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The first six issues of *The Slovenia Times*, which bills itself on its website (<http://www.sloveniatimes.com>) as “the first independent English-language newspaper in Slovenia,” have appeared, establishing the paper as a stable element in Slovenia’s media landscape. Launching a new newspaper—even one appearing biweekly, such as this—is a significant endeavor demanding the coordination of editors, reporters, photographers, printers and other persons. Such a project is doubly significant when the result fills a hitherto unoccupied niche in a country’s media culture.

The Slovenia Times falls among the growing number of locally published English-language newspapers that have appeared in the newly democratic states of Central and Eastern Europe. These publications, which generally appear weekly, include *The Baltic Times*, *The Prague Post*, *The Slovak Spectator*, *The Sofia Echo*, and *The Warsaw Voice*, to name but a handful.

Unlike foreign-language newspapers in the U.S., which are generally aimed at recently-arrived immigrant groups that have not yet linguistically assimilated, or which serve as a heritage language forum for the older generation of earlier immigrants, these new publications target a diverse audience. Equally significant, the target is a moving one, represented by summer travelers and visiting businesspeople (many of whom speak English as a second language), as well as an increasingly large community of North Americans, British, Australians and New Zealanders abroad, either temporarily or permanently.

The capitals of Central and Eastern Europe have become attractive destinations for young Americans interested in living abroad, but lacking the finances to settle down in, say, Paris or Rome. Prague in particular has drawn so many young Americans that, in an optimistic allusion to the high profile expatriates that gathered in France after World War I, it has been referred to as the “Paris of the East” (incidentally, a title also claimed by Beirut, Budapest, Bucharest, Cairo, Saigon, Shanghai and no doubt other cities). Young people are gradually discovering other capitals in the region, and Ljubljana is among them with a growing population of English speakers.

The Slovenia Times can be viewed as having a double responsibility. First (and crucially, from the economic point of view) it must strive to serve the varied needs and interests of its presumed

readership. Second, as perhaps the only readily available local news sources for readers of English, it should present accurate and comprehensive information in a quality manner.

Slovenia has had two English-language news periodicals for a number of years, both published in magazine format on glossy A3 folio: *Ljubljana Life* and *Slovenia News*. Issues of both publications run approximately 22 pages. *Ljubljana Life* (issued quarterly and distributed free) is edited and published in Ljubljana, principally focuses on culture and entertainment, and, as the name implies, centers on happenings in Ljubljana rather than Slovenia as a whole. In September 2002, *Slovenia Weekly* was succeeded by *Slovenia News*, also published in Ljubljana. Like its predecessor, the weekly *Slovenia News* focuses on politics, economics, business, and highbrow culture. The language in both publications is carefully and competently edited.

By comparison, *The Slovenia Times* appears on standard newsprint in tabloid format. In content, it aims to be a general paper, covering “all aspects of Slovenian society, from politics to business, from culture to sports.” Each issue runs 16 pages. In terms of layout, the paper appears to have settled on sections titled News, Business, Society, Opinion, Sports, Around Slovenia, Leisure, People, Information, Culture, and Last Page (topical events and culture).

In general, the political coverage is timely and accurate. In these articles, *The Slovenia Times* avoids the traps of becoming a public relations mouthpiece, with an irrepressibly upbeat attitude, or a gadfly with stinging criticism of every shortcoming in society. Attention is drawn to serious problems such as alcoholism (4:7) and an ineffective judicial system (5:3), as well as sources of pride, such as EU accession (2:1) and the high level of wireless technology (5:4).

Articles on topical issues—for example, water purity (2:3), the 2003 Eurovision contest (3:15), the Roma (4:6), and homophobia (5:6)—are likely to appeal to the interests of a broad readership. The coverage of local culture—for example, articles on the Škocjan Caves (2:9), the Kolpa River (4:10), the Avsenik ensemble (4:14), and Sečovelje (5:10)—is informative and will provide insight for newcomers and visitors to Slovenia that goes beyond what is available in English-language guidebooks.

The first few issues of *The Slovenia Times* had a section titled “Ex-patriates” [sic], mostly dedicated to the gee-whiz wonder of living in a foreign country for the first time, hand-wringing over official paperwork, and despair at ever learning Slovene. Although the section

has apparently been phased out, these themes reappear in later issues. More casual articles often contain unnecessary references to nightlife, partying, and drinking; for example, in an article on becoming a freelance writer, “last weekend I found myself in a bar (isn’t that where all the best business is done in Slovenia?)” (2:10). The tedious theme of “unknown Slovenia” (0:15, 3:14, 4:5, 4:10) also makes a regular appearance. Taken together, these give the impression that the paper is intended less for the “foreign business people and diplomats ... checking into the best Slovenian hotels or eating at the finest restaurants” cited on the paper’s website, and more for footloose, inexperienced 20-somethings.

A regular column by “Biba” is dedicated to teaching readers some Slovene. Short phrases are strewn throughout its rambling format, but it can be short on accuracy. One column states “We use a polite way to adress [sic] people ... with the 3rd person plural (called *vikanje*)” (3:12) and another points out that the letter *e* has two pronunciations (i.e., /e/ and /_/) (2:12). Comments in the language column are also likely to alienate some readers as condescending, and to undermine the confidence of others: “I’ll tell you all about the notorious declensions,” “be careful about the famous Slovene dual!,” and “... a sentence I’m sure you use a lot: *govorite angleško?*” (3:12).

The Slovenia Times rates highly in terms of accessibility. The Slovene-language media casually refer to groups like the *optanti*, *pregnanci*, and *izbrisani* without any background explanation—and, generally speaking, none is needed for natives. However, even astute learners of the language lacking the cultural background are likely to remain puzzled by such references. How welcome it is, then, to read the explanation of Ljubljana’s *Ana Desetnica* street theater: “...named after a medieval Slovene tradition according to which every tenth child had to leave home and make a living on the streets” (5:16), or *kresovanje*: “traditional bonfire parties on hilltops on the evening of April 30th” (2:8).

The quality of writing (i.e., composition) in *The Slovenia Times* varies greatly from article to article. Some have the poverty of organization and content that one would expect from a high school student, while others have a succinctness and clarity that would be appropriate in any newspaper. The quality of the English in the paper is similarly uneven. Without belaboring the point, the large number of grammatical, syntactic and spelling errors in every issue seriously degrades the image of *The Slovenia Times*. The paper is in serious need of a trained language editor, not only to weed out the common English

blunders made by Slovene speakers, but to improve those written by English speakers as well. Each contribution should be carefully edited and unsuitable articles should be rejected without regret.

The regular “word from the editor,” Jaka Terpinec, which appears on page 2, makes it clear that *The Slovenia Times* is an evolving project, still adapting and shaping itself, and eager for feedback. Let us wish it good luck and the perseverance to develop into a mature newspaper that will serve the needs of a diverse readership.

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