



# THE SLOVAK SPECTATOR

CAREERS

from page 6

FOCUS  
of this issue

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## NEWS

### Nobel laureate lauded

The award of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to imprisoned Chinese human-rights activist Liu Xiaobo has been welcomed by Slovak politicians despite a furious response from China.

pg 2

### Looking for a way back

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) are pinning their hopes of a political comeback on forthcoming municipal elections, after losing all their parliamentary seats in June.

pg 3

## OPINION

### The first 100 days

The Iveta Radičová government can claim to have made some real strides since taking office in July, and it is undoubtedly better than its predecessor. But looking good by comparison with the Fico administration will not be enough.

pg 5

## BUSINESS FOCUS

### Struggling to grow jobs

While the economy is growing strongly, according to official figures, employment levels are still struggling to recover. This week's Business Focus, on careers, looks at the reasons why.

pg 6

### Helping Slovaks home

Tens of thousands of Slovaks are currently working abroad. A local initiative is encouraging some of them to bring their skills home, but organisers acknowledge that moving back can be difficult.

pg 7

## CULTURE

### Bare naked ladies

A new exhibition featuring a fresh look at female nude portraits opened at the Slovak National Gallery recently. The launch event was enlivened by a male stalker.

pg 11



The distinctive headquarters of Slovak Radio (left) and Slovak Television, both in Bratislava. The government has announced it intends to merge the two organisations to form a single state-owned broadcaster. Photo: Sme - Tomáš Benedikovič

# Minister sets out new future for STV and SRO

A NEW media colossus housing both of Slovakia's public-service broadcasters - television and radio - is Culture Minister Daniel Krajcer's solution for what he called the catastrophic situation within Slovak Television (STV), which has lately been bleeding from several wounds: mounting debts, a general director who cannot be sacked, and loss of credibility.

Krajcer, a nominee of the Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) party, wants to have STV and Slovak Radio (SRO) placed under one roof by January 2011. While observers had been expecting such a

decision, they were surprised by the brief time frame within which Krajcer wants the two media organisations, which have several hundred employees, to merge.

"It is a non-standard solution, given its speed, but it is a move which at the same time includes some of the conceptual changes I have been

working on for a longer time," Krajcer said.

Krajcer believes that he has both political support as well as the backing of the public, at least to a certain degree. The minister has restated that he is principally in favour of preserving the public-service media.

"I consider their existence [as being] justified as they should broadcast programmes that are needed but still uninteresting for private television stations from a commercial aspect," Krajcer said in an official statement.

See SRTV pg 2

BY BEATA BALOGOVÁ  
Spectator staff

# Unions rally against austerity package

OCTOBER has become a month of protests for Slovakia's trade unions. The government's austerity package, with its €1.7 billion in cuts and tax rises, has become the main target of the unions' frustrations. The measures, which were designed by the cabinet of Iveta Radičová, are now being considered by MPs, who

seem likely to modify some of the proposals. During the first two weeks of October unionists rallied against the package in Žilina and Košice. The protests culminated in a demonstration in Bratislava on October 12 which attracted more than 3,000 union members.

The Confederation of Trade Unions (KOZ) is demanding that the state does not tighten its belt at the expense of employees and the most vulnerable groups in society. The unions oppose the hike in value added tax (VAT) from 19 to 20 percent and are instead de-

manding differentiated VAT rates with, for example, lower ones for food products and a higher one for luxury products. The unions say the state should be more aggressive about curbing its own administrative expenses and changing some employment rules, KOZ spokesman Otto Ewiak told The Slovak Spectator.

KOZ is also against the increase in the excise tax rate on coal and natural gas, farmers' loss of a tax bonus through their use of so-called red diesel, and government pension reforms.

See DEMO pg 4

BY BEATA BALOGOVÁ  
Spectator staff

# Red sludge risks remain

Environmental group says serious damage is possible

BY MICHAELA TEREZANI  
Spectator staff

ENVIRONMENTAL disasters do not recognise state borders, Slovaks realised after the spill of toxic red sludge on October 4 near the town of Ajka in Hungary, about an hour's drive from the Slovak border. The toxic sludge flowed swiftly across seven Hungarian villages, leaving several people dead, scores injured, and many more homeless; the wide extent of the contamination of soil, water and air may have a long-term detrimental impact on the whole region.

The Environment Ministry in Bratislava reported that the Slovak Water Management Company has been monitoring pollution levels in the Danube River between the mouth of the Moson branch of the Danube and the town of Štúrovo following the sludge spill. The analyses released on October 12 showed pH levels between 7.91 and 8.12, which the water management company said was normal.

According to the report, the pH of the monitored section of the Danube had returned to its normal level on October 9.

See MUD pg 3

# 'Hayek' state secretary quits

BY BEATA BALOGOVÁ  
Spectator staff

IVAN Švejna, one of two deputy ministers named in media stories about state contracts given to a firm of which both were directors, has stepped down. Nominated by Most-Híd as state secretary at the Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications following the June general election, Švejna left his post over what he called the immense media pressure. He has since returned to parliament to resume his job as an MP and take a seat on the parliamentary finance committee.

Švejna resigned before the state audit authority had reported on deals made between Hayek Consulting, the company he co-owned before entering politics, and the state.

Švejna said on October 8 that he had taken his own decision to resign in order to protect the Hayek Foundation, under whose auspices Hayek Consulting operated, and Most-Híd.

See OUT pg 4

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