

Report

55th International Congress of the AWR

From 22nd-25th September 2005 the annual International Congress of the AWR took place in Ljubljana, one of the smallest capital cities of Europe. This year's meeting was entitled, "Ethnic cleansing in Europe and repatriation after flight and expulsion" and was attended by approximately 60 members of the AWR.

The city of Ljubljana took its current name after the end of WWI. The city can however be traced in historical documents as far back as 1144 under the names Emona and Laibach and was allegedly founded by the Argonaut Jason.

This year's conference was organised by the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Law (Dean Prof. Dr. Franjo Štiblar) with the collaboration of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts – SASA (ZRC SAZU) – Ljubljana (Director Prof. Dr. Oto Luthar) and the Austrian Scientific Office in Ljubljana (University Lecturer Dr. Feliks Bister).

The working sessions of the board of directors, chairmanship and scientific council as well as the advisory board of the editorial office commenced early on the Thursday afternoon. For all participants the conference was drawn to a close with a reception accompanied by typical Slovenian food and wine held by Prof. Dr. Oto Luthar in the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

The 55th International Congress of the AWR was inaugurated by its president, Prof. Dr. Rainer Wiestner, whose inaugural address was followed by the commemorative speech "Ethnic cleansing and Human Rights in the 20th Century" by Prof. Dr. Danilo Türk. Further welcoming speeches were held by the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Prof. Dr. Franjo Štiblar, PD Dr. Vincenc Rajšp, Speaker of the Slovenian AWR Section as well as Dr. Miroslav Polzer, representative of the two co-organisers.

After a short coffee break the first working session started under the topic "Ethnic Cleansing". Contributions followed from Ass. Prof. Dr. Barbara Franz (USA) on „War in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its international involvement“, Dr. Luigino Manca (Roma) regarding, "Women in armed conflicts: Rape as a means of ethnic expulsion, prevention and repression," and Dr. Eva Maria Barki (Vienna) on the issue of, "Ethnic cleansing versus the right of a home country".

The second working session on "Repatriation" got underway in the afternoon. Presentations were made by Prof. Dr. Andrzej Sakson (Poznan) on the "Repatriation of the Polish population: 1945 – 2005" and by Prof. Dr. Maria Rita Saulle (Roma) concerning "The return of real property as a condition for the return of the refugees: model former Yugoslavia". These were followed by Prof. Dr. Peter Stiegnitz (Vienna) on the "Social-analytical aspects of the ethnic cleansing of the Jews in Europe under their repatriation", Dr. Ralf Roskopf (Schweinfurt) "Right of a home country – Right of repatriation" and Simone Grimm (Leonberg) on the "Repatriation of refugees – The European dimension".

The congress continued with the conferment of the third Research Prize 2004 by the German Section of the AWR. Dr. Stefan Berglund, patron of the award and representative of the UNHCR in Berlin, awarded Simone Grimm with the prize for her thesis.

The Conferment and the second day of the congress had its successful conclusion with the wonderful reception of the Ambassador of Austria, Dr. Valentin Inzko, at his residence.

The third working session "Integration and Repatriation" opened the third day of the congress on Saturday and informed about "Integration and compensation in German post-war debt redistribution – a successful central element of managing the German post-war responsibilities" (Dr. Karl Heinz Schaefer, Bad Homburg). Further contributions included, "Voluntary return: necessity or virtue" (Dott. Sonia Masiello, Roma) and "Repatriation of refugees from Slovenia to Bosnia-Herzegovina and their Reintegration in the home country" (Natalija Vrečer, M.A., Ljubljana).

Refreshed after a short coffee break, the participants took part in the fourth and final working session, entitled "Varia – Refugees and displaced persons". Presentations followed on "Relationships between local village inhabitants and refugees in an Austrian municipality" (Iris Gachowetz, Vienna), "The question of diplomatic protection of refugees by host States" (Dr. Alberta Fabbricotti, Roma), "Who were the refugees and who the Optants? Post-war emigration from the District of Koper/Capodistria" (Jure Gombač, Ljubljana) and finally „Child soldiers and child prostitutes" (Dr. Rita Wiesinger, Vienna).

Each of the four working sessions was followed by vivid discussions which were at their maximum by the adoption of the Resolution during the General Assembly.

Prof. Dr. Damjan Prelovšek then led the congress participants on a guided tour through Ljubljana, which highlighted the contributions made to the city by Slovenian Master-Architect Josef Plečnik. Under the soft autumn sun in the early evening, the group visited sites such as the dragon bridge, the Franciscan Church, the Town Hall and various other examples of architecture designed by Plečnik.

Finally the evening and also the congress ended in a small wine cellar with Slovenian wine and solid gammon. On Sunday, many of the AWR members took the opportunity of taking part in an organised trip to the southern part of Slovenia. Their visit took in a Sinti- and Roma settlement, where they were informed about the social, economic and legal situation of minorities in Slovenia.

A further destination was the monastery Stična (meaning Parakeet), a small abbey of the Cistercian Fraternity which dates from 1135. Until 1462 Stična was the most important religious centre of the Lower Carniola. It remained so until 1784, even after the foundation of the Diocese of Ljubljana, one of the most important ecclesiastic centres of the country.

With a meal consisting of sucking-pig and roast lamb the congress participants enjoyed again the delicious Slovenian cuisine.

*God's blessing on all nations,
Who long and work for that bright day,
When o'er earth's habitations
No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
Who long to see
That all men free
No more shall foes, but neighbours be.*
(France Prešeren, 1800 – 1849)

Simone Emmert