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INTERNATIONAL P.E.N.
A WORLD ASSOCIATION OF WRITERS

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Writers for Peace Committee

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Ljubljana, 17th January 2011

Dear Colleagues,

We have the honour and the pleasure of inviting two delegates of your centre to the 43rd International PEN conference, organized jointly by the Slovene PEN centre and the Writers for Peace Committee of International PEN at Bled in Slovenia. As you have been informed, the conference will take place from **4th to 8th of May 2011** in the PARK hotel in Bled. The theme proposed for the first two round tables are: ***Bibliodiversity and the Future of Writing*** and ***Freedom of Expression: overt and covert Censorship*** while the theme of the Peace Committee round table will be ***The Image of the Stranger in literature as a Route to Peace.***

You are welcome to participate in the discussions and/or prepare papers on the proposed themes (papers should not exceed 3 pages). In order to organize the discussions and to prepare the conference material the papers should reach us before **the 15th of March** in English, French or Slovene.

During the conference prepared papers will not be read but summarized so as to allow more time for reactions and discussion. Enclosed you will find documents prepared by members of our Board which are meant to provoke your responses on the issues of the themes.

The conference fee for delegates, participants and accompanying guests amounts to **270 EUR** and covers conference material, social events and hotel accomodation including the meals stated in the programme. Travel expenses have to be covered by the delegates, participants and accompanying guests themselves.

Enclosed you will find the provisional programme of the meeting as well as the registration form. We would kindly ask you to return the registration forms duly completed before **the end of March. If you need a visa, you should let us know as soon as possible, so that we can send you the guarantee letter needed for the visa.**

The official languages of the conference will be English, French and Slovene. Simultaneous translation from and into these languages will be assured.

Awaiting a positive answer from you, we remain,

yours sincerely,

Edvard Kovač
Chair of the WfPC

Marjan Strojan
President of Slovene PEN

Bibliodiversity and the future of writing

The term bibliodiversity is used to describe cultural diversity applied to the world of publishing. As an echo of the term biodiversity, it refers to the necessary diversity of the editorial output made available to readers. Bibliodiversity appears today to be threatened by an editorial glut and financial concentration in the world of publishing, which paves the way to the supremacy of a handful of major publishing groups and the quest for high productivity.

Bibliodiversity is one among many new tools that help us to address problems linked to geographical, political, economical and developmental contexts. Measures should be taken to produce and make accessible non-mainstream, independent works of literature. Literary genres at the risk of extinction should be protected. Policies should be generated to prevent the standardization of expression and promote biblio-diversity.

Digital media is essential for freedom of thought and expression. The digital media is a potential sphere of democratization. We oppose government surveillance and censorship strategies aimed at limiting the free flow of information and ideas. New ways should be found to access high quality information and to preserve authors' rights.

And last but not least: linguistic oppression is unacceptable. Everyone should be free to express themselves in the language of their choice. Methods should be devised to transgress the hierarchy between centre and periphery. Minority languages and "minor" languages must be supported and translation into and out of these languages must be funded. The role of translation is of the utmost importance in determining the literary landscape. Translation is essential for cross border literacy. New sources of funding must be sought and existing ones protected.

Marjan Strojan

Freedom of expression: overt and covert censorship

Freedom of expression is one of the fundamental freedoms and so every society wishes to create at least the appearance of freedom in the media and in public speaking and appearances. Even totalitarian regimes, whilst limiting this freedom, feel the need to justify their actions as a matter of necessity, which they say is only a temporary state that will help to avert the even worse catastrophe they always claim could strike the whole country or nation. This is why authoritarian regimes cultivate the illusion that the abolition of the freedom of expression is only temporary and do everything in their power to make it socially acceptable and thus internalised.

However, even democratic societies are not free of censorship, just as they are not strangers to totalitarian leanings or ideologies. But this 'invisible censorship' is much harder to recognise and acknowledge. The invisible censorship in democratic societies is even more internalised than in totalitarian regimes. Every society internalises not only fundamental values such as the sanctity of life, but also prejudices and the assumptions of the dominant ideology. Ideologies dictate that some things are obvious and can not withstand critical consideration.

This is why it is very important for intellectuals and writers in every society to admit to themselves what are the ideological factors that dominate a particular civilisation. We can see that nowadays in Western society it is the so called "individual genome", which means that every person is fully realised simply by becoming realised as an individual. The realisation of an individual is his duty and undeniable right. The protection of an individual and his property is the premise that dictates a specific style and type of expression. This gave birth to a manner of expression that is covertly legalised and includes sanctions if someone sins against the "politically correct" manner of expression.

This round table discussion should throw light on which values and views in individual societies are dictated by "political correctness". The question remains how to outgrow the frameworks and mental schematics we have internalised and which function like new "taboos" inside us. Or more precisely, how can an intellectual and a writer find genuine words for thought and poetry to express the miracle of being human or the surprising nature of the "event" that is man – man with other people and man in the world, beyond the established norms?

Edvard Kovač

BLED 2011

Provisional Programme

Wednesday, May 4

- Arrival of participants
18.00 Literary evening
19.00 Reception given by **Mr. Janez Fajfar**, Mayor of Bled

Thursday, May 5

- 9.30 Opening of the 43rd International Bled Conference (Park Hotel- Cankar Hall)
1st round table
Bibliodiversity and the future of writing
moderator: **Marjan Strojjan**
13.00 Lunch
15.00 2nd round table
Freedom of expression: overt and covert censorship
moderator: **Franca Tiberto**
19.00 Literary evenings of the participants in different Slovene towns
19.0 Dinner
19.30 Literary evenings of the participants in different Slovene towns
20.30 Literary evening of the participants in Bled (Park hotel-Prešeren Hall)

Friday, May 6

- 9.30 Round table of the Writers for Peace Committee
The image of the stranger in literature as a route to peace
moderator: **Edvard Kovač**
13.00 Lunch
15.15 Departure for Ljubljana
18.00 Literary evening in the Ljubljana Castle
19.00 Reception given by **Mr Zoran Jankovič**, Mayor of Ljubljana
20.30 Departure for Bled

Saturday, May 7

- 9.00 Meeting of the Writers for Peace Committee
12.30 Excursion and picnic
19.0 Reception given by **Mr. Danilo Türk**, President of the Republic of Slovenia

Sunday, May 28

Departure of participants

Official languages: Slovene, English, French