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Prime Minister of Slovenia To Keynote IWU's President's Convocation; Political Leader Likely to Discuss Volatile Balkan Politics,Communism-Capitalism Changeover

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Sept. 21, 1999

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Janez Drnovsek

**Prime Minister of Slovenia
To Keynote IWU's President's Convocation;
Political Leader Likely to Discuss Volatile
Balkan Politics, Communism-Capitalism
Changeover**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek--a leader in bringing independence, democracy, and capitalism to a nation that was once part of turbulent Yugoslavia--will visit Illinois Wesleyan University on Monday, Sept. 27.

Drnovsek, who is among the world's youngest heads of state at age 49, will attend a reception, hold a news conference; and deliver IWU's President's Convocation address, marking the start of the 1999-2000 school year. For details of Drnovsek's schedule, see the attached News Media Advisory

A Man of Firsts

Drnovsek, prime minister of Slovenia since 1992, has a political pedigree that includes key roles as peacemaker, economic reformer, and human-rights advocate. He also is a man of several historic firsts--the first non-communist president of Yugoslavia, elected to office in the first free democratic elections in Eastern Europe.

Slovenia, a parliamentary democracy, is a Southeastern European nation slightly smaller than New Jersey with a population of about 2 million, bordering the Adriatic Sea, between Austria and Croatia.

On April 2, 1989, Drnovsek was elected--in a free and democratic contest--to the post of Slovenian representative to the collective presidency of the former Yugoslavia. His term as President of the Presidency spanned 1989-90--a time in which he also became head of the Non-Alignment Movement, the global political association of nations not teamed with the two superpowers, Slovenian Prime Minister to Washington or Moscow. He chaired the non-aligned group's Summit Conference in 1989.

As President of the Presidency, Drnovsek worked to shift the former Yugoslavia to a market economy and to integrate the country into the European Community. During his tenure, Drnovsek succeeded in liberating political prisoners held in the former Yugoslavia's jails, a clear sign of his commitment to human rights.

Drnovsek played a pivotal role in abolishing one-party rule, introducing a multi-party political system. The first free multi-party democratic elections in Slovenia and Croatia were held while he was President of the Presidency.

Independence and War

Slovenia voted overwhelmingly for independence in a plebiscite, declaring its freedom from the former Yugoslav federation on June 25, 1991. This triggered military action by the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA). Ultimately, the YPA withdrew from Slovenian territory. During the conflict, Drnovsek was the principal negotiator with the YPA and a key player in the Brioni talks, which ended the war.

As president of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Drnovsek was elected prime minister of the Republic of Slovenia in April, 1992. During his term in office, he has focused on Slovenia's political transformation, as well as privatization of the economy, rehabilitation of the banking system, and restructuring enterprises.

Strong Economic, Political Leadership

A Drnovsek biography points out that, ". . . the Government under the leadership of Dr. Drnovsek succeeded in bringing about . . . strong economic growth, low inflation, reorientation of foreign trade towards the western markets and full integration of Slovenia into numerous international organizations," including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the Council of Europe.

"The party Drnovsek presides over, the Liberal Democratic Party," the biography added, "holds presently over a third of the seats in the 90-seat Parliament and forms--in coalition with Christian Democrats--a strong and dedicated ruling majority."

Drnovsek, according to the biography, "has managed to establish a broad political consensus behind his policies and created a political base which facilitates further steps towards political and economic stabilization of Slovenia."

By 1996, Slovenia's growth rate reached 4 percent, "with [the Gross National Product] per capita at \$9,700, by far the highest figure in Central Europe," Drnovsek's biography reported.

"Therefore," the biographical sketch concluded, "it has not come as a surprise that some international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund praised Slovenia for 'its clearly excellent 'performance' and cited it as 'an example of excellent policy management in a transition country.'"

Drnovsek Background

Drnovsek, born in 1950 in Celje, Slovenia, received a doctorate in economics from the University of Maribor, Slovenia, where he specialized in monetary policy. He received an Honorary Degree from Boston University in 1994.

The Economist's Dictionary of Political Biography describes Drnovsek this way:

"He has worked in industry, banking, and the diplomatic service. A liberal technocrat, he stood as an independent candidate in Slovenia's first democratic presidential poll in May, 1989, and defeated the communist party's nominee.

"He advocates economic liberalism and closer links with the [European Community]. In October, 1990, he announced his withdrawal from the collective state presidency in protest against its systematic manipulation by Borisav Jovic, Serbia's member who took over as president [succeeding Drnovsek] for one year in May, 1990."

About IWU

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,070 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, and a \$1.65 million baseball stadium.

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FACT SHEET

Republic of Slovenia

Location: Southeastern Europe, eastern Alps, bordering the Adriatic Sea, between Austria and Croatia

Area: 7,906 square miles, slightly smaller than New Jersey

Population: 2 million, 90% Slovenes

Capital: Ljubljana, 1996 population: 276,397

Climate: Mediterranean, continental, and Alpine

Legislature: Parliamentary Democracy

Bicameral (2-house) legislature . . .

National Assembly is the highest legislative authority, consisting of 90 deputies elected for terms of 4 years by secret ballot, universal adult suffrage; Italian, Hungarian ethnic minorities guaranteed two seats in the National Assembly

National Council, 40 members, elected to represent social, economic, professional, and local interests for 5-year terms

Executive Branch:

President: Milan Kucan, Head of State. Elected for a maximum two, five-year terms, direct election

Prime Minister: Janez Drnovsek. Executive power is vested in the prime minister and an 18-member Cabinet; the government must be approved by the National Assembly

Judiciary: Judges exercise judicial authority, appointment is for life. There are district and circuit courts, the high courts are appeals courts, while the supreme court is the highest court in the judicial system. The constitutional court has the highest power of review of legislation to ensure its consistency with Slovenia's constitution. Its 9 judges are elected for 9-year terms.

Economic

Growth: 4%, 1998 estimate

Indicators: The Slovenian Mission to the United Nations reports:

"The active population is 65% of the total, 51% of women being in the active population group. A high proportion of the population are university graduates, and 11% of the labor force employed in the economy have university degrees.

"Over the last 3 years, there were 18 students per 1,000 inhabitants; 6,000 students graduate annually from university level education. There is an extensive social welfare system in Slovenia. In 1994, there were 219 physicians, 577.7 hospital beds, and 53 dentists for every 100,000 inhabitants. A universal state pension fund is available."

History: From as early as the 9th century, Slovenia has fallen under foreign rulers, including partial control by Bavarian dukes and the Republic of Venice. With the exception of Napoleon's 4-year tutelage of parts of Slovenia and Croatia--the "Illyrian Provinces"--Slovenia was part of the Hapsburg Empire from the 14th century until 1918. Nevertheless, Slovenia resisted Germanizing influences and retained its unique Slavic language and culture.

In 1918, Slovenia joined with other southern Slav states in forming the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, as part of the peace plan at the end of World War I.

Renamed in 1929 under a Serbian monarch, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia fell to the Axis powers during World War II. Following communist partisan resistance to German, Hungarian, and Italian occupation, socialist Yugoslavia was born under the helm of strongman Josip Broz Tito.

During the communist era, Slovenia became Yugoslavia's most prosperous republic, at the forefront of Yugoslavia's unique, mixed economic system.

Within a few years of Tito's death in 1980, Belgrade initiated plans to further concentrate political and economic power in its hands. Defying the politicians in Belgrade, Slovenia underwent a flowering of democracy and an opening of its society in cultural, civic, and economic areas to a degree almost unprecedented in the communist world.

In September, 1989, the General Assembly of the Yugoslav Republic of Slovenia adopted an amendment to its constitution asserting Slovenia's right to secede from Yugoslavia.

On Dec. 23, 1990, 88% of Slovenia's population voted for independence in a referendum.

On June 25, 1991, the Republic of Slovenia declared its independence.

A nearly bloodless 10-day war with Yugoslavia followed; Yugoslav forces withdrew after Slovenia demonstrated stiff resistance to Belgrade. The last Yugoslav soldier left Slovenia on Oct. 25, 1991.

Slovenia adopted its constitution on Dec. 23, 1991.

In 1992, Slovenia was official recognized by the European Union and Slovenia became a United Nations' member. 1992 also saw the first elections held in an independent Slovenia.

Two years later, Slovenia joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and became a founding member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Slovenia became a full member of the Central European Free Trade Agreement in 1996. That year, Slovenia became associated with the European Union and it also associated with the Western European Union.

As a young independent republic, Slovenia pursued economic stabilization and further political openness, while emphasizing its Western outlook and central European heritage.

Sources:

U.S. State Department, Background Notes: Slovenia, February, 1999

CIA World Fact Book

Republic of Slovenia, Embassy to the U.K. and Ireland

Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations

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News Media Advisory

Editor's Note: The Prime Minister of Slovenia, Janez Drnovsek, will visit Illinois Wesleyan University on Monday, Sept. 27. He will likely offer first-hand observations about the troubled Balkan region—the site of many wars in the 20th century, including the recent NATO air campaign over ethnic cleansing in Kosovo—and insights into what it takes for a nation to move from communism to democracy.

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Event: Reception, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek will meet members of the IWU community and others.

Date: Sept. 27 (Monday)

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Location: Merwin Art Gallery, Joyce Eichhorn Ames School of Art, Building, 302 E. Graham, Bloomington

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Event: News Conference

Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek will have a 10-minute press availability to take questions from the news media immediately before his President's Convocation speech.

Date: Sept. 27 (Monday)

Time: 3:50 p.m.

Location: IWU School of Music, Reception Room, 1st Floor, Presser Hall, 303 E. University, Bloomington

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Event: President's Convocation

Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek will keynote IWU's President's Convocation, an assembly marking the start of the 1999-2000 school year, IWU's 149th year.

Date: Sept. 27 (Monday)

Time: 4 p.m.

Location: Westbrook Auditorium, 1st Floor, Presser Hall (IWU School of Music), 303 E.
University Ave., Bloomington

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