

THE LAND AMONG BATTLES

Zdravko Duša



Translation: Helena Fošnjar

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It was originally intended for this book to begin with excerpts from *Zgodovina Tolminskega* (The history of the Tolmin region), published in 1882 by Simon Rutar. Somehow it seemed to make perfect sense, but then things took a different turn. As the lengthy, horrifying pages and chapters piled up about what is presumably the single most important development in the history of Tolmin, the Soča (Isonzo) Front during the First World War, reading one of the pivotal works on that period, *Koraki skozi meglo* (Stepping Through the Fog) by Vasja Klavora, opened another door into the book. Not only because this has been my own entrance into the heart of the Tolmin region, and I know exactly what it refers to, it became clear to me - as I read through the description of the view that unfolds as you take a right turn under the Mengore hill and above Volče, and a wide panorama reveals the outlines of the homestead beneath the road, behind it the village, and lower, under the village, to the right, St Daniel, followed by layers of background scenery reaching further and higher, across fields and hills and mountains, all the way up to the clouds, which can probably be seen all the way from the Bohinj corner - how this stricter Tolmin area can be embraced by a single view, and the borders I searched for while selecting and discarding what I had written, were as clear as day up here. There is no pithier way of putting it. But above all, it is impossible to bring together, in a few paragraphs, the landscape and history with an outline of the heritage and character of people that live here, and thus happily enjoy their company, more beautifully than it was done by Klavora.

Following the above logic, the Tolmin basin should also include the area between Bučenica and Modrej up to Most na Soči; accounts from World War I have stretched towards the west across the villages of Kozmerice and Sela, and included, tracing the outer limits of the Tolmin Bridgehead, the villages of Kozaršče, Čiginj, and Volče with Mengore in the centre, while to the east, of course, the meadowlands along the river Idrijca up to Trebuša, the gorges and slopes alongside the river Bača, and the Šentviška planota plateau. Revolutionaries and men of letters came mostly from this area. Writers Ivan Pregelj and Saša Vuga came from Most na Soči, Ciril Kosmač **built his** personality somewhat higher up the river, in Slap ob Idrijci; he was not born into a prominent family, like Vuga (and neither was Pregelj), but in a shack in Bukovica, as the modest family property by the Idrijca river was called, his father revealed to him the universal value of human pride. So, in the end, without premeditation, the literary landscape almost precisely matched the borders of today's Tolmin municipality.

As regards writings, the first to emerge from the shadows of time was the Fish Faronika. The ancient folk song was first recorded in Podmelec in 1886 and later became famous as a source to explorers of Slavic, wider Indo-European, and even non-European creation myths. Three more versions were put down, all in Podmelec, where they continued late into the twentieth century to tell about a giant fish that carries our world on its back: if it flips its tail, there will be an earthquake, if it goes under, the whole world will drown as well. Following the ruthless pagan creature, Jesus swims up, setting the limits to this wanton destruction: he separates people to those who are worthy of ruin, and those who do not deserve it. We are at the very core of the meeting between the pagan and the Christian worlds, at the birth of mercy, which began, loaded with hope, its march into the world and history.

The Fish Faronika was the obsession that Ivan Pregelj bestowed upon the protagonist of his novel *Plebanus Joannes* (The Priest John) - Janez Potrebujež, of whom the Tolmin parish chronicle states, that he was performing the job of a vicar at St Mary's Assumption Church – the one celebrated in the poem *V Tminu tam na ilovci*, putting into verse the legend of the flower that blossoms every year or so by the statue of Mary on the front exterior – for as long as forty years, from 1516 to 1556. This is the time when the Tolmin region was struck by the plague, which is, of course, a suitable challenge for questioning about sin and punishment: why must all men perish, far and wide? The middle-length novel (published in 1921), with settings between Tolmin and Volče, where Plebanus's foe and immoral antipode de Menezis served as a vicar, introduces a local character whose constant conflicts arise out of the clash between what he feels and what he is supposed to believe, between conscience and insight, between principle and consequence, between carnality of the body and sanctity of the spirit. In the novel *Tolminci* (The People of Tolmin), Pregelj also implants this inner struggle in the peasant character of Andrej Laharnar, who scrapes painfully between his faith in divine providence and his personal imperatives to revolt; the same moral discord, as we shall see later on, is revived by Ciril Kosmač through the torments of Temnikar, a peasant placed in the role of arbiter between immoral survival and a moral stand at the cost of his own, and other people's death.

The great Tolmin peasant uprising is the central emancipatory act in the history of this little land. The cruelties of the count of Tolmin were a constantly recurring theme in folk tales, where the master of the Kozlov rob hill would be punished by hell for having left a peasant to rot away in the cellar over a single farthing, or would happily be seen eaten alive by lice. Then, in 1713, the march of the Tolmin peasants, who gathered on Mengore hill and set out to free their wrongfully imprisoned countrymen from the Gorica prison, gave rise to the rebellion of the residents of the Goriška Brda Hills, splashed over into the Vipava region, and spilt across Karst all the way to Duino.

The rebel farmers formed a peasant union, the Idrija miners were agitated – in short, an overthrow occurred that was stifled only by the German special unit soldiers and the *krajišniki* (named after the Military Frontier region, Vojna Krajina) from Karlovac. Military patrols were chasing peasants under suspicion, more than a hundred of them experienced the horrors of the Gorica castle dungeon; eleven Tolmin farmers lay their heads on the chopping block in the square in front of the Gorica church one year after the suppression of the uprising. Taxes, punishments, confiscation of assets and increased surveillance long continued to trouble the rebellious places. Frescos in St Mary's Assumption Church in Podmelec (probably from 1718), their stunning depictions of the lost souls' cruel torments in hell, were supposedly inspired precisely by this troublesome air built around the post-revolt repression.

The twentieth century discovers the revolt as a national, social, or ethical subject, or simply as an exciting theme for storytelling. This epic chapter in Tolmin's history was treated by France Bevk: *Iskra pod pepelom* (A Spark in the Ashes), *Iz iskre požar* (Conflagration from a Spark), *Tolminski punt* (The Peasant Revolt in Tolmin), and *Pravica do življenja* (Right to Life) - under the same title, the latter was dramatized by Janez Dolenc. Alojzij Remec wrote the novel *Veliki punt* (The Great Revolt). In poetry, the most famous is the sonnet cycle *Tolminski punt* (The Tolmin Revolt) by Alojz Gradnik, his fellow countryman Zlatko Kaučič from the Brda region translated the eponymous theme into experimental jazz nearly a hundred years later; the opera *Tolminski puntarji* (The Rebels of Tolmin) was written by composer Ubald Vrabc, it resounded with songwriter Iztok Mlakar and became the topic of a comic book adaptation (by Italian author Remigio Gabellini), it was depicted visually by painters Tone Kralj, Riko Debenjak, Rudi Skočir, as well as a Tolmin-born sculptor Boštjan Kavčič, who eternalized the uprising with a statue in the heart of the city, marking its tercentennial, and who is presented in this book with one of the most recent depictions of the Fish Faronika; to Silvester Komel and Tolmin-born Ivan Čargo, the revolt served as a thematic starting point. The narrative in *Pustota* (Waste Land) by Vladimir Kavčič revolves around an exiled family of rebels from Tolmin, who settled somewhere between the Cerknio and Žiri hills. The revolt's most recognizable literary expression, however, was provided by Ivan Pregelj in his novel *Tolminci* (The People of Tolmin), followed later by *Štefan Golja in njegovi* (Štefan Golja and His Folks), and *Zadnji upornik* (The Last Rebel), and his popular novella *Matkova Tina* (Tina from the Matko's Inn). Initially, when it was serialized in the *Dom in svet* (Home and World) magazine, Pregelj had titled the first as *Tlačani* (Serfs), and only renamed it to *Tolminci* when it was about to be published as a book, thus creating – or simply recapping, since after two centuries "Tolminci" had become a generic name for rebels – a collective subject, unpredictable when it comes to loyalty, and consistent when it comes to their rights.

Seen from the court of the Gorica *Landstände* (Provincial Estates), the Tolmin people are a problematic, stubborn, and highly opinionated community. They are portrayed in the same way by France Bevk in *Znamenja na nebu* (Signs in the Sky): after conquering Tolmin, the Gorica victors over the patriarchy are in for a cruel reality check, instead of the expected statement of loyalty on behalf of their new underlings. Still, Pregelj was also able to expatiate alongside his fellow landmen, and capture their wit, as in the story about Anton Muznik, also a real-life person, born in Most na Soči, who explored and described the Gorica climate in the second half of the 18th century.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Tolmin awakens to a nationwide turmoil. Poet Simon Gregorčič lived quite nearby, he was practically a local, and at that time an icon and linchpin personality of the Slovene national awakening (already during his school years, he performed with a commemorative poem at one of the cultural/political events called *Bésedé*, which were held regularly in Tolmin's 'Reading Club' – a social and educational club), while in that same period, the city of Tolmin itself saw lawyers Peter Kozler, Jovan Vesel Koseski, Karel Lavrič, and Henrik Tuma, all important co-creators of Slovene national history and – to a lesser or greater extent – of local life in Tolmin. It was here that Kozler was finalizing his work on the famous first map of Slovene lands, and had already collected commissions; a testimony to this is his angry letter of complaint about the intervention of the military court in Vienna, which had sealed his test prints and printing plates. Karel Lavrič, a sensitive soul, went through a personal crisis during the period he spent in Tolmin, converting from Catholicism to Protestantism, and attempting suicide following a disappointment over a love affair – yet establishing a Slovene reading club for the local inhabitants. As he was leaving Tolmin, an anonymous "gymnasium student from Gorica" wrote him a rapturous farewell sonnet; hiding behind the modest signature was Simon Gregorčič. The life of the market town was recounted amusingly by Henrik Tuma. Not that it was of great amusement to him, as he was a sombre person, and conceited as well, yet intellectually piercing and stern. The buffoonery of the market town worthies, the intrusive ease of their presence, and the irresponsible way in which they handled their duties, draw a clear line between Tolmin, its worthies – this blend of Friulians, Italians, but also Carniolans and Croats, who were brought to the place by administrative jobs, clerics, litigators and personnel, the locals that worked for them, the transfer of authority with its pertaining small privileges and trainings in eloquence and public appearance, which is why the Tolmin people celebrated, and became masterful in, histrionics – and the surrounding villages, which he would visit to enthuse about native inhabitants and the vigorousness of their language: it was here that he saw the true potential and support for the upcoming nationwide project.

(It is, however, interesting – or typical? – that Ivan Kuk, a local, who published the "tale" of *Dantejeva jama* (Dante's Cave) in the Klagenfurt magazine *Prijatelj* (Friend), sees this same Tolmin region somewhat pathetically as an unredeemed wilderness; a view from the top of mountain Migovec towards Upper Carniola invitingly discloses to him the vast beauty of the mountains and the Bled Lake, their implied greatness in terms of national awakening not excluded; but as he turns to his native valley, he sees the Kozlov rob hill squatting murkily like a plucked down haystack, behind it a messy puddle, and even this puddle needs to be filled from time to time, as it does not always contain enough water.) Tuma was well-equipped with knowledge and an excellent memory, lacking neither passion nor empathy, his storytelling talent was indubitable, hence the Tolmin chapter of his autobiography is a witty analysis of the Tolmin milieu.

Everything changes with the arrival of the railway in 1906 and the world war a decade later. More than fifty years had to pass before the remains and impressions of the latter began to compose into a wider picture. Today, historical texts, documents, and personal testimonies could fill a small library; most of the credit for depictions of the Tolmin Bridgehead goes to Vasja Klavora, who combined local testimonies and military history in the already mentioned work *Stepping Through the Fog*. In our book, five different perspectives on this awful place were chosen. German officer Erwin Rommel offers a dry factual analysis and perceives the Tolmin area as a physical space with surveyors' bench marks and positions, a battleground, from which one's view tries to decipher the physical environment outlined on the military map. The first Austrian war correspondent Alice Schalek, kept more or less safely above the arena, recapitulates this military perspective, but already attempts to invigorate it through the words of a witness, as she adds concrete meaning, a sense of experience, and human figures to the military terms. We step off the battleground and into the life of locals through the diary notes of Slovene soldier Jakob Prešeren, who fought in the gravest battles of the Isonzo Front in those crucial days and nights of October, 1917. His account of the fierce twelfth Isonzo battle is militaristically realistic, but as soon as he enters a village house we find ourselves among local people, who would refuse to open the door to him if he were a German and foreigner. When Prešeren moves on to empty the liberated Friulian wine cellars, Ciril Munih approaches, the St Lucia vicar and a chronicler of Most na Soči and the surrounding villages, portraying the wartime life of this village community, i.e. the people who have not just passed by and will not leave once the battles will have subsided, but who have taken the burden of war and placed it on their shoulders and carry it the same way any ruthless fate is carried.

The depictions form a fresco brimful of soldiery, where the smashing sound of falling grenades interchanges with the sounds of the accordion, and the cruel fates of those who got hit alternate with the sound of singing late into the night alongside a jug of wine, terrified of becoming refugees. Here, the story of war separates from documenting impressions, moving with Ciril Kosmač to its fifth, literary incarnation, and elevating images from reality into a story of kinship and family at the cutting edge of history.

In Javorca, the soldiers left behind a little wooden church, coloured and painted in vibrant colours of the Vienna Secession, designed in 1916 by Viennese architect Remigius Geyling in memory of his fallen fellow soldiers, and erected by his comrades. Austrian artilleryman Oskar Kokoschka captured Tolmin in his notebook. Slovene painter Ivan Vavpotič recorded the course of events in the frontlines and hinterland. Maksim Gaspari, Hinko Smrekar and Anton Koželj generously lent their talents to a postcard series called *Vojska v slikah* (The War in Images); it was indeed the poem *Soči* (To the Soča River) by Simon Gregorčič, as well as some of his other encouraging and national awareness-raising poems that often inspired or enhanced illustrations on postcards used during wartime correspondence. Fran Tratnik, albeit in Ljubljana, created a few expressive drawings of refugees from the places he knew well from his pre-war stint there.

Prešeren and Munih speak of the great expectations the local inhabitants had as they rejoiced at the downfall of the much hated Austro-Hungary, and the approaching country of Southern Slavs appeared on the horizon in the promise of national independence. Instead of this, the places devastated by war were occupied by Italians, while Tolmin as a city, as well as the art of this region are characterized during the 1920s and 30s by a sense of historical injustice, the immediate severity of Mussolini's fascism, and a genocidal policy of denying language and culture. The sonnet cycle by one of greatest Slovene poets Alojz Gradnik about the Tolmin peasants' revolt actually unfolds as a manifesto, a call for national resistance through a poetised version of the story of the uprising almost two centuries earlier. The present selection features a sonnet *Štefan Golja to his father Simon Golja*, which sums up the frustrations of that era. The same goes for two sonnets titled *Tolmin*. Gradnik, serving as a judge, was even living in Tolmin, although for a very short period of time, after he had moved from Gorica following the beginning of World War I; later he moved to Cerkno. (Another poet, who wrote down Tolmin's poetic vignette bearing the same title at approximately the same time, Srečko Kosovel, visited these places for entirely different reasons: his ideological comrade and sweetheart, Fanica Obid from Bukovo, was a student at the Tolmin teachers' college.)

Thus, the revolt cycle is conceived as a means of mobilization, as a manifesto and warning with a clear dramaturgy and rhetoric, with ritualized listing of Slovene place names that were threatened to become eradicated due to Italianisation, and of Italian family names serving as a warning about the long history of submission. Similar covert or open strategies can be found in the depictions of biblical motifs created by painter Tone Kralj, who participated in the restoration of churches in the Slovene Littoral that were devastated during World War I. Slavic apostles, Cyril and Methodius on the right side of the presbytery in the church in Volče - according to Egon Pelikan – exchange glance with Saints Peter and Paul on the left, thus placing the universalism of Catholicism and particularism of Slavism/Sloveneness on the same level. Christ's mockers and murderers on the Stations of the Cross in the church of St Lucia (Most na Soči) are obvious caricatures of Mussolini's attackers, dressed in colours of the Italian flag and wearing typical fascist fezzes, while in the church of St Vitus in Šentviška gora, Mussolini's typical posture with legs spread apart plays the role of supervisor during the flagellation of a helpless saint, as his two torturers take it out on him, wearing clear signs of Nazi and Fascist soldiers.

In that time, Ciril Kosmač enters the literary arena: brought up as a patriot, intellectually brilliant, deprived by class, but above all, the most artistically talented author from the twentieth century Tolmin. Already in his secondary school years he found a connection to members of the nationalist organization TIGR, soon falling into the hands of police investigators, and eventually, following his conviction (and pardon, due to his young age) at the trial in Rome, fled across the border to Yugoslavia. Just like Ivo Šorli (born in Podmelec) and Ciril Drekonja (from the nearby settlement of Temljine), Kosmač shared the fate of other intellectuals from the Littoral, who retreated to their national home base. Šorli was in his early twenties when he wrote his "letter to fellow countrymen", a lawyer with a settled existence provided by his job as a public notary, and an established writer with an almost completed opus, a master of erotic prose. As for Kosmač and Drekonja, it was only after 1930, when they came to Yugoslavia, that their opuses began to form, and are, understandably, thematically quite closely linked to the Tolmin region, its peasant population, and its rural setting; apart from his own writing, Drekonja also collected and published folk tales from the Tolmin region. France Bevk saw his own persistence and his political and literary activity among the local people as his central mission, refusing to move to Ljubljana which offered a safer and inclusive working environment. During the time of increased violence he described the 14th century Tolmin, marked by the struggles between bishops of Aquileia and the Gorica counts, in one of the most extensive chronicles of the Tolmin history, the trilogy of novels *Znamenja na nebu* (Signs in the Sky).

After the war, writer and journalist Janko Perat, who also depicted other adventures of the Slovene Littoral population under Italy, wrote *Golo upanje* (Naked Hope), which revived the events at the Tolmin border between Italy and Yugoslavia, where politics mingled with the folklore of smuggling, which became, following a turn of events, a spying activity and a matter of national security. The period concludes with a seemingly merry jailbird poem (it turns out to be really sad, once we learn about the outcome) by Simon Kos, a defendant in the Second Trieste trial. This young member of the TIGR movement couldn't care less, laughing joyfully and frankly at the graveness of his anti-state activity, and declaring it an offence similar to smuggling or physical violence in everyday quarrels, for which his peers were locked down in other cells. He was looking forward to turning back to mischief with his friends, after being released from prison. On the 14th of December 1941 he was sentenced to death and, according to the memories of Dorče Sardoč, he was the only one out of four who was unable to grasp the idea, crying all night after the pronouncement of sentence, until dawn, when they took him to the execution grounds.

In the same straightforward manner, folk poet Pavla Leban recounts the general state of mind, morals, and awareness at a time when passive resistance progressed to liberation movement. Kosmač's artistic treatment of the same topic produced one of the pivotal works from the Second World War period, the novel *Balada o trobenti in oblaku* (Ballad of the Trumpet and the Cloud). The inner struggles of Jernej Temnikar, placed before the choice of inevitable sacrifice, take us back to the character of Janez Potrebujež. Both, the aged peasant and the soul shepherd, are seen standing lost amidst the Tolmin landscape, robbed of the safe shell of the village parsonage and of the warm shelter of family farm, insignificant worms under the hefty mass of the Krn Mountain, must choose, gain, and carry the burden of their own humaneness.

The Ballad of the Trumpet and the Cloud first appeared in the magazine *Naša sodobnost* (Our Contemporaneity) in 1956, only three years after Kosmač rounded up the story of his personal, family, and village life around the crucial events of the 20th century: his novel *Pomladni dan* (A day in Spring) discusses the First World War, the downfall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, fascism, the anti-fascist resistance movement, and national and social independence. The author, who fled from the stifling air of fascist Italy and into the world, was a writer and journalist in France and UK, returned with a liberation army, finally managed to put in a nutshell the abundance of history in this small territory, producing the grand text about the Tolmin region.

The description from Saša Vuga's novel *Opomin k čuječnosti* (A Reminder to Mindfulness) thematizes the grim remains and unresolved matters left behind by the war. It would have been hard for him to find a better setting for his shadowy characters other than Mengore, "this little shrine among the mountains", a gathering point for the Tolmin peasants before their march to Gorica and the Mary's Hill from Alice Schalek's reportage. If one were to stack up the dead bodies one next to the other during the First World War, this little hill would not be enough for all the death, says one of the shadows in Vuga's novel: so many soldiers were slaughtered here during the war. We will still come across the Mengore hill a few pages later, in the poem by Ljubka Šorli, who outlines the post-war period: the church on the top was surrounded by a sort of God-forsaken zone, one doesn't have to be religious to perceive this absence of the divine, and the expectation of the moment when the little flame of faith and meaning will rekindle and attract pilgrims. It was a time of settling scores with religion and priests -- the memories *Moje celice* (My Cells) by Jožko Kragelj, who was sentenced to death at the 1949 public trial in the Tolmin theatre (later his punishment was changed to imprisonment), is a testimony to this.

On the other side of the border, in Friuli, this inspired admiration, as suggested by a passage from the novel by Pier Paolo Pasolini: the state that dared to take the power away from the hands of priests and landowners, was glowing brightly from behind the hills in the east like a socialist paradise. To the peasant boys who escaped there at great risk, the disillusion could not be blunter than the first night they spent in the Tolmin prison. On this side, young boys were equally driven towards the Italian border by the idea of finding there a land of milk and honey.

The song *Mala Tolminka* (The little girl from Tolmin) also found its way among the post-war texts. It was only after the break of the millennium that it has become a hit in the most trivial sense, for its melody, and above all, the lyrics, special for no other reason but a single verse, which intervenes between the trembling and the natural beauties so artlessly with the image of factories, lighting them up to a starlit evening: a quick wink to industrialization, as it enters the Tolmin basin. A decade or so later, Onelio Supplizi, born in Tolmin between the two wars, nostalgically sang a similar ode to the beauties of local sights. Painters Riko Debenjak and France Pavlovec left behind less sentimental testimonies.

The true poet of Tolmin, however, is of course Ljubka Šorli Bratuž. This Tolmin-born poetess was married off to Gorica, where she lost her husband, choir master Lojze Bratuž – fascists forced him to drink up machine oil, of which he died –, while she herself later endured some of the worst tortures in the Trieste prison. Her idyllic pictures in verse about Tolmin conclude the period of one and a half century, when poets and poetesses filled the vessel of poetry with patriotic messages, feelings of yearning, guilt, and gratitude, or celebrated the harmonic scenery of the landscape alongside the river Soča. – During endless conversations on his terrace in Bazovica Street, composer and professor Makso Pirnik would put ideas into the heads of students from the teachers' college, which later became a gymnasium; books from his rich and constantly replenished library passed from hand to hand; this is where, among other exquisite Slovene men of letters and intellectuals, Rudi Šeligo, Dane Zajc, Evgen Bavčar, Aldo Kumar, Darko Komac, Sarival Sosič and Boris Jukić formed their profiles and world views; the latter providing for the only real contribution of Tolmin to Slovene post-war prose, his novella *Klavir* (The Piano) retells the true story of Pirnik's arrival to the little town by the river Soča, the dry spirit of the era. In the decades of his professorship, another silent man from the same assembly, Janez Dolenc, Slavicist and ethnologist, continued to push his students, having them comb through the Tolmin landscape until they dug up folk tales even in places where there weren't any left; a smaller part of his legacy was published, while the bulk of it is still waiting to be dealt with. One generation later, a blend of memoirs and culinary texts titled *Ostružki* (Scrapings) by Helena Čujec Stres was created on the premises of that same school. Some distinctive fine art depictions of the old Tolmin were left behind by academically trained painter Ljubo Brovč, who painted in his spare time, after finishing his daily job of initiating secondary school youngsters to the world of fine arts. At the same time painter Rudi Kogej would pick lungwort in the gorge of the Tolminka and alongside Soča rivers, as he was trying to capture the hues of both waters, which provided him with decent enough commissions, but were also a source of frustration, because he was trapped repeatedly in the same circle of motifs: if they care so much for water, they should just bottle it, he often used to say. Uroš Rojko, a composer, was discovering his love of the clarinet as an elementary school pupil here. At the same time, in the settlement of Volčanski Ruti, south of Tolmin, ethnologist Pavel Medvešček created records, which fifty years later disturbed not only the Tolmin region, but the entire Slovenia by revealing that underneath the surface of these events, a centuries-old belief with its rules, organization, and world view, was bidding its farewell.

After the independence scratches of 1991 the Tolmin military post was shut down, which was no small cut: the military had contributed greatly to the development of this market town. Miloš Batistuta's documentary record about changing the clothes of the escaped soldiers became, with a drop of literalized humour, a witty and human metaphor for the moulting of the town from a uniformed into civilian life.

Tolmin enters the third millennium as a setting for filmmakers. In 2001, in Jan Cvitkovič's *Kruh in mleko* (Bread and Milk), a Tolmin story unfolds, shot in the local streets and bars, with living characters of the city's underground. The lyrics by the local music and performance band *Tminski madrigalisti*, written and put into music at around the same time, celebrate this spirit, which remains faithfully anchored in the local, as it digests the tradition of the counts and the rebels through parody and persiflage. In the meantime, written poetry distils into three-versed haiku. These were introduced to Tolmin by Dimitar Anakiev after he took off his uniform of a military doctor, while poet and music pedagogue Jože Štucin has managed, through the years, to set up an international meeting point for young haiku poets. The scene has become independent, the troublesome history is currently present only as a finding, as an impression, or as a story to be told to a foreign tourist. Enjoyment, re-enjoyment, and play - is what we could say after reading Andrej Lupinc's story. Nature and spectacle, as they have throughout the course of history, continue to interchange on this plain under the Castle, and in the gorges and mountains of the Tolmin landscape, which is mostly caught by the eye of history only when "...a green rocket rises, lighting up the area of attack with a blazing flare", in the words of Alice Schalek.

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