

The voice- Of Slovenia

Year 3/No 29-30
February March 2003

Slovenians Vastly in Favour of EU and NATO

Slovenian voters surprisingly and overwhelmingly backed the country's EU and NATO memberships at referendums. According to unofficial results, NATO support stood at 66.18 percent while EU backing, at 89.66 percent, surpassed even that of the independence vote in 1990. The turnout stood at 57.92 percent; 33.82 percent of the electorate voted against NATO, while EU was disapproved by 10.34 percent.

The strong support for the EU and NATO thrilled Slovenia's top officials. President Janez Drnovšek called the outcome the "crown of a decade long effort", while Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel believed the citizens, wise and prudent, grabbed an historic opportunity. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Anton Rop pointed out that a lot remains ahead of Slovenia, before it actually joins the EU and NATO. Europe Minister Potocnik was certain the "yes" vote to the EU confirms Slovenian's sense of belonging to Europe. As to the acceptance of the NATO invitation, Defence Minister Anton Grizold believes that Slovenia will be a credible partner in NATO.

The President of the European Parliament Pat Cox arrived in Slovenia especially to celebrate the "yes" vote of the EU referendum. He congratulated Slovenians at an event staged by the European Commission delegation to Slovenia, where Speaker of the Slovenian Parliament, Borut Pahor, and EU Ambassador Erwan Fouere rejoiced in the overwhelming support for the EU. The representative of the Greek EU presidency, charges d'affaires Ioanna Efthymiadou, welcomed Slovenia to the European family. The outcome was also hailed by NATO Secretary General George Robertson, the European Commission, and other foreign officials.

Knotty Path Towards Referenda

Although nearly all parliamentary parties have backed Slovenia's accession to the EU and the Alliance - opposing NATO membership are only the opposition Youth Party (SMS) and National Party (SNS), while the latter is also against membership of the EU - the path towards the referenda was not as smooth as one would expect. The government and the opposition launched negotiations over the date and the form of both votes right after the New Year.

The government initially suggested both referenda should be consultative in form and held as early as February 9, but the largest two opposition parties - the Social Democrats (SDS) and New Slovenia (NSi) - did not agree with the idea that the results of both votes would not be formally binding. As the government decided that the referendum on NATO should be held before the end of March in view of the Alliance's expectation that Slovenia would give a clear answer to the Prague invitation to join NATO before the Accession Protocols are signed on March 26, the ruling coalition was pressed for time and therefore filed an initiative itself to call the referenda in mid-January.

However, negotiations continued with the opposition SDS and NSi (which support membership of both the EU and NATO) and they eventually resulted in constitutional changes. These not only pertained to the referenda, but chiefly to the so-called "European clauses" amended in light of the country's accession to the EU. The implementation part of the constitutional act set down that the March 23 referenda are legally binding and cannot be repeated in case of a positive outcome. It further stipulated that the referenda can be participated in by Slovenian citizens abroad, and that invalid votes would not count as no votes as was the case in referenda so far.

By way of these changes, the government secured the important support of the two opposition parties in the continuation of the referendum campaign.

At Home in Europe, Safe in NATO

This was the slogan of the referendum campaign in which the government tried to persuade the people to vote for accession into the EU as well as NATO. There was no doubt that Slovenian voters would back membership of the EU as there were steady high public approval ratings for the Union. NATO was another story. Public opinion was divided and, in mid-February, the number of advocates in opinion polls was almost on a par with the number of opponents, while almost one third of voters were still undecided. While government officials were only lukewarm in persuading

the voters of the benefits of NATO membership for Slovenia, and even made some errors that contributed to a decline in support for NATO, the opponents were quite active.

The situation reversed in early March; the government began to promote arguments in favour of NATO in a more aggressive manner and, in the face of the impending war in Iraq, tried to make people understand that NATO was not the same as the United States. The government was assisted by a number of senior representatives of both organisations, and top officials from member countries of the EU and NATO, who literally followed on each other's heels to Ljubljana during the first two weeks of March. The efforts bore fruit and, a week ahead of the referenda, it was all but clear that Slovenians would also back membership of NATO.

The government is said to have spent SIT 128 million (EUR 0.55m) for the referendum campaign, while the main reproach of those opposing NATO membership was that they did not get any financial resources for their campaign from the government, and that the campaign was therefore one-sided.

EU and NATO Long-Term Foreign Policy Goals

Soon after declaring independence, Slovenia made it its goal to join the EU and NATO, so the National Assembly set down these two strategic objectives in several documents. Yet the path was not free from impediments and disappointments.

Slovenia asked for associate membership of the Union as early as 1992, which is the year it won international recognition, but it was not able to sign the Association Treaty until 1996. Before signing, the country was forced to submit to the demands of one member, i.e. Italy, and accept the so-called Spanish compromise requiring it to open its property market. The accession negotiations with the 15-nation bloc kicked off in 1998. The negotiations over 31 chapters wrapped up last December. While the first part of the talks mainly discussed Slovenia's adoption of European legislation, the final phase focused on financial issues.

Slovenia had expected an invitation to join NATO as early as the Madrid summit of 1997, but that expectation turned into bitter disappointment. At the time, the Alliance only extended its invitation to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland; Slovenia, together with Rumania, had to make do with a vague promise of the Alliance's future enlargement. In the face of the Madrid setback, politicians were careful with promises thereafter and meanwhile, opposition to NATO membership started to grow among the public. Slovenia co-operated with NATO within the Partnership for Peace programme, and began implementing the Membership Action Plan after the 1999 Washington summit. Slovenia was officially invited to join the Alliance at the NATO summit in Prague last November.

What Next?

Neither the EU nor NATO required Slovenia to stage the referendum on membership; rather it was the decision of Slovenian politicians in a bid to get a mandate from the voters before the final decisions are made.

Together with the other accession countries, Slovenia will sign the Accession Treaty with the EU in Athens on April 16. This will then have to be ratified by the parliaments of all the incumbent, as well as future members. Slovenia is expected to join the EU as a full-fledged member on May 1 2004.

In May of next year Slovenia is also expected to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The signing of the Accession Protocols on March 26 will be followed by the ratification process in all NATO members and the parliaments of the invited countries. When the procedure wraps up - expectedly before the next NATO summit in May 2004 - Slovenia and six other countries will enter the Alliance.

Vladimir Bartol: Far Ahead of His Time

*Vladimir Bartol, the author of one the most widely translated Slovenian novel, *Alamut*, would celebrate his 100th birthday on February 24. When it was first published in 1938, *Alamut* was received with considerable scepticism by critics. Now, decades later, critics and readers alike talk about it with nothing but superlatives.*



Bartol was born in 1903 in a small village near Trieste into the family of a post office worker, Gregor Bartol. His mother Marica was a teacher, writer and the editor of the first Slovenian women's magazine *Slovenka*. While his mother later largely renounced her feminist views in practice, the young Vladimir was adamant to pursue his dreams and become a writer. Not just any writer, but a world famous man of letters. The undeterred self-confidence that he showed as a youngster later helped him weather the storm of criticism that he was exposed to due to his life philosophy and writing. The family decided to move to Ljubljana when Vladimir was in secondary school. After finishing school in 1921, he went on to study biology and philosophy, and graduated with a thesis entitled *On Factors that Enable Living Organisms to React Reasonably to External Impulses*.

The Formative Years

While at university, Bartol made friends with the young philosopher and alpine climber Klement Jug. Jug was a fervent believer in Nietzsche's "will to power" and, unlike many other philosophers, he actually practiced what he preached. He undeniably affirmed his philosophy of an uncompromising rise of will-power when he died climbing the excruciating northern face of Mount Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain, in 1924. Jug left an indelible impression on Bartol, the ultimate result being that his opponents too often criticised him as a philosopher and ideologist, and forgot about his literary work.

In the concept of "will to power", Bartol found what he perceived as being the elementary characteristic that a small and threatened national group like Slovenians need in their struggle to persevere. He was sharply critical as he discovered in Slovenians the characteristics of a weakened nation, brought up in humility and fear of living. It was a nation defined by the cult of goodness—a goodness unfortunately, of the feeble.

In a short story entitled "At the Crossroads" (1935), where one of the characters can easily be recognised as modelled on Klement Jug, Bartol says: "Bunglers achieve nothing. Our nation has always been a nation of bunglers and a friend of compromise". Although this was a veiled call for a rise to arms in a national liberation struggle, the established intellectual elite started treating Bartol with considerable criticism; even more so after he published *Alamut* three years later. Bartol initially wanted to dedicate *Alamut* to an "unknown dictator", but the editors nipped his intention in the bud.

Alamut

Set in Persia in the 11th century, *Alamut* is the story of Hassan Ibn Sabah, an old man who becomes the head of the Ashashini sect. Ensnared within his mountain citadel of Alamut, the "Caligula of the East" wages a horrifying holy war against the Turks who threaten to impose Sunnism on the Persian Muslims. At first, Hassan Ibn Sabah seems weak and undermanned compared to the superior enemy. Yet he achieves a breakthrough with a small but utterly committed group of fedayee. They are fanatic desperados fearless of death. He gets them high on hashish, gives them a taste of what they believe to be heaven, and sends them to suicide missions they are eager to fulfil.



The character of Hassan Ibn Sabah was strongly reminiscent of the likes of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, who were in power when the novel was published. It could thus be interpreted as a warning, but Slovenian critics were utterly perplexed by the book's "nothing is real, everything is allowed" doctrine, and Hassan Ibn Sabah's "alienation of the people" method. "The lower the conscience of the group, the greater its zeal," Hassan would say. People who want to fight by his side must be in love with death.

All of Bartol's theses, as laid out in *Alamut*, seemed far out of the temporal and mental context of the time, at least for the critics. This can hardly be said of 1988 and 1989 though, when the novel was translated into French and Spanish. *Alamut* was an immediate hit in France, and the 30,000 copies printed were sold out in a matter of months. It was even more successful in Spain: the first 10,000 copies sold out even before the book was officially published. *Alamut* has since been translated into 15 languages, including Arabic. It also achieved its deserved recognition in Slovenia, as it became assigned reading in secondary school.

In the Spotlight after 9/11

There are at least two reasons why the novel is now immensely popular in Slovenia and abroad: the rise of Islamic terrorism, which took on a previously unseen form on September 11, 2001, and (what is often forgotten) the simple fact that the novel is a page-turner. The editor of the French edition, Jean Pierre Sicre, explained his decision to publish *Alamut* with the words "There is a single principle: pleasure! There are no others. A pure pleasure of reading". As is true of all great novels, *Alamut* is multi-layered. It can be read as a historical, philosophical, political or trivial text, or ultimately, as a metaphor that seems less and less abstract after the political turmoil of the recent years.

After the initial negative attitude towards Bartol, Slovenian readers have become increasingly approving of his work. Hopefully this is not because *Alamut* has been confirmed as a masterpiece by others, who are bigger than us. This would only indicate that not much has changed since Bartol complained about the humility and low self-esteem of Slovenians.

More than Just Alamut

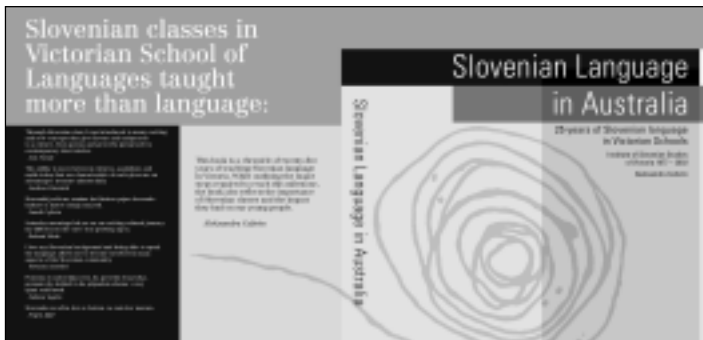
After publishing the fourth reprint of *Alamut* in 2002 (the book has been on the best-selling list for months) the publishing house Založba sanje also reprinted a collection of Bartol's short stories, entitled *Al Araf*, in December. The title, which in Arabic means the wall between heaven and hell (the wall of cognition), is a bit misleading as the 27 short stories are a psychological and philosophical view of day-to-day problems of urban life. The short stories bear distinct fingerprints of psychoanalysis, which was unusual of Slovenian literary works at the time. The only other contemporary of Bartol to apply psychoanalysis in his writings was Slavko Grum; he too only achieved critical acclaim after his death. Založba sanje has already announced it will shortly publish a selection of Bartol's lampoons.

Although disappointed at the less than rave reviews of his work, Bartol never lost his faith in his literary genius. He believed strongly in *Alamut*, and recalled on an occasion: "I had had the feeling as if I was also writing for a readership that would live fifty years from now". When he wrote the final word of his masterpiece, he became paranoid about the possibility of someone stealing his manuscript or losing it to a blaze of fire. "Let them kill me; I will be immortal in *Alamut*," he wrote. Vladimir Bartol died a non-violent death in 1967. It seems that he has become immortal, and that his writings are walking *Al Araf*, the wall of cognition.

Slovenian Language in the Australian School System 1977-2002

This book is a chronicle of twenty-five years of teaching Slovenian language in Victoria. While outlining the major steps required in achieving this milestone, the book also reflects the importance of Slovenian language classes and the impact they had on our young people.

Aleksandra Ceferin



Tanja Ledwyck - Brgoè designer of the book and Sasa Ceferin

Through Slovenian class I was introduced to many exciting and new concepts that give flavour and uniqueness to a culture, from poems and proverbs (pregovori) to contemporary short stories.

Jan Novak

The ability to move between cultures, assimilate and meld riches that are characteristic of each gives me an advantage I treasure almost daily.

Andrew Potoènik

Slovenski jezik me zanima kot bistven pojav slovenske kulture iz katere izhaja moj rod.

Sandi Ceferin

Saturday mornings led me on an exciting cultural journey far different to the one I was growing up in.

Roland Mrak

I love my Slovenian background and being able to speak the language allows me to become involved in many aspects of the Slovenian community.

Veronica Smrdel

Ponosna in zadovoljna sem, da govorim dva jezika, poznam dve kulturi in da pripadam obema v vsej njihuni razliènosti.

Sabina Vogrinec

Slovensko se uèim, ker se hoèem, ne zato ker moram.

Evgen Iglie

I love and cherish my background and I am grateful to my parents and teachers of Slovenian who have immersed me in my mother tongue and Slovenian culture

Barbara Brožie

Z veseljem se uèim slovensko, ker so predavanja zanimiva in ker me s sošolci veže nekaj skupnega, to je ljubezen do Slovenije, slovenskega jezika in kulture.

Iris Dietner

Slovenian means being able to speak to relatives in Slovenia. How can you have a family and not talk to them?

Melissa Bratina

Slovenski jezik je važen del mojega življenja. Moja dediščina je to, moja družina.

Zalika Rizmal

Slovenian traditions are a link to everyone and everything that made me as a person.

Natalie Postružin

**Book Slovenian Language in Australia can
be ordered at Institute for Slovenian Studies
of Victoria on Email issv@thezaurus.com.
phone (03) 9544 0595 or Baraga Library, 19
A'Beckett Street, Kew, Vic. 3101**

Milestones

- 1976** Accreditation of Slovenian as a HSC subject in Victoria - first step is taken
- Saturday School of Modern Languages (SSML) - introducing Slovenian into the school system Slovenian Teachers Association of Victoria (STAV) - teachers association is established
- 1977** Six Slovenian classes, at three school centres commence in Melbourne
- 1978** Saturday School of Community Languages in Sydney introduces Slovenian Accreditation process for HSC Slovenian in New South Wales is initiated
- 1979** The first HSC Slovenian class in New South Wales
- The Sub-committee for accreditation of HSC Slovenian in Victoria is established
- 1980** VISE HSC Slovenian Group 2 accreditation completed
- 1981** First group of students complete HSC Slovenian in Victoria HSC Slovenian Committee established
- 1983** SSML Advisory Council established
- 1984** The Review of HSC Slovenian - accredited till 1990
- Slovenian Literary Reader and Slovenian Folk Songs published
- 1986** Field of Studies Committee for Languages Other Than English (FOSC for LOTE) established Slovenian Language Teachers, Parents and Students Association of Victoria (SLTPSAV)
- 1990** Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB) introduces the new two-year VCE course
- 1991** Slovenian Course Outlines for VCE Years 11 & 12 developed by A Ceferin
- 1992** The first Slovenian VCE class to complete the reformed VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education)
- 1993** A Ceferin appointed Area Manager in Victorian School of Languages
- 1998** Institute for Slovenian Studies of Victoria established, reinstated from STAV
- 1999** The website Thezaurus.com with Sloveniana Webzine and Slovenian Language Resources is published on the Web
- 2001** Webclassroom and VCE Design and Resources (2001) published, Slovenian Literator launched
- 2002** CSF Course Outlines and VCE Course Outlines developed for VSL
- Student exchange initiative is introduced - The first student attends a Slovenian school Galeria Sloveniana, Thezaurus Forums and Careerlinx/Slovenian Connection published



What's On.....

LEARN TO DANCE Monday 10am and Sunday 6pm
Let Australian Champions Neale Byrne and Harley teach you how to really dance – 1&1/2hr lesson for just \$5 per person
Social Dance following FREE with lesson

SOCIAL DANCE Sunday night 7.30pm to 10pm
Come along and enjoy the music and get rhythm in those feet
Demonstration couples will be on display showing off their fancy foot work and beautiful costumes
Social Dance ONLY \$3pp

CLUB BINGO Tuesdays 12noon and out in time to pick up the kids from school Wednesday 11am Thursday 11am and Thursday night 7pm Bingo packages \$7 or single books \$3pp -
We do it a little bit different

FRIDAY NIGHT FRENZY is back! Starting end March you can win Meat & Vegetable Trays, Beer and Wine. Join in the fun & laughter with us all Spinning Wheel follows with **more prizes**
'THE MEN' play cards up stairs tonight and every Friday night. Just be prepared to shout a round of drinks if you lose.



SOCIAL BOCCE played every Wednesday from 12noon
Even if you haven't played for years come and join us.
BOCCE COMPETITION test your skill every 2nd Sunday and win prizes. Competition is always followed by dinner in the dining room
For more information ring Martha 9609 6057

LUNCH & BAND just like the old days. Let 'The Masters' get your feet tapping once a month – Come along and meet friends you haven't seem for years.
\$12 per person gets you a delicious BBQ lunch and great entertainment.
For more information and bookings ring Martha 9609 6057

St Johns Park Panthers (Triglav) is your club
Peter Krobe our Chairman, Tony Ursic, Franc Valencic, Silvo Pahor and Walter Suber who are all members of the Board, would love to see you on Friday night, at Bocce or at the Sunday Lunch.
80-84 Brisbane Road St Johns Park – General Enquiry 02 9610 627 and ask for Lesley (she speaks 25 words of Slovenian now)

Information for Members and their guests

NSW Slovenian of the Year Awards 2002

Readers of Glas Slovenije last year may have read with interest the outcome of the inaugural NSW Slovenian of the Year Awards 2001, which were reported in the 2002 July issue of Glas. On behalf of the 2003 Slovenian of the Year Awards Sub-Committee, being Walter Suber, Dorothy Kobal, Tanya Smerdel, Danica Sajn, Anita Lever, Nick Vickers and Mr Ross Treyvaud, I would like to announce that the Awards will be held again this year in June at the St Johns Park Panthers-Triglav Club. In the very near future we will be able to inform readers more precisely of the date and of other details, as well as information for nominees and nominators, criteria and the categories that will be open for 2002. The sub-committee envisages that there will be more categories for 2002 than there was for 2001, and we look forward to sharing this exciting news with you very shortly.

We will keep you posted through Glas Slovenije, the various Slovenian Clubs in NSW as well as through a future website and of course through SBS Slovenian Radio, of all this necessary information. We look forward to receiving numerous applications for the various categories. Once the categories are formalised it is hoped that we will realise that we all know of at least one, if not several people that have achieved significant success and/or goals in their lives and could thus be nominated and recognised within our community.

Last year's winners.....

As reported, last year's winners for NSW Slovenian of the Year Awards were:

Mrs Eleonora White – *Outstanding Senior Citizen of the Year*
Mr Drago Ostric – *Young Entrepreneur of the Year*
Ms Brigita Bezjak – *Tertiary Student of the Year*
Ms Stefanie Suber – *Primary Student of the Year*

Highly Commended Plaques were awarded to **Dr Sean Parsonage** – *Young Entrepreneur of the Year* and to **Mrs Milka Stanic** – *Outstanding Senior Citizen of the Year*.

Here is what some of the Awards recipients of last year had to say about winning:

Mrs E White: "It felt absolutely wonderful, lovely. I was surprised-I didn't expect anything like this. I felt grateful too – these Awards are very important, as they give encouragement and respect for people getting involved. I keep the plaque in a prominent place in my house with pride, and friends always comment on it. They have said that this gives them ideas to nominate me for other government awards, which is very touching. And my husband, has always supported my work as well. At the moment I am collecting money, in conjunction with the Slovenian Club in Canberra for families that lost their houses in the Canberra fires. There are 6 Slovenian families all up and 1 has 3 children. I am raising money through donations and a raffle which will be drawn in April, just before Easter this year."

Well done, Mrs White – you just never stop!!

Ms Brigita Bezjak: "Since receiving this Award, I have been reminded that I can continue to live and promote a life as a Slovenian/Australian rather than just an Australian with a Slovenian background. It was exciting to know that there is a team promoting the continuation of Slovenian culture. Personally this award has been included in many discussions with people that have been interested to learn about Slovenia and travel there! Professionally the award has highlighted to employees that I have a culturally sensitivity to people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This experience and awareness is highly sought after in my profession, and I have enjoyed being able to share it. I hope it continues to grow and expand!"

As well as being an accomplished musician and cello player, Brigita graduated in her other chosen profession of Speech Pathology last year. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

We hope to bring you more feedback about what the other Awards recipients are up to this year as well, hopefully in the next edition of Glas Slovenije. Please stay tuned!

Danica Sajn on behalf of the Sub-Committee.