

COLUMBIA SYMPOSIUM

INTRODUCTION

John S. Micgiel

Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and East Central European Center, in collaboration with the Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and Consulate General of Slovenia in New York presented an academic symposium on *Slovenia – Past and Present* on 16 September 2005 in Columbia's International Affairs Building.

The session was introduced by Dr. John S. Micgiel, Director of Columbia's East Central European Center, who spoke of the long-standing links between Slovenia and Columbia. The session was dedicated to the memory of Professor Rado L. Lencek of Columbia University, a prominent Slovenian senior scholar who had done so much to promote Slovene Studies in the United States. Among other things, Dr. Lencek was for many years director of the Center for Research and Documentation of the Society of Slovene Studies, whose President, Dr. Metod M. Milač, delivered felicitations from the Society and then introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. His Excellency Samuel Žbogar, Ambassador of Slovenia to the United States in Washington, and the Honorable Alenka Suhadolnik, Consul General of Slovenia in New York, were in attendance, as were approximately seventy academics, members of the diplomatic community and the general public. Dr. Oto Luthar, Dr. Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, Dr. Jeffrey David Turk, and Dr. Marina Gržinić Mauhler, all members of the Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, presented papers which are published in this volume. Our speakers' efforts were well-received by the audience, as evidenced by the good cheer and congratulations shared at the reception that followed the symposium and formally opened an exhibit on contemporary Slovenia, entitled "An Exhibit of Slovenian Design and Architecture," in the atrium of the International Affairs Building.

The symposium and accompanying exhibit brought Slovenia a little closer to the faculty and students of Columbia University, thanks to the support of the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Society of Slovene Studies, and the Consulate General of the Republic of

Slovenia. Special thanks go to Consul General Alenka Suhadolnik and Marta Štemberger, the Consulate's Director of Communications and Special Events for their hard work.

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