his potential customers. "I've been a blacksmith for as long as I can remember. It's nice to come to Mikloševo senje where you show your products; many people buy a copper candlestick as a New Year's gift. Blacksmiths are known to bring good luck. And you get to meet acquaintances you haven't seen for a year," he says, explaining his annual visits to the fair.

ARRIVAL OF ST NICHOLAS

Suddenly, the crowd swelled even more, and we were barely moving. I can see them. Little white angels and big black frightening Krampuses. Their procession seems endless. People make way for them; children tremble at the sight of the men in black and hide behind their mothers. And then comes St Nicholas. The good man. "Have you been good, children?" he asks them. At first, there is silence, and then bashful voices reply, "Yes." St Nicholas smiles and says, "That's good. That's why I came to the senje in Murska Sobota this year, because I know that good people live here."

Source: The historical background on fairs in Prekmurje was summarised from a paper by Mateja Huber from a symposium in Petanjci, entitled "Fairs in Prekmurje in the First Half of the 20th Century".



Photo: Danika Mladenović

Fairs were always social events. Many folk musicians, also young ones, performed at this year's fair. An accordion is always found at festive occasions in Slovenia.

Christmas and New Year poll on attitudes towards tradition

We asked Slovenians abroad

It is important to maintain tradition, and many Slovenians who do not live in the homeland still nurture these Slovenian customs. But of course they have also adopted foreign habits from the environments in which they live. So how do you Slovenians who live abroad spend the upcoming holidays? How did you get used to living in communities in which you have lived all your lives or to which you have just moved? How do “Slovenian holidays” differ from those in Australia, America or the Czech Republic?

We asked and here are the answers.

CHRISTMAS IN AUSTRALIA - WE BECAME EACH OTHERS' FAMILIES AND NATIONS

Looking back on my family's fifty years in Australia, I see that the highlights of our lives were always the Christmas holidays. We live in an English-speaking multicultural country with many diverse traditions, so we rejoiced all the more over the yearly gatherings of Slovenian families for Christmas. Every year, my family invited friends to celebrate Christmas Eve with a BBQ under our linden tree in Canberra. The celebration usually ended with us going to a midnight mass. At the beginning, there were only Slovenians, but gradually our children brought their friends, wives, husbands and children. While the young ones chat mostly in English, we older ones remember our home, our youth and the things we

shared during the years; we are happy to speak Slovenian. At the beginning, we joined friends for Christmas Day itself, but as our families grew Christmas Day became a family celebration. On Boxing Day, we all usually went fishing together. My husband Joe was the main fisherman, so he invited friends to enjoy a camping experience with us for a few days along the Tumut River. I cooked trout straight from the cool clear river on an open BBQ while other women prepared delicacies of their kitchens; the delicious food was washed down with delicious wines and beer. There was usually story telling ending with singing and even dancing late into the night. We made trips into other Snowy Mountain resorts, but Tumut remained our base.

We returned to Canberra on the 30th of December. We needed



a day to go to a hairdresser and buy new outfits for the New Year's Eve dance. Nobody else took much notice of us, so we tried to shine for each other. These gatherings and celebrations helped us, especially during the early years, to overcome homesickness and loneliness – we became each others' families and nations.

Cilka Zagar, teacher

CHRISTMAS IN SHORT SLEEVES

As a Slovenian American living in northern California, a land of good wine – writer Jack London called it “Moon Valley” – 40 miles north of San Francisco, I certainly live a life more fulfilling than the residents of other states of America. That is because I know that the Christmas holidays will find me wandering around in short sleeves. The roads may be wet, but they will never be icy. December is a month of many parties with friends, both from private and business circles. Banks, shops, companies... everybody wants to thank you for being their client before the end of the year. Skiers spend their holidays in the

Sierras range, where ski slopes are good. Our family spends a lot on Christmas because everybody expects presents. We put up a Christmas tree in our living room and place beautifully wrapped presents under it to be opened on Christmas morning. We Christians go to Midnight Mass and celebrate Jesus, while other religious groups such as Muslims, Buddhists and Jews, who make up almost half the population here, do celebrate Christmas, but more for commercial rather than religious reasons. Christmas Day brings together families who socialise over full tables. Christmas is indeed not a time of thrift. On Christmas Day we go into the yard to play American Foot-

ball, our beloved sport, and give money to those without much luck in life.

Jože Udovč, entrepreneur



These gatherings and celebrations helped us, especially during the early years, to overcome homesickness and loneliness – we became each others' families and nations.

A PLACE WHERE FATHER CHRISTMAS WEARS SHORT PANTS

Christmas in Adelaide is much more than just celebrating on the day of December 25. The Christmas season here begins on the second Saturday of November when the annual Adelaide Christmas Pageant weaves its magic through the main streets of the city. The pageant was first held in 1933 as a means to lift people's spirits during the Great Depres-



sion, and it has been lifting people's spirits ever since. Over the past 80 years, the Adelaide Christmas Pageant has grown to be the largest parade of its type in the world with about 400,000 people lining the city streets, watching a wonderland unfold before their very eyes along the 3.3 kilometre route. Once the Adelaide Pageant has happened, the Christmas season gets into full swing with local suburbs holding their own Christmas parades, people putting up Christmas decorations and lighting the outside of their houses; the best example of the latter is the Christmas Lights of Lobethal, just over 40 kilometres east of Adelaide city. The Christmas display at the South Australian Brewing company along the River Torrens, Christmas carol concerts in parks, Christmas parties and, of course, retailers are in full Christmas mode. In the Slo-

venian community in Adelaide, which was first populated with Slovenians in large numbers after World War Two, Christmas is celebrated with Miklavzevanje at Slovenian Club Adelaide and the Slovenian Catholic Church. In addition, in December, Slovenian Club Adelaide hosts a Christmas dinner with Slovenian Christmas carols sung by Slovenian Choir Adelaide and the Slovenian Church has a Christmas church service and carols sung by the Slovenia church choir. As we live in the Southern hemisphere, our Christmas is experienced in summer with temperatures that can approach 40 degrees Celsius. Yes, our Father Christmas can be dressed in short, and instead of arriving on a sleigh he can come surfing the waves on a surfboard!

Adrian Vatovec, (born in Australia but "made in Slovenia"), music producer

CHRISTMAS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC WITH SLOVENIAN FOOD

Although we traditionally celebrated Christmas in Slovenia with our families, the Slovenian restaurant Nenasyta, which we opened last year, made us stay in the Czech Republic, and this year it will be no different. The time before the New Year is, in fact, our busiest period. This is when we prepare business presents – Nenasyta is a venue for family and business celebrations – and visit Christmas markets. Although we have quite a number of staff, this is a key period for us so we will be present in person. We will spend Christmas Eve at home, decorating the tree, lighting a fire in the fireplace and having a good dinner followed by a toast with vintage wine. New Year's Eve will be taken up with work, though, as Nenasyta will host a celebration for an organised group. Our company Foodadventure, which offers top-class Slovenian delicacies in the marketplaces of Prague, will have a busy December, with numerous events being organised.

First we will attend the Christmas Market at Drahenice Castle,

organised by the aristocratic family of Lobkowicz. This year's event takes place under the auspices of the Rotary Club Prague Bohemia, which joined forces with the Sluníčko pro děti (Sun for Children) foundation. The proceeds of the event will go to inhabitants of the Czech Republic suffering hardship. At the Christmas Market of Advent Trees in the Dolní Břežany suburbs of Prague we will serve Slovenian winter stews and other spoon food, as well as walnut potica for those with a sweet tooth. All of these markets will sell the produce of Czech farmers, while the Slovenian stall will offer delicacies from Slovenian farms and cook traditional winter food – jota stew with pickled turnips and kranjska klobasa sausages, Szegedin goulash, sarma rolls, bograč stew... and outstanding wines of Slovenian winemakers.

On Štědrý den (Christmas Eve), people are supposed to fast until the evening, when an abundant dinner is served. Parents promise to their children: »Kdo o Štědrý den nebude celý den jíst, uvidí večer zlaté prasátko« (If you do not eat all day on Christmas Eve, you will see a golden

piglet in the evening.) No traditional Czech Christmas feast will be perfect without "Kuba" – barley with porcini, fish soup and carp with potato salad. After dinner, Ježíšek (baby Jesus) brings presents. This is followed by the film Tři oříšky pro Popelku (Three Nuts for Cinderella) based on the tale by Czech writer Božena Němcova and directed by Václav Vorlíček, which has been broadcast by Czech television every Christmas Eve for over 30 years. Although the Czechs are mostly atheists, they attend the Midnight Mass with their families.

Especially at Christmas and the pre-New Year time, Czechs like buying our products and indulging in them. Czechs are generally very fond of Slovenians and Slovenia; they are happy to leaf through catalogues about the charms of our country and sometimes visit Slovenia on our recommendation, too.

Meti Kosec and Primož Škerjanec – Slovenians who opened a restaurant with authentic Slovenian food in Prague



THE OLD DAYS WERE BETTER

I live in the centre of Buenos Aires, some distance from the homes of pre-war and post-war Slovenian immigrants; the closest such place is the old institution from 1870 that later changed into a Yugoslav establishment, and has retained that name to this day.

The old days were better for me. We attended Christmas and Easter ceremonies, Easter food blessings and Midnight Masses. After the Argentinian crisis caused by international capitalism in the late 1980's, the city became dangerous, especially on the outskirts where most post-war Slovenian immigrants live. This means that the number of people attending the ceremonies in the central Slovenian House, the headquarters of the Zedinjena Slovenija (Unified Slovenia) organisation, which also has a theatre or multi-purpose hall, a church and offices and offers secondary education

courses, is smaller from year to year.

These days – I do not go to masses in Argentina, only in Slovenia on exceptional occasions – I always attend the early “Midnight Masses”. Although the weather at Christmas is hot, the rituals are European, which means that the food is suited for the cold climate and Santa Clauses sweat heavily under their red garments, caps and beards. Christmas trees are decorated with cotton wool to simulate snow. On Christmas Eve I go for a meal at my mother's – my father died 20 years ago; sometimes we are also joined by the family of my sister, whose husband is Slovenian, too. Two of their children now live in Ljubljana. My mother lives not far from the Slovenian House, in a quarter inhabited by people from Primorska who fled to Argentina between the two World Wars to escape the Italian terror and poverty. After visiting

my mother I attend a ceremony or a mass, where I meet fewer people each time, which is sad in a way. I nevertheless stick to this habit – let it be until it lasts! The mass, which is held in Slovenian, is always accompanied by a choir. On the following morning people hold Christmas receptions in their homes, which I sometimes attend but not very often. Christmas receptions – masses followed by breakfast – are quite well-attended, and people gather in clubs, which are the centres of the communal life of Slovenians.

Rok Fink, economist



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CHRISTMAS IN THE FAR NORTH

The population of northern Europe, which is predominantly Lutheran, devotes a lot of attention to Advent – the preparation for Christmas. This generally quiet period is filled with events. Advent begins on 1 December, when lights on giant Christmas trees are lit in town and village squares. This is not a family event but a communal ritual: families bring their children, choirs sing Christmas carols, there are various performances and children get a lot of presents. Dancing around the Christmas tree and singing Christmas carols confirm the beginning of Advent. Garlands and golden ribbon draped on the tree originate from the Scandinavian myth about beautiful fairy Huldra, with her long golden hair, who conceals a cow tail under her clothes. You have to be kind to her, or else she might take severe revenge. Another important day is St Lucy's day, 13 December, when processions of white-clad children take place at schools. They are headed by Lucy, bearing a wreath of light on her head (formerly a wreath of real candles). Children sing the well-known

song Santa Lucia, and offer Lucy's biscuits previously baked in the school kitchen.

In the Advent period, managers invite their employees to a Christmas feast (julebord). Food is precisely defined in the Christmas period. Advent is the time for modest food while Christmas dinner is rich. The dinner starts with mashed swede followed by lamb ribs (pinnekjøtt) and an indispensable lutefisk, stockfish adored by some and loathed by others. There is even a club for those who love this lye-soaked fish, similar to the club for sautéed potato lovers in Slovenia. Every true Christmas feast must include the following: ribbe – roasted pork belly, julepølse – pork sausage with red cabbage and potatoes, medisterkaker – fried minced pork meat and flour patties, and countless kinds of biscuits, cakes and other desserts. My favourite is called Trollkrem – mousse made of cranberries, whipped egg whites and sugar. Scandinavians do not forget that elves deserve a Christmas treat, too, so they make them porridge and place it outside, out of reach of cats and mice. In the old days,

housewives throwing away cooking water first scared away the elves by yelling “Hoosh, hoosh!”, and only then poured the hot water out in the yard.

One thing, however, has remained unchanged since the end of the war: Norway always presents Britain with a huge Christmas tree as a way of thanking for the British help for Norwegian refugees during the war. Each year the tree, which stands in Trafalgar Square, preaches “Peace on Earth”.

Ida Pedersen, translator living in Oslo



France Prešeren

A Toast

A Toast, France Prešeren,
Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič,
Publisher: Mladinska knjiga,
2013, Ljubljana

France Prešeren (3 December 1800 – 8 February 1849) has been considered Slovenia's greatest poet for a century and a half. His poetry is a match for that of all other great poets around the world. The day of his death is marked as a Slovenian Cultural Holiday, and the seventh stanza (God's blessing on all nations,) of his most famous poem, "Zdravljica" ("A Toast"), has been the text of the Slovenian anthem since 1989 and of the national anthem since 1991. Prešeren wrote "A Toast" in the form of a social drinking song in the autumn of 1844. It was first published in *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (Agricultural and Artisan News) in 1848. The poem is patriotic and tolerant towards other nations. It first toasts its own nation, the Slovenians, then all nations of the world, and in the final stanza, all good hearts. We selected few stanza for you.



To accept an unusual challenge and publish a picture book on the topic of the Slovenian anthem was a courageous act, which Mladinska Knjiga Publishing House undoubtedly justified by inviting Damijan Stepančič, the experienced illustrator, to illustrate *Zdravljica* (A Toast). The analytical approach to artistic interpretation typical of the frequently awarded Stepančič can be seen in the entire editorial design of the sensitive homeland theme. It is almost a miniature historical textbook, equipped with stylised portraits of prominent Slovenians chronologically and thoughtfully intertwined from stanza to stanza with their personal fates and placed in their geographical spaces with the corresponding symbols of Slovenian identity.



Damijan Stepančič was born on 22 May 1969 in Ljubljana. After graduating from the Secondary School for Design and Photography in Ljubljana, he continued his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts. After two years at the department of design and realising that, when faced with fundamental artistic problems, he preferred the classical approach, he decided to continue his studies at the department of painting in 1991. He graduated in 1996 under Prof. Gustav Gnamuš with a series of paintings. He has been particularly active in the illustration of books for youth and also of periodicals. In addition to painting, he expresses himself through comics, animation and puppets. He received the 2013 Kristina Brenkova Award for the original Slovenian picture book, *Zdravljica* (A Toast).

France Prešeren and Čopova street

Capital's public spaces as a representative space for all citizens



Photo: Archives of Municipality of Ljubljana

Čopova ulica, which in the second half of the 70's became one of the first pedestrian zones in Slovenia, is one of the oldest streets of Ljubljana. It connects the main urban thoroughfare, the former Emona cardo, with the main one of the five medieval entrances to the town.

This is what was behind the decision to select those verses of the greatest Slovenian poet France Prešeren, which in addition to the profound substantive message also denote Slovenian statehood. As a place of constitutional significance and the country's capital city, Ljubljana definitely calls for suitable symbolic representation in the urban area. We believe that in this way too, we can contribute to raising awareness of the capital's public spaces as a representative space for all citizens, and thereby upgrade the cultural and linking role of the city, which should go beyond the role of political and administrative centre of the country. In contrast to other state symbols, the selected seventh stanza (national anthem) is the very state symbol with which the majority of citizens can identify.

The message of serenity and peace in the Slovenian national anthem is universal and all-embracing; in addition to bringing together all Slovenians and citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, it also addresses and brings together other visitors to the city. With its systematic expansion of pedestrian zones to renovated streets and squares as well as through

the comprehensive renovation of the river banks with new bridges, the city of Ljubljana ranks among those European cities that are aware of the importance of quality public urban areas for the democratic life of the city. Well-arranged and maintained urban space that is open to everyone at all times is a quality that makes common life in cities more pleasant and represents the ideal of an open and democratic society. The reasoning behind the prestigious biennial prize – the European Prize for Urban Public Space, intended to encourage the creation, revitalisation and improvement of public space – won by Ljubljana in 2012, stated that the condition of public space is a good indicator of the healthy development of society and urban management.

Čopova street is also part of Ljubljana's famous promenade connecting the old town with the central Tivoli Park. During the post-earthquake reconstruction of the city, architect Maks Fabiani placed Prešeren's monument at the end of the street, thereby creating a cityscape that epitomises views of the city. In planning the comprehensive renovation, the place from which this symbol first comes into view seemed the most appropriate place to be commemorated with the poet's verses, so as to connect it experientially and substantively to the square and its monument. Furthermore, this is one of the most popular meeting points in the city, and the street itself is one of the most famous urban areas in the whole country.

Fran Levstik's legendary story

Martin Krpan as Slovenian superhero

The story of Martin Krpan z Vrha (Martin Krpan from Vrha) saw the light for the first time in 1858, when it was published in the literary journal *Slovenski glasnik*; its author was Fran Levstik, a poet, writer, literary critic and pioneer of the Young Slovene

political movement. Although the story initially received a poor response, decades later Martin Krpan became a hero of almost mythical proportions with a significant influence on the development of national awareness.

Photo: STA



The legendary illustrations of Martin Krpan were created by painter Hinko Smrekar.

Even today, Martin Krpan is closely associated with the national affiliation. The middle of the 19th century thus witnessed the birth of Martin Krpan, a character who has become a fundamental and timeless Slovenian superhero, deeply rooted in the cultural awareness of every Slovenian.

THE STORY OF MARTIN KRPAN

Let's start from the beginning. Who is Martin Krpan? Well, he's a very well known character to all Slovenians but maybe completely unknown to the foreign reader. Levstik's Krpan is a stalwart, a simple but unique countryman from the village of "Hilltop by the Holy Trinity", who made his living by smuggling English salt. Because of his actions, he ran into many problems with the authorities. One day, Krpan accidentally meets the imperial carriage and

makes way for it by simply lifting up his mare and moving her aside. The Emperor was thus taken aback by Martin Krpan's strength. A year later, the Emperor summoned Krpan to the royal Viennese court, as Vienna was being terrified by Brdavs, a brutal warrior who ruthlessly murdered everyone who came his way. Simple but clever, not at all conceited, such as he was, Krpan easily defeated Brdavs. He did his job. Now he only had to provide himself with a permit for carrying on with the transportation of salt and head home with his mare. Martin Krpan is a simple smuggler of salt, with a sober and clear mind, who in a tactful but his own unique way rescues the Emperor and Vienna from the giant Brdavs. For his work, Krpan was not amply repaid; instead, he faced ingratitude and ridicule, but he dealt with this in his own distinctive way.

In terms of national awakening, this is an essential aspect of Levstik's story, which was of major importance, also influencing the awakening of Slovenian national awareness. To make the story more powerful, Levstik put it in the mouth of an old farmer and so added the simple colourful narration of a story-teller, thus bringing it even closer to the people.

Ever since its birth and publication, Levstik's story has roused Slovenian readers and literary critics alike. It has made a truly remarkable impact. As noted by literary historian and researcher of Slovenian literature Anton Slodnjak, with his tale of Martin Krpan Fran Levstik wanted to create an artistic model for theoretical debate, since Martin Krpan is a culmination of the folklore narrative mode. In Slodnjak's opinion, Levstik's aim was

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to implement his literary programme and show what type of prose should be written for Slovenians.

A HERO AND A SMUGGLER

The story of Martin Krpan is a Slovenian story about the fight between a simple and little man and a giant. Martin Krpan is a man of the people, who on account of his physical strength and lightness of heart becomes a real and authentic Slovenian superhero. It was not until the end of the 19th century, however, that the reaction to the story became more visible. And Krpan's popularity really began to rise only in the twentieth century. Publishers issued the story in a variety of forms – from picture books for children and adults to various collections and editions. Bojan Baskar (ethnologist, 2008) wrote that a real explosion of Krpan's popularity occurred in the period before Slovenia's independence. The image of Krpan embodying the Slovenian na-

tional character then spread from academic circles to the general public.

Thus, in our consciousness, Martin Krpan is perceived as more than just a simple man with extraordinary strength. He is one of those heroes of Slovenian literature who are distinguished by courage, dignity and modesty and who have been entirely internalised by Slovenians. There are many folk stories associated with Krpan's paths and strength. In folk tradition, we can still find stories about the whereabouts of his homestead at the Hilltop by the Holy Trinity near Pivka and Postojna, and this is just on the road that led to Trieste and on which the traffic in salt was most busy.

NATIONAL DERIVATIONS

Today we can find a wide variety of offshoots – Martin Krpan lent his name to numerous products and institutions, including com-

petitions for the strongest Slovene. The Sečovlje Saltpans also marketed its brand and story of salt on the image of Martin Krpan. Where it smells of power, there's Martin Krpan!

It is also interesting to note that prior to Slovenia's accession to the European Union, even various debates were held, mainly political ones, in which Vienna was compared to Brussels. The character of Martin Krpan is also attractive in terms of national awareness. Krpan is a hero raising national awareness and affiliation. Also its author, Fran Levstik, was a fervent patriot and a great Slovenian, politician and linguist. To the very end, he remained true to his words, which he wrote in his play entitled Tugomer: "Be tough and merciless, a man of steel, when defending the honor and justice of the nation and of its language! (Trd bodi in neizprosen, mož jeklen, kadar je braniti časti in pravde narodu in jeziku svojemu!)"

Fran Levstik was a Slovenian poet, playwright, literary critic, journalist and pioneer of the Young Slovene political movement. With his literary works entitled *Popotovanje iz Litije do Čateža* (A Journey from Litija to Čatež) (1858), *Napake slovenskega pisanja* (Mistakes in Slovene Writing) and other critical essays, he formulated a literary programme that in the 19th century provided a basis for Slovenian literary creation. To set an example for his literary principles and guidelines for prose writing, Levstik wrote a story of Martin Krpan *z Vrha* (Martin Krpan from Vrh). He was born in 1831 in Dolnje Retje near Velike Lašče.

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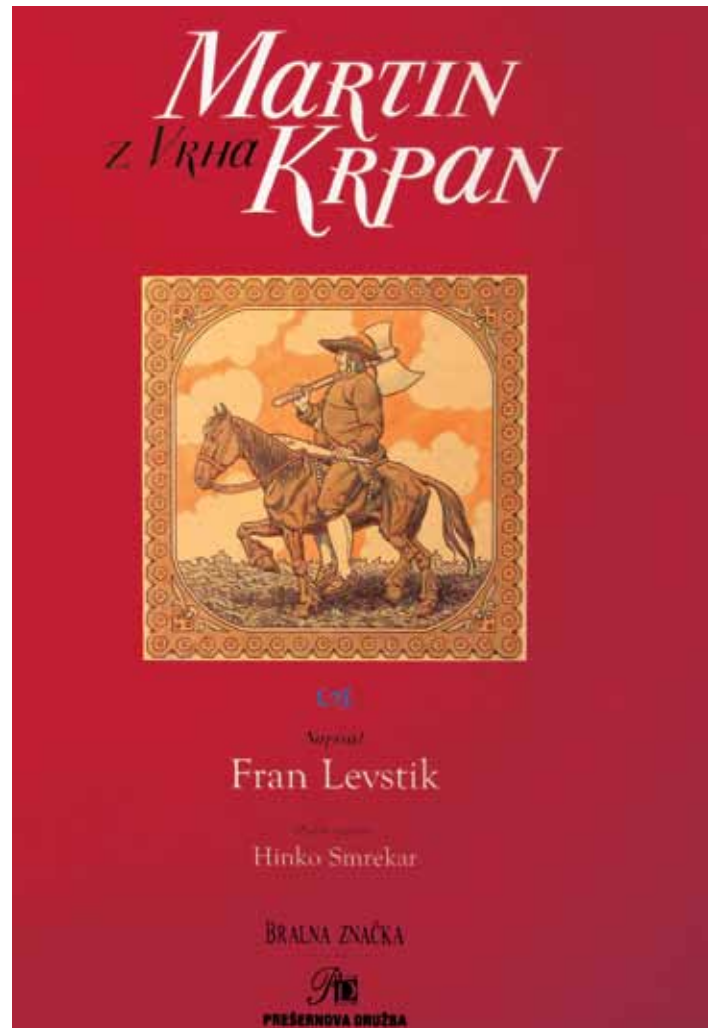


Photo: STA



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SALT SMUGGLING

The interpretations of Krpan's salt smuggling are particularly interesting. In the period of Martin Krpan, Austria did not permit any buying and selling of salt, nor did it abolish the monopoly of domestic salt originating from Trieste until as late as 1819, when free trade was introduced. This led to a widespread smuggling of salt, and Levstik's idea for the story of Martin Krpan came from such smugglers. This is one interpretation. Another interpretation suggests that Krpan peddled English salt or saltpetre, which was used for making explosives.

KRPAN TODAY

Today Martin Krpan has become topical in light of the difficult situation in which Slovenia has found itself and the strength that our country has to show to overcome this situation. Levstik's Krpan is thus exactly what we need – resilience, agility, resourcefulness

and determination. Precisely because Martin Krpan is a simple man, his character is an even stronger inspiration to the nation and its power. In this respect, the parallels between a simple literary hero and his political dimension are of significant relevance.

MARTIN KRPAN ON STAGE

In art, Martin Krpan is currently a very significant figure, also because the story is being staged at the Slovene National Theatre Drama (SNT Drama) in Ljubljana. Starting this month, SNT Drama will present the most updated theatre performance of Martin Krpan. With this performance, it seeks to bring the story of Martin Krpan closer to younger generations by introducing a video animation. The performance is aimed at children from 4 to 14 years as well as the older audience – the play is timeless and can thus be enjoyed by everyone, regardless of age. The voice of Martin Krpan is performed by actor Jernej Šugman. In creating the play, di-

rector Janez Burger explored the idea of how to bring Krpan and the play closer to “the children growing up in an overabundance of audio-visual sensations – from the TV and cinema to the internet and video games and other applications in smart phones – while not losing the most important feature of the play – the magic of narrating a story about a primary Slovenian superhero.” The basic feature of the performance is a narrator who is telling Levstik's story about Martin Krpan with recorded dialogues of all the characters that appear therein. Using animations and other audio-visual sensations, the narrator's story spreads across the stage and in the interaction with the narrator forms a compact world of contemporary audio-visual narration: “In this way, we wanted to create a warm and amusing performance to bring the story of our hero from the 19th century to the children from the 21st century,” Janez Burger explains.

Scene from the theatre performance of Martin Krpan at SNG Drama Ljubljana.

Using animations and other audio-visual sensations, the narrator's story spreads across the stage and in the interaction with the narrator forms a compact world of contemporary audio-visual narration.

Alfred Nobel and His Spendthrift Lady

Sofija Hess' Tea Party

To honour the memory of Alfred Nobel, his bust was unveiled in Celje in October. On the occasion, the local tourist society presented a short cultural programme and its latest production and a new tourist product, the Sofija Hess' Tea Party.

It is not widely known that Alfred Nobel fell fatally in love with a woman from Celje, Sofija Hess, the oldest daughter of Heinrich Hess, a renowned merchant of the town. After arriving from Moravia, the family settled in the Quarter House in Celje, where Albert Brunner, the first director of the zinc factory established in 1873, also found his wife Amalija, Sofija's younger sister.

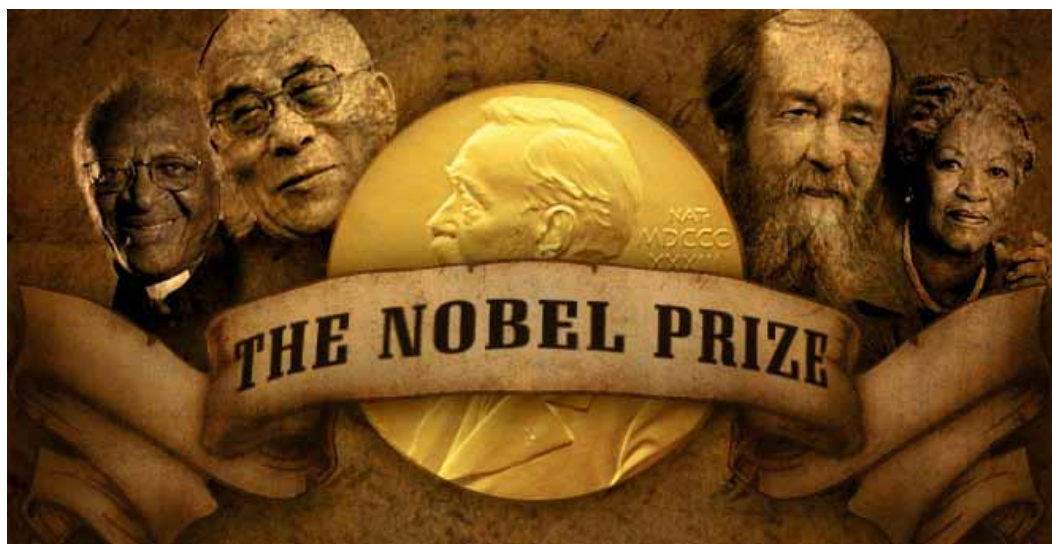
Alfred Nobel quickly became rich from the production of dynamite in his own factories around the world. In 1867, 11 tonnes of dynamite were produced; three years later, as many as 424 tonnes. His companies around the world quickly grew into an empire, and Nobel invested in their management all of his time. He occasionally attended a reception, but most of the time he remained alone.



Photo: Archives of Municipality of Celje

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Photo GCO



The first ever Nobel Prize Award Ceremony was on 10 December 1901.

NOBEL'S SAFE GUN POWDER

Alfred Nobel, dubbed by Victor Hugo as 'the world's wealthiest tramp', spent his childhood in poverty. Due to his father, also an inventor, he acquired an excellent education. At the end of 1863, he was able for the first time to detonate nitroglycerine with the aid of a small amount of gunpowder. This was the first stage in the development of a more powerful detonator later used in dynamite. Between 1867 and 1868, his patents were approved in England and later in most other Western European countries and the USA, South America, the British colonies and Australia.

PRIVATE LIFE WAS AN UTTER FIASCO

In the mid-1870s, Nobel was one of the wealthiest people in the world, but his private life was a failure. As a young man, he fell in love with a Swedish woman in Paris (he carefully kept her name from the public), but the idyll was interrupted by her death. After the tragic loss, he met 33-year old Bertha Kinsky, of the Kinsky-Tettau family of impoverished Austrian counts, with the help of a personal ad in the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*. This story would have had a happy ending as Nobel was seriously considering marriage if, 14 days after starting their relationship, Bertha had not received a love

letter from her previous lover and decided to return to him.

HE FELL IN LOVE WITH A WOMAN FROM CELJE

In that period, Nobel met a young flower seller in a Viennese florist's shop, Sofija Hess, the daughter of a Celje townsman, Heinrich Hess, who completely charmed him with her youth. During his frequent visits to the Austrian capital, where he planned to open a dynamite factory, he dedicated most of his time to 'his beloved little girl'. Since she told him that she was under age, he persuaded her to return to her father in Celje, where he would visit her. He loved Sofija deeply, but she was not educated enough for a great

He loved Sofija deeply, but she was not educated enough for a great intellectual and man of the world such as Nobel. In order for her to advance intellectually, he, in addition to a maid and cook, also hired a lady companion to teach her flawless French. When he realised that Sofija had no desire to study, he wrote to her, "A man can be head over heels in love, but a letter such as you have written can be a blow to the heart."

Photo Archives of Municipality of Celje



Quotation from the Tea Party:
Sofija: "...meine liebe Alfred really loves me, and my family too. Already before I was born, he liked to come to Cili (colloquially: Celje) and spoke to Herr Brunner about that factory of his all the time. My Alfred invited him to come to work in his factory – somewhere in Europe – but my brother-in-law Albert looked upon his factory as his baby. At least, that's what my Alfred told me. He didn't want to go anywhere else. But he still wanted advice from my Alfred, and his visits..."

Nobel found a kindred spirit in Brunner, an excellent technician, and even offered him a well-paid job in one of his factories in Sweden but Brunner considered the zinc factory his brainchild and refused the offer. The men were in continuous correspondence and Brunner also informed Nobel about various technical innovations and favourable investment possibilities.

intellectual and man of the world such as Nobel. In order for her to advance intellectually, he, in addition to a maid and cook, also hired a lady companion to teach her flawless French. When he realised that Sofija had no desire to study, he wrote to her, "A man can be head over heels in love, but a letter such as you have written can be a blow to the heart." After several years, he came to terms with the fact that Sofija would never grow into the ideal of his perfect woman of tsarist Russia. His ideal was an educated noblewoman, capable of moving effortlessly in high society and conversing about any social, political and philosophical issue. He accepted this fact; although he suffered greatly because of it, since Sofija was flirtatious, frivolous and enjoyed a carefree life, which he provided for her throughout, even after she cheated on him, became pregnant by another man and had his child. Even then, Nobel paid her a large annuity and occasionally supported her additionally, since Sofija was constantly in debt, providing her with a luxurious lifestyle.

NOBEL'S CONTACTS WITH CELJE

Alfred Nobel visited Celje and Sofija's relatives several times with Sofija and at least once on his own. Friderika, the youngest Brunner daughter, described one of his visits, "Once, when returning from a journey to Italy, Nobel visited us in Celje and complained to my father about my aunt's behaviour, saying that she was supposedly cheating on him with every waiter. He was very generous and brought presents for the children from Italy: a valuable pocket-watch for my sister and a toy gondola decorated with seashells for me. When my father mentioned to him that he wanted the children to learn the piano, Nobel gave him half of the money for the piano."

KINDRED SPIRITS

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and Brunner also informed Nobel about various technical innovations and favourable investment possibilities. At the end of 1890, when wishing Nobel a happy New Year in the name of his family, Brunner cordially wrote, "We frequently remember the joyful hours we spent in your company during your visit. It would please us immensely if you decided to visit us again in spring." But he also informed him about business matters, "I have heard that your company is planning to buy Fehleisen's haloxylin factory near Celje. Perhaps this project is an opportunity for you to visit us more frequently." The shattered relationship between Nobel and Sofija also affected Nobel's relationship with Sofija's relatives; although it was evident from the letters that the Brunners, especially Albert, held Nobel in high regard. Although he did not visit them later in Celje, as he found it difficult to get over the frivolity of his beloved Sofija, he kept up a correspondence with them until his death.

NO DIFFERENCE IN DEATH

Alfred Nobel died of a cerebral haemorrhage early in the morning of 10 December 1896 in a villa in San Remo, Italy. He died alone. Albert Brunner, the founder and first director of Cinkarna Celje, died three years later. Sofija Hess, the woman adored by Nobel, died in Vienna in 1922. Unlike Nobel, who left great wealth, she died poor, but also alone. How true were Pastor Söderblom's words, uttered at Alfred Nobel's funeral in San Remo on 17 December 1896, "In death, there is no difference between a multi-millionaire and a cottager, between a genius and a simpleton. When the game ends, we are all the same."

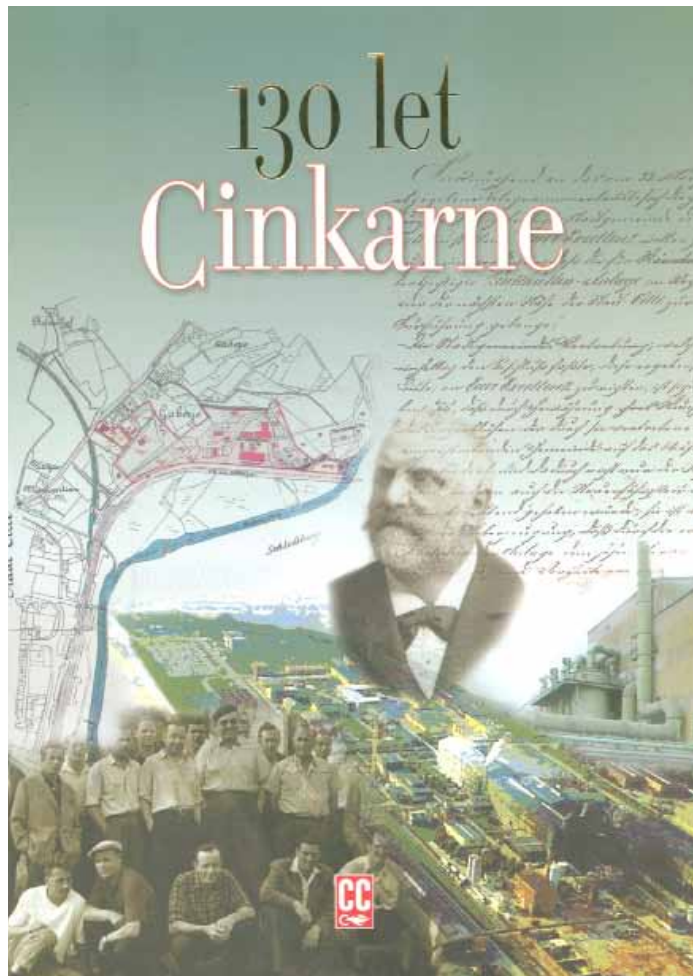
FATAL 218 LETTERS

Nobel left most of his wealth for awards to scientists, writers and fighters for peace. He left Sofija a monthly annuity. When she threatened to publish all of Nobel's 218 letters to her and cause a great scandal, his lawyers paid her a large amount of money from Nobel's legacy. Such was the epilogue of the almost twenty-year relationship between Alfred Nobel and a Viennese flower seller from Celje.

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This year marks the 140th anniversary of the establishment of Cinkarna and 170 years of Alfred Nobel's birth. Josef Neckermann, then Mayor of Celje and founder of the first Celje Tourist Society, ensured suitable land in Gaberje for the construction of the factory and greatly contributed to the establishment of Cinkarna in 1873.

Photo Archives of Municipality of Celje



Christmas and New Year's Concert by the SAF Military Band

Little Fighter Stories

Time and again members of the Slovenian Armed Forces listen to the needs of those whom life has shown but little kindness. On this occasion, the soldiers were touched by the stories of some exceptional children – little fighters who teach

This year's traditional Christmas and New Year's concert by the SAF Military Band was held on 16 December in Cankarjev Dom's Gallus Hall and was dedicated to support the Vesele nogice (Happy Feet) society. The honorary sponsor of the concert was the President of the Republic of Slovenia and the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces, Borut Pahor.

HAPPY FEET

The SAF's aim was to help the little fighters and their parents on their difficult path to achieving the greatest possible independence; therefore all the proceeds from ticket sales were donated to Happy Feet, the Society for Assistance to People with Developmental Disorders. The soldiers were joined by many compassionate supporters who also care about these little fighters. The Happy Feet society will use the money raised to ensure these children the necessary aids to facilitate their development, to facilitate self-help and provide socialising for parents to help them to embrace their children's differences and offer them the best childhood possible, and to help the families and their members to overcome social distress.

HEARTFELT MELODIES

On the festive evening, the SAF Military Band led the audience through musical stories by Gershwin and Schönberg, charmed the listeners with Apperomont's childlike playfulness and delighted them with Slovenian evergreens. Performing with the orchestra were talented young soloists who have started to conquer the world stage and already won numerous international

awards: Nuška Drašček Rojko – a versatile artist renowned for her European tour with the world-famous Ana Netrebko and the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, Nina Dominko – the visiting soprano of the Ljubljana Opera theatre and the winner of the 2011 student Prešeren Award of the Academy of Music, and Domen Križaj – selected among 400 singers within the Young Singers Project to perform in Verdi's Don Carlos at this year's Salzburg Summer Festival. The young musicians sang roles from the musicals Porgy and Bess, Miss Saigon and Les Misérables.

HOPE SMILES FROM THE THRESHOLD OF THE YEAR TO COME

"We soldiers are always moved by the sad stories. As they are becoming more common, we are becoming more active. Children cannot be overlooked," said the Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces, Major General Dobran Božič. The Major General emphasised that this year's concert was the first open not only to the military but also to the general public and the first ever not to be performed for free. The decision to help children with cerebral palsy was well considered. The SAF was touched by the stories and just couldn't ignore the problems these children face. Major General Božič has children of his own. As a father of two daughters, he can hardly imagine what the families with children affected by cerebral palsy must endure: "It is every parent's wish to do the very best for their children, not to see them regress in their development but witness their eventual independent and confident living without limits.

us how to appreciate the little things and how to fight for them, children with cerebral palsy whose development and progress are largely dependent on professional assistance.

Parents of healthy children take that for granted. We are often impatient if our child does not start to walk at the same time as the neighbours'. Children from Happy Feet are different and all the more special. They have learned to appreciate the little things and show unselfish love." Major General Božič also talked about the pride soldiers felt after this humanitarian event ended: "When we saw sincere appreciation in the parents' eyes, my and my colleagues' hearts filled with pride. We were proud because we and those who joined us for the concert had recognised their distress and expressed strong and widespread support. We have chosen a good fight." And has the Major General a special wish for SINFO readers? "I hope that all your readers dare to make mistakes in the year to come. In this way one can discover and test new things, learn, live, progress, change oneself and the world. I believe in what Alfred Tennyson wrote: Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering 'It will be happier.'"

The SAF's aim was to help the little fighters and their parents on their difficult path to achieving the greatest possible independence; therefore all the proceeds from ticket sales were donated to Happy Feet, the Society for Assistance to People with Developmental Disorders.

Happy Feet society: "Every bit of progress counts, no matter how small."

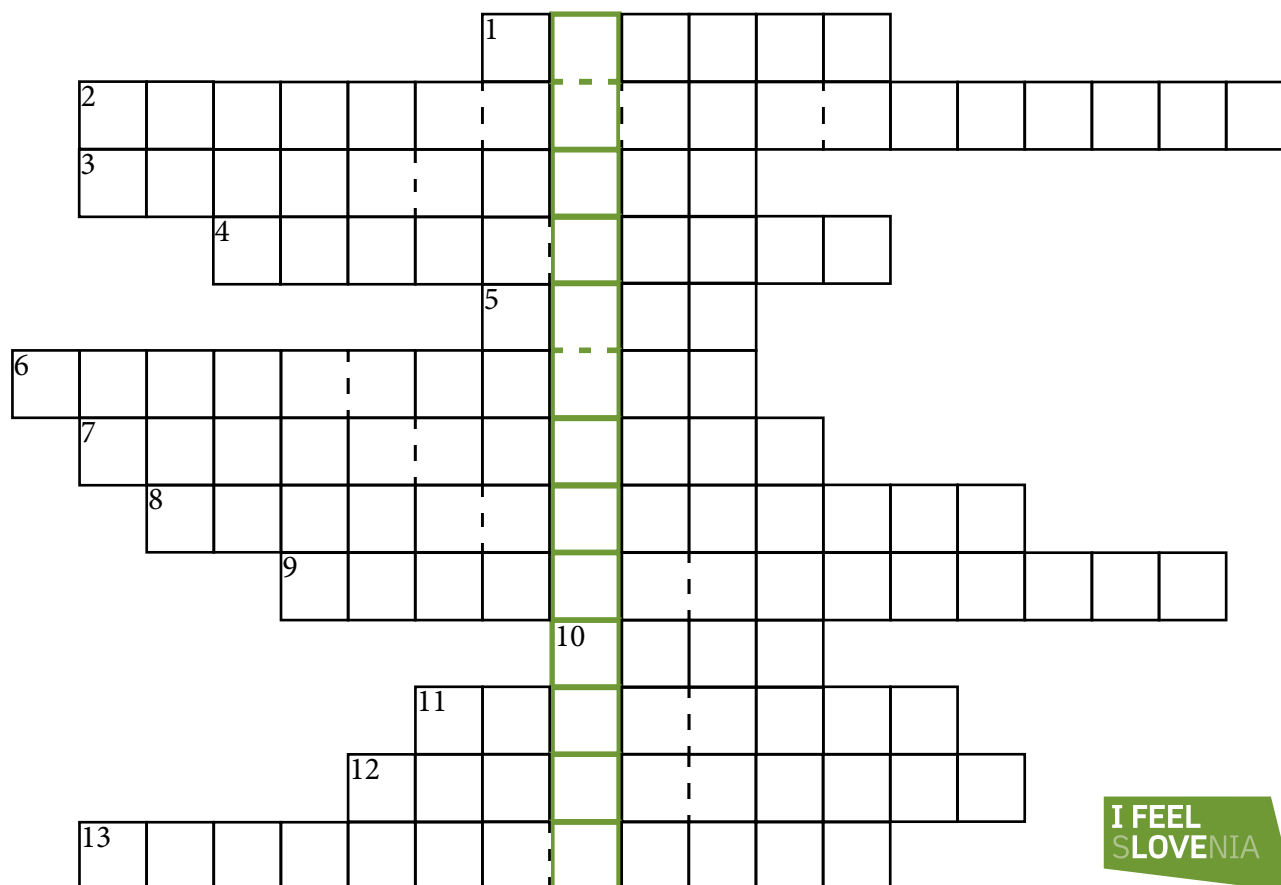


Prize crossword

Dear readers,

We are sure that you read our magazine with great interest throughout the year. So with this in mind, and in order to preserve the respectful playfulness of the magazine's contents, we have included a Sinfo crossword puzzle as an added feature of this issue. The solutions to the puzzle can all be found in the short sections "What's up", "Tips" and "Wow!", but we do not doubt that you will find the right solutions without looking them up in previous issues!

1. Which Slovenian company was among the 10 winners of the UKTI Award for Innovation?
2. Which is the best Slovenian cookbook in Eastern Europe?
3. Who is the Slovenian candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize?
4. Which Slovenian film impressed the Venice Film Festival?
5. Which Slovenian company received an award from NASA?
6. Who received the 2013 Grum Award for the best play script?
7. Who was the Slovenian Woman of the Year 2012, declared in January 2013?
8. Who is the Slovenian who received the UN Environment Award?
9. Who successfully flew over the North Pole in an ultra-light plane?
10. Which Slovenian company organised a skiing event by the sea called 'White Circus on the Sea'?
11. Which Slovenian athlete earned a record number of points in Alpine skiing?
12. Who received the Award of European Citizen of the Year 2013?
13. What is the most prestigious Slovenian award for sporting achievements?



Please, send the fullfilled crossword by 31 January to tanja.glogovcan@gov.si
Let's begin the New Year with surprises for you!

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



The 29th Slovenian Book Fair

Three awards were made at an event which took place under the slogan or famous words of poet Tone Pavček, “If we do not read, we’ll be written off”.

The Schwentner Award for significant contributions to Slovenian publishing and bookselling went to Jože Zupan. The award for the best literary debut went to Jasmin B. Frelj for the novel, *Na/pol* (In/Half), and Ana Jasmina Oseban received the Radojka Vrančič Award for young translators awarded by the Slovenian Association of Literary Translators for her translation of the novel *Blumenberg* by Sibylle Lewitscharoff.

Photo: Daniel Novakovič/STA



More than 110 winemakers attend wine festival

The Slovenian Wine Festival, accompanied by the Culinary Festival, again this year proved to be the most important event in this area in the country. It brought together more than 110 winemakers.

Within the festival, the Association of the Slovenian Order of Knights of Wine and the European Order of Knights of Wine selected their respective Knight’s Wine. In cooperation with the sommeliers and winemakers, workshops primarily intended for students were organised within the festival. Young people who see their professional future in hospitality presented their creativity in the Gallery of Tastes.

Photo: Staniko Gruden/STA



Mirko Šubic award conferred

The Slovenian Society for Conservation–Restoration presented its Mirko Šubic awards and recognitions. The Award for Life’s Work was bestowed on Jana Šubic Prislan and posthumously on Ivo Nemeč.

Recognitions were also awarded to Irena Jeras Dimovska, Vlado Fras Zavrl and the Conservation and Restoration Department of the National Museum of Slovenia. Jana Šubic Prislan received the award for her contribution to the development and visibility of the conservation–restoration profession. Throughout her professional career she has endeavoured to achieve the highest quality work and mentorship and to transfer knowledge to experts and the lay public alike.

Photo: Nebojša Tejić/STA



The second Golden Reel

Čefurji raus!, a film by Goran Vojnović, adapted from his novel of the same name, has already been viewed by more than 50,000 people, earning the film its second Golden Reel awarded by the Association of Slovene Film Workers and the Kolosej Cinemas.

Čefurji raus! was Vojnović’s first novel and won him the Prešeren Fund and Kresnik awards. The story is set in Fužine, a district of Ljubljana where many immigrants from other former Yugoslav republics (sometimes dismissively referred to as *čefurji*) live.

Photo: Archives of Kranjska Gora



Live nativity in ice

Kranjska Gora, 25 December 2013–3 January 2014

This year you can once again visit the mysterious world of the Snow Queen and watch a live Nativity play in the unique scenery of artificial ice waterfalls. You can also take a walk around her kingdom and view the gallery of Nativity scenes along the path.

More information available at <http://www.kranjska-gora.si/Home>

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Meetings with the past

Ljubljana, 16 January 2014

Ljubljana Castle has various links with famous Slovenians, including Ivan Cankar, Ivan Hribar, Janez Cigler, Juš Kozak, Anton Aškerc, Ivan Vurnik, Ivan Zajec, Marij Pregelj, Jože Plečnik, Boris Kobe, Ferdo Vesel and many others. Some of them were prisoners at the castle, while others lived there voluntarily. Some of them devised plans for various things that could be done with the castle, but only a few succeeded in making those “castle plans” a reality. Their experience and the traces they left in the history of Ljubljana Castle will be discussed in the lecture, which will include short excerpts from works by Cankar and Kozak. The lecture will elaborate more on the stories of Ivan Hribar, the mayor to whom most credit should be given for Ljubljana Castle becoming the property of the city, Ivan Cankar as a prisoner, Janez Cigler, the prison chaplain, and Samassa, the bell-maker whose villa still stands on the south side of the castle hill.

More information available at www.ljubljana.si

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



Nativity scenes in Gradež

Gradež, 15 December 2013–5 January 2014

The exhibition of Nativity scenes in the hidden corners of Gradež will feature Nativity scenes of various sizes and materials, made by many Slovenian artisans, some recent and some more than a hundred years old. The opening ceremony and the pre-Christmas and final viewing will be accompanied by singing, torches and a market.

Source: Association for Heritage Preservation

Photo: Tamino Petelinšek/STA



The history of a full plate

Ljubljana, City Museum, every first Monday of the month until 3 March 2014

In the lecture by Marko Prpič you will learn about the past through food that made a mark on Europe following the discovery of America. Many foodstuffs that have become daily ingredients of our meals only came to Europe after the discovery of America. There was no “German” potato, “Italian” tomato or “Slovenian” žganci before that!

More information available at www.mgml.si

Naïve Art from Kovačica

The exhibition entitled “Naïve Art from Kovačica”, organised by the Naïve Art Gallery of Kovačica, the Mihajlo Pupin Cultural Society and the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in the Republic of Slovenia recently opened at the Trebnje Gallery of Naïve Artists.

The exhibition, which features works by artists from Kovačica, a town in Vojvodina, Serbia, is a continuation of the annual display of works of naïve art by foreign artists and an upgrade of the cooperation with the Naïve Art Gallery of Kovačica to date. Traditionally, artists from Kovačica have gathered at an international camp of naïve artists, organised in Trebnje since 1968, where they have created works of art and afterwards donated them to the Trebnje Gallery of Naïve Artists.

On the initiative of the Mihajlo Pupin Cultural Society, younger artists first presented works from their own collections in Ljubljana and then in Maribor. In cooperation with the Naïve Art Gallery of Kovačica, the exhibition in Trebnje has been expanded to also include the works of the first generation of artists of naïve art.

This group of artists began painting soon after the Second World War and saw creating works of art as one of the ways of preserving their heritage. Their ancestors moved from Slovakia to Vojvodina more than 150 years ago, where they established the town of Kovačica. Many members of the Slovak minority still live there, alongside people of many other nations. There are indeed as many as 25 different languages listed as being spoken in the Municipality of Kovačica. In such a diverse environment, members of the Slovak minority use painting as a means of maintaining their ties with their homeland and its customs. Martin Paluška, Jan Sokol, Mihal Bireš, Jan Knjazovic, Zuzana Halupova and Jan Venjarsk were the first to begin painting and were soon followed by others. The exhibition thus showcases the works of the first generation of artists, together with the works of younger artists.

It brings to life images of the past, when everyday life centred around the land and work on the farm. This was not only about sowing and harvesting – it involved much more than that. Martin Jonaš, Martin Paluška, Zuzana Halupova, Jan Knjazovic take you on a romantic journey to meet wedding guests and relive the joys of winter and carriage rides. Their successors have woven elements of fairy-tales into everyday life, transporting you to a world of tree houses and giant pumpkins. The exhibition, which runs until 9 February 2014, displays more than 60 works by 23 painters.

Pavel Hajko was born in 1952 in Kovačica. In 1970 he finished high school, professional woodworking craft. His talent was noticed by Martin Jonas. He is constantly engaged in painting since 1973. He participated in the 1974 group exhibition of painters Kovačica. It has been able to build a unique style and his artistic expression diverts attention from the works of previous works of popular artists of Kovačica. Many compositions are based on scenes from the life, with imaginative and colorful stories. The main theme from 1975 is the rooster. The creation of a true legend as a symbol of beauty, life and death, love and struggle. The rooster is a bird of night and day, the bird of darkness and light. First he painted the rooster, symbol of life, struggling with the fox, which leads to death. Since 1981 is part of the 'Association of Kovačica naïve painters.

