

Representations of the Nation and of the Other in the Slovenian Periodical Press Before and After 1991: Engagements and Implications

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Defining ‘Quality Press’

In debates on the role of public media that have proliferated throughout Europe after the rise of commercial media in the 1980s and (in former communist countries) in the 1990s, the claims to ‘quality’ were a common argument in support of the state-sponsored media, usually labelled as ‘public’. However, as various authors have noted, the exact definition of quality was lacking and the notion of ‘quality’ itself was often used to refer to a variety of meanings, even conflicting ones, and was thus open to manipulation (cf. Keane 1992: 112; Bašić-Hrvatinić 2002: 16).

Arguably, the definition of ‘quality’ suggested in the general outline of the project on the quality press in Southeast Europe is similarly open to manipulation. The notion of ‘quality press’ is not explicitly defined, but seems to refer to those periodical print media which provide a platform for ‘important public debates on the key issues of the societies in Southeast Europe’. Such a notion could hardly be used as an analytical concept. As this paper aims to demonstrate, the chief problem of publications that initiated ‘important public debates on the key issues’ in Slovenia in the recent past was not necessarily their relatively low circulation and commercial pressure of high-circulation periodicals. Despite their relatively low circulation, some periodicals managed to provoke debates that were featured on the front pages of periodicals with the highest circulation, or got addressed in prime-time TV and radio newscasts. However, it should be taken into account that not every periodical that has raised issues of purportedly public interest was concerned with aims such as the pluralization of public debate or prevention of social exclusion. Quite the contrary: in some cases, the specific discursive frames and representations activated by such periodicals would suggest a narrowing down of ‘the public’ – for example by equating the ‘public’ with a certain nation understood primarily in ethnic terms, and excluding or at least marginalizing various segments of the citizenry such as other nations, women, refugees, asylum seekers, gays, lesbians and bisexuals, drug addicts, Muslims etc.

The debate focalized and elaborated in Slovenia in 1987 by a cultural journal called *Nova Revija* [New Review] is a case in point. In its 57th issue, published under the title *Contributions to*

the Slovenian National Programme, a number of Slovenian writers, poets, lawyers, sociologists and philosophers (mostly belonging to the Heideggerian circle) expressed concern about the ‘crisis’ (a label widely used to describe the situation in Yugoslavia in the 1980s) and discussed options available to the Slovenian nation. The thematic issue was conceived as a Slovenian counterpart to the infamous *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a document issued in 1986 and used as a blueprint for Serbia’s onslaught on the federal structures as well as for the subsequent war (cf. Magaš 1992: 199-200). Similarly, arguments and frames offered in the 57th issue of *Nova Revija* were used to underpin the political programme of DEMOS, a coalition of predominantly right-wing and nationalist parties that rose to power following the first multiparty elections in Slovenia in spring 1990. Moreover, many contributors to the 57th issue became active political figures or chief ideologues of the coalition. It is important to note that *Nova Revija* still holds a privileged position in Slovenian collective memory as the forerunner of democracy despite the fact that the crucial arguments and frames offered in the 57th issue were unmistakably nationalist. In one way or another, their red thread was the idea that the political unit should coincide with the cultural/ethnic unit, which is precisely the core idea of 19th and 20th century nationalisms (cf. Gellner 1987; 1998). For example, a conceptual distinction offered by one of the contributors, the philosopher Tine Hribar, who later became one of the chief advisors to the coalition – namely the distinction between ‘*narod*’ (nation without a state) and ‘*nacija*’ (nation with a state) – was central to DEMOS’s arguments in favour of Slovenia as an independent nation state.¹

It is important to note that the political programme – we might also say an *outline for the homogenization of the mental horizon* – fostered by the *Nova Revija* circle was initially rejected as heretical. However, by 1990 it gained support not only in the DEMOS coalition, but also in the opposition parties, including the reformed communists. The reformed communists’ leader Milan Kučan, who was elected president of the republic in the first multiparty elections and remained in office until 2002, eagerly endorsed nationalist arguments in order to enhance his public appeal. Moreover, the period between 1990 and 1991 – the crucial period for the establishment of Slovenia as an independent state, which included events such as the plebiscite for independence in December 1990 and the Ten-Day War – was also the period when political disagreements were repeatedly suspended in favour of ‘national unity’ and ‘national survival’.

¹ According to Hribar (1987: 3-4), one of the leading proponents of the Heideggerian circle, the understanding of ‘nation’ to be adopted by the new Slovenian national programme should be the one fostered by G. W. F. Hegel rather than that developed by Ernest Renan. Following Hegel, a ‘*narod*’ only becomes a historical nation or ‘*nacija*’ (i.e. participates in the history of the World Spirit) when it forms its own state. Contrary to that, the conception of nation furthered by Renan, according to which a nation is, above all, a perpetual plebiscite, should be, argued Hribar, rejected; following this definition, Slovenians could easily choose to disappear as a distinct nation and become an indistinguishable part of the Yugoslav nation.

After the establishment of Slovenia as an independent state, its nationalism was never publicly denounced; at the most, it was dealt with as ‘patriotism’. Most recently, it was discursively appropriated to the new political conjuncture as ‘noble patriotism’ (as further promoted by Aleš Debeljak 2003; cf. Kramberger 2003). The absence of a public denunciation of the nationalist foundations of Slovenia’s ‘independence’ and ‘democracy’ is, as this study aims to show, the defining feature of virtually every important public debate in Slovenia after 1990.

Therefore, when providing an overview of a selection of important public debates that took place in Slovenia after 1991, this study will pay special attention to the discursive frames and references used in various periodical print media, and provide an assessment of those frames from the point of view of their involvement in narrowing down or opening up the public space. This, however, should not mean that the economic and legal context should not be taken into account and that it should suffice to focus on a disembodied conflict of discourses and symbols. To rephrase Pierre Bourdieu’s discussion of religious language, the crisis of language and its performative efficacy ‘is not limited, as is often believed, to the collapse of a world of representations: it is part of the disintegration of an entire universe of social relations of which it was constitutive’ (Bourdieu 1991 [1982]: 116). Any discussion of the role of mass media in political processes can thus only be partial if it fails to address both the level of symbolic representations (re)produced by the media and the level of institutional structures necessary for the production, dissemination and reception of these representations, including, first and foremost, the legal structures, political and economic practices affecting media institutions. Therefore, while focusing on exclusions inherent in representations and discursive frames offered by various media, this paper points also to those elements of media policies in Slovenia after 1991 that have supported the perpetuation of such frames during the period in question. Arguably, in Slovenia the universe of social relations established with the independence in 1991 – and to a large extent inculcated into various state institutions – still persists. The imminent entry into the European Union, and the changes needed for this step to be made, have already brought some important changes.

The Media System in Communist Yugoslavia: Democratization or a Prelude to Disintegration?

Apart from brief treatments of the most important legislation and general features of the ownership structures of mass media in communist Yugoslavia in general (cf. Thompson 1994: 5-

21), and a treatment of the periodical *Perspektive* [*Perspectives*] that was published in 1960-1964 (Repe 1990), the history of the periodical press in Slovenia after World War II remains an almost blank page in the available historiography. Only since 2000 have works dealing with the periodical press in this period been appearing, yet for now mostly in the form of unpublished graduation theses (Gorše 2000; Hvale 2001; Lunder 2001; Senić 2002; Žibret 2002). Therefore, any considerations of the periodical press (including the mass periodical press) in Slovenia under communism can be limited only to very general sketches.

Immediately after the Second World War, the two key newspapers in Slovenia were *Slovenski Poročevalec* (*Slovenian Reporter*; first two numbers published in 1938, from 1941 published as an organ of the Liberation Front, from 1945 as a daily newspaper), and *Ljudska Pravica* (*People's Justice*; established in 1934 as an official organ of the Communist Party of Slovenia, from 1945 published as a daily newspaper). After the war, both dailies were *de facto* more or less linked to the Communist Party of Slovenia. While the former was regarded as more pro-Western, the latter had the reputation of being more pro-Eastern (and thus pro-Soviet). In 1959, the Slovenian Communist Party branch decided to merge the two newspapers into one and change the title to *Delo* [*Work*], officially because the Slovenian market was deemed to be too small for two newspapers (cf. Gorše 2000: 58; Žibret 2002: 18-19). Two other important dailies that must be mentioned are *Večer* [*Evening*] and *Ljubljanski Dnevnik* [*Ljubljana Daily*], later known as *Neodvisni Dnevnik* [*Independent Daily*], and finally only as *Dnevnik* [*Daily*]. The former was established in 1952, was based in Maribor, the second largest city in Slovenia, and targeted the northeastern part of the republic. The latter was established in 1951, and was catering predominantly to the inhabitants of the republic's capital and the wider region. The newspaper with the widest circulation in the period was the weekly *Nedeljski Dnevnik* [*Sunday Daily*], issued as the seventh number of *Ljubljanski Dnevnik* (www.dnevnik.si).

The periodical which became the central forum for democratization processes in the 1980s, the weekly *Mladina* [*Youth*], was founded as the journal of the youth branch of the republican Communist Party in 1943 (Supančič 2002). Another important periodical, the fortnightly *Naši Razgledi* [*Our Views*] (later known as *Razgledi* [*Views*]), dedicated to cultural, social, political and economic issues, was established as a special review published by the *Delo* publishing house in 1952. Finally, in the same year, also the most important Slovenian newspaper attached to a religious institution, *Družina* [*Family*], was launched by the Catholic Church (Pavlovič 2002).

In Yugoslavia, especially low-circulation journals dedicated to the questions of culture, with contributors coming from circles of writers, literary critics, historians, philosophers etc. would occasionally issue articles that were not favourably accepted by the party elite. Among

such journals in Slovenia one should mention at least *Naša Sodobnost* [*Our Contemporary Times*] (1953-present, from 1963 as *Sodobnost*), *Perspektive* [*Perspectives*] (1960-1964), and *Problemi* [*Problems*] (1962-present).² Existing analyses of those periodicals are scarce, largely written through the optic of developments in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and 90s, and can thus provide only a partial insight into the actual functioning of the periodicals in question. Yet they do show that an important part of discussions going on in these journals was centred on the notions of nation and (national) culture. In 1961, for example, both *Naša Sodobnost* and *Perspektive* participated in the debate on nationalism started by an exchange between the Slovenian literary theorist and critic Dušan Pirjevec and the Serbian novelist Dobrica Ćosić. While Ćosić claimed that ‘vampire nationalisms’ would always be an obstacle to interethnic mixing in Yugoslavia as long as republics existed, Pirjevec accused Ćosić of ignoring the tendency towards unitarism, and its possible overlapping with Serbian hegemonic tendencies.³

While the self-definitions of political elites in other parts of the Eastern bloc were characterized by a single defining negation – namely the negation of things Western – the official self-definitions in Yugoslavia were based on a double negation, namely on the negation of both ‘the East’ (Stalinist communism) and ‘the West’ (capitalism). In the period after 1948, Yugoslav party elites strove to develop their own, neither-Western-nor-Eastern political system, namely self-management socialism. A crucial part of this policy was the belief in the gradual withering away of the state, which served as one of the main arguments underpinning the gradual decentralization of the state. At the same time, the media were also decentralized. With the exception of a couple of pan-Yugoslav media (the daily *Borba*, the news agency *Tanjug*, and the short-lived television *Yutel*), they were controlled at the republican or provincial level and were

² After the Second World War, the publication of some of the most important and elaborated – i.e. socially, culturally and critically susceptible – quality journals from the pre-war period (such as, for example, *Modra Ptica* [*Blue Bird*], published monthly between 1929–1941) was discontinued. The new regime had established rather strict and oppressive selection criteria of the cultural memory (and oblivion), and in the newly formulated frames of collective memory critical thought was not appreciated. The intrusion of the monolithic representative frames and the radical reduction of the choice of readings available to the potential readership of the press had deep effects and consequences for the shaping of the public sphere. As Mary Douglas notes (1986: 21ff), these effects and consequences are especially stressful in the frames of the small-scale societies – such as the society of Slovenia also was/is – as they give scope to many interpersonal conflicts. In the case of post-war Slovenia, such circumstances established awkward, literally personified institutions, which played by far the most important role in the process of classifying and forgetting (Josip Vidmar, the main political and cultural ideologist in the post-war period in Slovenia, is a case in point: He was the leading cultural critic, the principal agent of the journal *Sodobnost* and a close collaborator of the communist nomenclature of Yugoslavia).

³ But maybe even more important than the ethnic and national(istic) polemics, which are usually accentuated and permanently put at the forefront of the analyses, was the attempt of the few Slovenian intellectuals (such as Taras Kermauner, Primož Kozak, Vital Klabus, and some others) to fasten the Slovenian intellectual thought to the contemporary currents in Europe (particularly to the publicly critical French production; for example, the influence that Sartre had upon the authors of the journal *Perspektive* almost totally escaped the later authors of the analyses, not to mention the first penetrations of the ideas of structuralism etc.). After the journal *Perspektive* was suppressed (1964) a new, politically launched journal, namely *Problemi* (1962–present), proceeded to be published, and the journal soon (partly) appropriated the vision of the former *Perspektive*.

increasingly geared towards republican or provincial audiences, thus developing a number of distinct public forums. However, although the Yugoslav media system provided opportunities for the constitution of a number of distinct public forums, it must be kept in mind that the decentralization and ‘democratization’ of Yugoslav mass media was carried out largely along republican and thus often also national lines (Robinson 1977: 192-199). The consequence was that the various opinions were not confronted in one single public sphere, but were rather co-existing in a multitude of parallel, relatively closed, and only partially overlapping spheres, to a large extent delimited along national lines (with the notable exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Furthermore, the tendency towards a segmented public sphere in communist Yugoslavia becomes even more evident if one takes into account the linguistic diversity and the fact that not all Yugoslav citizens were able to understand all the languages of all the other nations and nationalities. Thus, media production in the Slovenian and Macedonian language, for example, was incomprehensible to most of the Yugoslav audiences.

The results of an opinion poll conducted in 1983, focusing on the knowledge about other Yugoslav nations and nationalities, showed a predictable picture: a low level of common knowledge shared among various nations and nationalities in the federal state (cf. Klinar 1984: 111-114). Both scholars and politicians were arguing for the implementation of policy changes that would secure a higher level of commonly shared knowledge among Yugoslav citizens. In the late 1970s, a new law on the press and public information as well as a new law on education curricula begun to be discussed, and both generated great controversies. The educational reform was blocked in the republican Assembly in Slovenia after a public protest initiated by the members of the Association of Slovenian Writers, since the changes were deemed to lead to an erosion of the Slovenian cultural specificity (cf. Repe 2002: 45-47). The new law concerning the press was adopted in 1985, yet it failed to bring about a unified regime of public information for all of Yugoslavia; because the law was initiated by the federal government and led to greater uniformity, the attempts to implement it were increasingly regarded as undemocratic (cf. Ramet 1992: 424-426).

The history of the media in the last decade of communist Yugoslavia has been treated in a number of works, yet sources that would focus on media in Slovenia in the period are, again, virtually nonexistent.⁴ This void can be explained as a consequence of the general tendency to regard Slovenia’s recent developments as a ‘success story’, sharply distinct from paths trodden

⁴ By contrast, the media in Serbia in the 1980s have already been quite extensively studied; most attention has been paid to the daily *Politika*, but also periodicals such as *NIN*, the state television, and some oppositional media have received considerable attention as chief actors in the preparation of conflicts that erupted in the 1990s (Slapšak et al. 1997; media-related contributions to Popov 2000 [1996] etc.).

by other states formed on the territory of communist Yugoslavia in the same period, and almost unequivocally democratic (see Bebler 2002 for a recent example of such rhetoric). The short list of main reasons that are usually mentioned as fostering the successful exit from communism in Slovenia – relative economic prosperity,⁵ a strong civil society,⁶ and an ethnically homogeneous population⁷ – matches the ones usually to be found in Central European states. However, Slovenia *was* part of Yugoslavia, and what is more, many analysts of the collapse of the federal state tend to see the Slovenian *Declaration of Independence* adopted by the republican Assembly on 25 June 1991, as well as the longer process of establishing an independent nation state and the concomitant rise of ethno-nationalism, as one of the main triggers, if not causes, of the final dissolution (cf. Woodward 1995). Despite this, the history of transition in Slovenia, especially of its early phases, remains among the least researched developments potentially leading towards the collapse of the federal state. Only recently have books dealing specifically with Slovenia's early phase of the exit from communism been appearing, yet they still remain scarce and – apart from a handful of articles in collective volumes – fail to provide a critical examination of ethno-nationalist conceptions of state and territory and their gradual rise throughout the late 1980s. Historians are particularly reluctant to treat these issues; if they do address them, they tend to avoid labelling various phenomena in Slovenia as nationalist, stressing that they were simply reactions to Serbian hegemony.⁸ A rare critical voice among scholars dealing with media that pointed to the nationalistic discourses rising in media in Slovenia in the late 1980s was Slavko Splichal (1992), yet he dedicated his works mostly to the developments after 1990 and to comparative analysis of media policies and systems in the wider region in the post-socialist period. Given the lack of relevant literature based on analyses of media texts, policies etc., the overview of this period is again limited only to sketches.

Until the late 1980s, most high-circulation and high-coverage media in Slovenia were reluctant to allow voices challenging the existing arrangement of Yugoslavia, and a plurality of opinions in general, to enter their pages and waves. However, sometimes they were obliged to do so, since they had to comply with the constitutionally guaranteed right of reply. In the early

⁵ Throughout Yugoslavian history (both inter-war and post-WWII), Slovenia was economically the most prosperous part of Yugoslavia. In the late 1980s, with a population of approximately two million or 8.4% of the total Yugoslav population, it produced 16.8% of the national domestic product (Zarkovic Bookman 1991: 35).

⁶ A comprehensive, non-partisan history of the so-called civil society in Slovenia is yet to be written. For some useful contributions in English discussing selected aspects of the civil movements in Slovenia in the 1980s such as the punk movement, the feminist movement and the strikes, see Tomc, Jalušič and Kuzmanić, all 1997 [1994].

⁷ According to the last Yugoslav census in 1991, the population consisted of over 87% ethnic Slovenians. In terms of ethnic homogeneity, no other Yugoslav republic could rival Slovenia.

⁸ For example, Carmichael and Gow (2000) and Repe (2002), both explicitly dealing with Slovenians and the break-up of Yugoslavia, remain disturbingly silent or benevolent when touching upon the question of ethno-nationalism. A similar lack of critical distance is to be found in many of the contributions to Benderly and Kraft (1997 [1994]).

1980s, Matevž Krivic, a Slovenian jurist – a specialist in constitutional law, as well as party member – wrote a number of critical articles, including one which criticized the editor-in-chief of *Delo* (Jak Koprivc). These articles were initially rejected by the newspaper, and so were also Krivic's appeals to the court. However, in 1984 the Supreme Court of Slovenia ruled that *Delo* should publish the article (Sparks 1998). While major mass media still rejected oppositional voices, a number of periodical print media adopted the role of forums for discussions challenging the legitimacy of the existing regime. In Slovenia, two periodicals in particular usually play a prominent role in recollections of the period offered by historians and mass media in the 1990s: the already discussed *Nova Revija* and the weekly *Mladina*. While *Nova Revija* often promoted nationalist arguments and the view that Slovenia should become a fully sovereign (ethno)nation state, *Mladina* countered the homogenization brought about by such ideas. *Mladina* is usually celebrated for being the focal point of dissent in the late 1980s, publishing articles critical of the Yugoslav Peoples' Army (YPA). In the summer of 1988, the clash with the YPA culminated in the trial against 'the Four', i.e. the trial against two of *Mladina*'s journalists, the editor and an army officer accused of leaking a secret document (cf. Repe 2001: 38-46). Indeed, this event was used as a focal point of the homogenization of Slovenian opinion – not only against the federal army, but partly also against the federation and Yugoslavness in general. However – a fact virtually never mentioned in the accounts of Slovenia in the 1980s – such a use of the 'trial against the Four' was characteristic of the dominant, high-circulation Slovenian media, especially from 1989 onwards. It should be taken into account that ideas that were publicly rejected by the republican elites in 1987 became widely shared by an important segment of the newly formed political spectrum in 1990. What had been a heretic idea in 1987 – namely to establish a fully sovereign Slovenian nation state – became a guiding motto of most political parties in the run-up to the first multiparty elections in 1990.⁹ In this period, most central republican mass media began unequivocally supporting ideas which were first shared only by small oppositional circles. In May 1989, for example, the central republican daily, *Delo*, removed the subheading 'Proletarians of all lands, unite!' from its front page. A couple of weeks later, it published a commentary supportive of the *May Declaration*, a document prepared by the *Nova Revija* circle and the Association of Slovenian Writers, arguing for a Slovenian nation state (cf. Žibret 2002: 31-32). While earlier moves of a similar kind were countered not only by the republican authorities but also from inside the editorial board of the daily itself, this time the

⁹ This transformation is at least partly due to the general fear of a military putsch that dominated in Slovenia (and Yugoslavia) by that time.

pressure from the Alliance of Socialist Workers of Slovenia had to face a unified front of *Delo*'s chief figures.

After the 1990 elections, other high-circulation print media as well as broadcast media with the widest coverage were gradually adopting the same discursive frames, serving the idea of an independent Slovenian nation state. Their participation in the propaganda campaign for the plebiscite for an independent Slovenia organized by the republican government in December 1990 is a case in point. Apart from the daily *Dnevnik* and the weekly *Mladina*, the main mass media, including the weekly *Družina* owned by the Catholic Church, had no reservations about supporting the campaign. On 10 December, four days after all political parties represented in the republican Assembly unanimously decided to support the plebiscite, *Delo* appeared with a brand new motto: 'An Independent Newspaper for an Independent Slovenia'. At this point, virtually all media were debating 'key issues of public concern', yet the rising consensus was that the concerned public was, first and foremost, the Slovenian (ethno)nation (cf. Mihelj 2003a). The debate on human rights, crucial to the discussion surrounding the 'trial against the Four' in 1988, moved to the backstage. To use a succinct formulation offered by Slavko Splichal in his discussion of developments in media systems in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989: '[T]he issue of democratization was reduced to the rights of nations (and not citizens)' (Splichal 1992: 38).¹⁰

The Media Landscape in Slovenia after the Dismemberment of Yugoslavia

In contrast to the situation with literature on media in Slovenia in the period of communism, works dealing with media developments in Slovenia after 1990 abound and allow for a far more comprehensive picture of the media than in earlier periods. Contrary to what has happened in some other countries from the former Eastern bloc (cf. Giorgi 1995), the largest part of the

¹⁰ In the same period, *Mladina*, as well as the daily *Dnevnik*, countered the homogenization of Slovenian public opinion (cf. Mihelj 2003a). Yet by that time, *Mladina*'s circulation – which rose from 10,000 to above 28,000 in 1987 alone – had already begun to drop, while the readership of *Dnevnik* was mostly limited to Ljubljana and the surroundings. Other mass media that contributed to the pluralization of the public sphere in the 1980s, yet are only exceptionally mentioned in the accounts of the period, include *Radio Študent*, a student-run radio station based in Ljubljana, established in 1969; the journal *Katedra* (1961-1996), an organ of the students of the University of Maribor; *Tribuna* (1951-present), an organ of the students of the University of Ljubljana; *Teleks* (1977-1988, 1988-1990 as *Telex*); and the short-lived supplement to the daily *Dnevnik* titled *Podmornica* [*Submarine*] (1990-1991). The latest was conceived to be a highly profiled intellectual supplement following the example of *Le Monde Diplomatique*. But such high aims were soon rebutted by the editor-in-chief of *Dnevnik* (Milan Meden). The main projecting editor of *Podmornica* was Drago B. Rotar. Around that time he also published a book of critical essays on the subordination of Slovenian authorities in Yugoslavia (Rotar 1989; before the dissolution of Yugoslavia), as well as some articles on the genesis of the nationalistic construction of Yugoslavia (Rotar 1993; after the dissolution of Yugoslavia).

Slovenian periodical press market is held by a small number of local owners with stakes in numerous affiliated companies, and is not substantially controlled by large European and American corporations (cf. Bašič-Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001). Three out of four existing daily newspapers (*Delo*, *Večer* and *Dnevnik*) originate from the period of communist Yugoslavia. The fourth daily, *Slovenske Novice* [*Slovenian News*], which soon adopted an overtly tabloid editorial policy, was established in 1991 by a group of journalists working for *Delo* and is published by the same publishing house. Except for *Slovenske Novice*, three other dailies formed after 1990 (*Slovenec* [*The Slovenian*], *Republika* [*Republic*], *Jutranjik* [*Morning Newspaper*]) failed, while the fourth one, *Finance* [*Finances*], is mostly limited to financial issues and has a much lower circulation. The failure of the first three dailies is seen as a consequence of the fact that they were predominantly political ventures not paying sufficient attention to the expectations of the market, but also of a lack of necessary financial resources and adequate professional criteria (cf. Bašič-Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001: 35). At the turn of the millennium, the four biggest media companies, which published the above-mentioned four most important dailies, controlled more than 90% of the daily newspaper market (cf. Bašič-Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001: 17).

As far as the legislation on media is concerned, the Mass Media Act that came into force in 1994 proved to be deficient and did not manage to secure the legal and financial conditions for plurality in the media. Similarly to the other post-communist and post-socialist countries, the media in Slovenia were supposed to be completely removed from the power centres and centralized control, and thus from the state. Contrary to Western Europe, the democratization of the media was expected to go hand in hand with the introduction of private property and market mechanisms, with no regulation needed on the the part of the state (cf. Bašič-Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001: 14), the sole exception being the public broadcasting service. In 2001, another law legislating media was adopted, which is too detailed in regulating the interests of the state but too loose with regard to the protection of citizens' interests. Furthermore, just as the law adopted in 1994, the new law has likewise failed to give an answer to the question of what is the media policy promoted by the Slovenian state (cf. Bašič-Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001: 11); nor has it managed to guarantee a transparent ownership structure of media (cf. 2001: 36-44). After 1989, the formerly 'socially owned' and 'socially managed' publishing houses declared independence from the state and parties, yet the state has remained an effective owner of important shares in all the four existing dailies, and is exempt from ownership restrictions (cf. Bašič Hrvatin 2002: 14). And it is mostly through the control of ownership that political control over the media is also exerted.

As Slavko Splichal pointed out, the political and economic elites in the region tended to use nationalist policies to maximize power and profits while neglecting the development of the public sector as the foundation of more democratic communication. Also, they were inclined to support fears about national sovereignty which led to a neglecting of issues of pluralism in society (cf. Splichal 1992: 40-46). The various aspects of media coverage discussed in the next section clearly exemplify the persistence of such tendencies in Slovenia throughout the 1990s and also after 2000. It is important to keep in mind that, as Drago B. Rotar argues (cf. Rotar 1989; 1993 and 2002), the nationalist discourses in the 1990s, while presented as a continuation of much earlier developments, were actually firmly established only *after* 1990. The nationalistic stereotypes promoted in the late 1980s, in the first place by the circle of *Nova Revija*, were later uncritically and unreflectively adopted even by purportedly oppositional parties. Similarly, the mass media apparently spontaneously appropriated the same discourses. Two questions remain: Who is responsible for such a generalization of nationalistic pastiches, and who – if anyone, by then – was able to recognize the subtle dimensions of the nationalistic reinterpretations of the current events.

The Role of the Periodical Press in Public Debates after 1990: Media as Instruments of the Nationalizing State

The analysis presented below draws largely on a rereading of existing analyses of media representations in Slovenia after 1990, most of them published by the Open Society Institute and/or Peace Institute in the *Media Watch* Series from 1998 onwards. Other important sources for the present paper include the results of a research project on the representations of culture in Slovenian media carried out in 2000-2002 (Kramberger et al. 2002a; 2002b), as well as the results of other research projects whose results have been partly published or publicly presented (Mihelj 2003a; 2003b). While analyses of the economic and legal aspects of the transformation of the media system in Slovenia after 1990 comprehensively cover developments over the whole decade, many analyses of the media products and texts from the same period remain fragmental, limited to just one topic or a narrow selection of media. Moreover, analyses of reception are virtually absent (a rare exception being Pušnik 1999), and considerations of relations between the legal and economic context of production and the actual media output are made at best in passing. Finally, most of the existing analyses focus on what they deem to be negative tendencies in media coverage, and only marginally mention positive cases, i.e. examples of authors, articles

or media that counter the dominant tendencies, never providing a full-scale analysis of their strategies.

The first of the two tables below lists a selection of periodical print media most often treated in the analyses that served as the basis for this study, and/or regarded as most relevant to the formation of public opinion on the nationwide level in Slovenia after 1990. The second table includes two magazines and one book series that have an explicit focus on the media. The magazine *Medijska Preža* [*Media Watch*] and the book series *Media Watch* are both published by the Peace Institute from 1998 and systematically monitor the mass media for various forms of ethnocentrism, racism, sexism etc. The magazine *Ampak* [*But*], which includes a section dedicated to media, was established in 2000 and aimed to fill the void left after the closing down of *Razgledi*. Judging from the publisher and from some responses in other media, the magazine presents a continuation of frames and references characteristic of the journal *Nova Revija*, yet no extensive analyses of the magazine that could provide a fuller picture have been made.

Table 1: *Periodical Press Most Relevant to the Formation of Public Opinion on the Nationwide Level in Slovenia after 1990*

	Daily newspapers				Weekly magazines				
	<i>Delo</i>	<i>Dnevnik</i>	<i>Večer</i>	<i>Slovenske novice</i>	<i>Mag</i>	<i>Mladina</i>	<i>Družina</i>	<i>Nedeljski dnevnik</i>	<i>(Naši) Razgledi</i>
Years of publication	1959 ¹¹ -	1951-	1952 ¹² -	1991-	1995-	1943-	1952-	1962-	1952-99
Current/last editor¹³	Darijan Košir	Miran Lesjak	Majda Struc	Marjan Bauer	Danilo Slivnik	Jani Sever	Franci Petrič	Vaso Gasar	Marko Crnkovič
Current/last circulation¹⁴	85,000-110,000	65,000	62,000	97,102	17,000	18,500	55,000	170,000	N/A
Publisher	Delo	Dnevnik	Večer	Delo	Salomon 2000	Mladina	Družina	Dnevnik	Delo

¹¹ An eponymous newspaper was established as early as 1921 in Julijska Krajina, a region that included the easternmost part of contemporary Slovenia and the westernmost part of contemporary Italy. It was supported by both the Slovenian and Italian socialist parties in the region, and was conceived as a communist outlet published in the Slovenian language, targeting the members and supporters of the communist movement among Croats and Slovenians inhabiting Julijska Krajina (cf. Gorše 2000: 21).

¹² The immediate predecessor of *Večer*, the daily *Vestnik* [*Newspaper*], was launched as early as 1945. Cf. www.vecer.si.

¹³ If a newspaper has a general editor and an editor-in-chief, only the name of the editor-in-chief is provided.

¹⁴ Some of the numbers regarding current circulation are based on data provided by publishers themselves and available on their official Internet sites (www.dnevnik.si, www.delo.si, www.vecer.si, www.druzina.si) or on the pages of printed editions, whereas others are taken from the bulletin *Dosje MM – Velika knjiga slovenskega oglaševanja* [*Dossier MM – The Big Book of Slovenian Advertising*]. Above mentioned are the numbers of printed copies; the numbers of the sold copies are slightly lower (for example, weekly *Družina*: printed – 55,000 copies; sold – 53,000 copies).

Table 2: *Magazines and Book Series with a Focus or Special Section on Media*

	Magazine <i>Medijska preža</i>	Series <i>Media Watch</i>	Magazine <i>Ampak</i>
Years of publication	1998-	1998-	2000-
Current editor(s)	Brankica Petković	Brankica Petković	Niko Grafenauer
Current circulation	800	N/A	3,500
Publisher	Peace Institute	Peace Institute	Nova Revija

The Slovenian print media after 1990, while purportedly defending democracy, eagerly participated in the policies of the nationalizing state, a state acting as a representative of one ‘core nation’ (Slovenian nation) defined in ethnic terms, a nation sharply distinguished from the citizenry as a whole (cf. Brubaker 1996). More broadly, existing analyses of media coverage show that for the most part, printed periodical media in Slovenia after 1990 participated in the perpetuation of the discourse of patriotism which is, according to Tonči Kuzmanić, structured along five axes of exclusion: 1) gender (male); 2) sexual orientation (heterosexual); 3) religion (Catholic); 4) nationality (Slovenian); 5) geo-politics (Western) (Kuzmanić 2003: 27-32). When it became clear that Slovenia was on its way to becoming a separate state, and especially after some of the above listed lines of exclusion were inculcated into the new constitution adopted in 1991,¹⁵ movements acting against these exclusions and aimed at pluralizing the public sphere in the 1980s were faced with an ever more limited access to the public sphere.¹⁶

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, feminist and women’s groups, which constituted a strong strain among the so-called ‘alternative movements’ in the 1980s, had to face a radical drop in the percentage of female delegates compared with earlier periods:¹⁷ from 26% at the beginning of the 1980s to only 14% and even 8% in 1996 (cf. Gaber-Antić and Jeram 1999: 273). In late 1991, less than two years after the first multiparty elections in Slovenia, various women’s groups, political parties etc. had to gather in front of the parliament to protest against the removal of the constitutional paragraph guaranteeing reproductive rights.¹⁸ According to existing analyses (Bašić-Hrvatini 1999; Kuhar 2001b; Hrženjak et al. 2002), sexist discourses

¹⁵ For example, the new Slovenian Constitution clearly defines the Slovenian (ethno)nation as the prime owner of the state. In the Preamble, it refers to ‘the historical fact that Slovenes have formed over many centuries of struggle for national liberation, their own national identity and established their own statehood’ (Trifunovska 1994: 434).

¹⁶ From this point of view, the situation with mass media in Slovenia after 1989 may be seen as a confirmation of Jack Snyder’s and Karen Ballantine’s argument that ‘promoting unconditional freedom of public debate in newly democratizing societies is, in many circumstances, likely to make the problem worse’ (Snyder and Ballantine 1996: 61-62; cf. also Bervar 2002: 16-18 for similar arguments).

¹⁷ Under socialism, representation of women in politics was relatively high, since the legal equality of women was an important part of the legitimization of the socialist system. The system guaranteed women a number of rights which, after 1990, began to be regarded as a forced emancipation that destroyed socialization and the family (cf. Jalušič 1997 [1994] 139-143).

¹⁸ The constitutional paragraph regarding the ‘human right to decide upon the birth of one’s own children’ (reproductive rights) remained the last point of disagreement in the entire constitutional debate in Slovenia in the early 1990s (cf. Jalušič 1997 [1994]).

persisted in the mass media in Slovenia throughout the 1990s. Most importantly, the results of some analyses (Pajnik 2003; Kramberger et al. 2002a; 2002b) disclose an absolute lack of any alternative ways of reporting on women in the Slovenian print media, including also periodical media which were otherwise at the forefront of breaking the exclusivist discourses in 1990s, such as the weekly *Mladina*. This result may indicate that the gender divide constitutes the very bottom-line of the net of exclusions structuring the public discourses in Slovenia.

Similarly to the various feminist and women's groups, also movements for gay, lesbian, and other non-heterosexual rights – another strain of initiatives that contributed to the pluralization of the public sphere in 1980s – experienced a shrinkage of the public sphere after the actual establishment of political pluralism in Slovenia. The number of media representations of homosexuality rose rapidly in the early 1990s, yet as Roman Kuhar points out (2003: 34-39), a large part of this rise is due to the rising amount of representations of homosexuality as a 'curiosity' or 'attraction' in the popular press. In contrast to that, the periodical *Teleks*, which included a well-established forum for gay and lesbian rights and provided a space for a more articulated debate on the issue, was closed down in 1990.

Apart from participating in the perpetuation of representations which would support the ideal of a heterosexual and patriarchal society and excluded or de-privileged parts of the population which do not conform to such an ideal, the mass media in Slovenia after 1990 contributed also to the reproduction of representations which would privilege the members of the Slovenian (ethno)national community while excluding members of other national communities, especially those inhabiting states to the south and east of Slovenia. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, the political elites and the mainstream mass media in Slovenia were framing the process of gaining independent statehood in terms of exiting 'the Balkans' – and thus first and foremost exiting Yugoslavia – and entering 'Europe' (cf. Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, 1992). Among the phenomena that repeatedly challenged this frame were the various forms of immigration. For example, the presence of a growing number of refugees after the outbreak of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992 (Doupona Horvat et al. 2001) was a disturbing sign of the fact that 'the Balkans' were not as far away as the prevailing rhetorical frame would have it. In order to retain the consistency of this frame, most mass media would employ a number of strategies which effectively put a distance between Slovenians and Bosnians, including representing Bosnian refugees as Slovenia's negative mirror image, as an intrusion of 'the Balkans' into 'Europe'. At the turn of the millennium, having successfully distanced itself from 'the Balkans' and undertaken negotiations for EU membership, Slovenia was – according to the mass media – endangered by a new 'tide of migration', this time originating further in the 'East'

(cf. Jalušić 2001; Kuhar 2001a). However, far from being unambiguously positioned on the side of 'Europe', Slovenia was now referred to as the 'rampart' or 'threshold' of the West, caught between the 'proper West' (i.e. European Union) and the menace of 'the East' (including 'the Balkans') (cf. Mihelj 2003b). Judging from existing analyses, *Slovenske Novice* (a tabloid), *Nedeljski Dnevnik*, as well as some journalists writing for *Delo*, *Večer* and occasionally also *Mladina* (as well as *Mag* in the case of 'illegal migrants' and *Slovenec* in the case of 'Bosnian refugees') were most active in defending the dominant frame. In contrast to that, *Dnevnik* and *Mladina*, together with certain *Delo* and *Večer* journalists (as well as some *Republika* journalists in the case of 'Bosnian refugees'), were critical of this same frame, and were supporting various civil initiatives and nongovernmental organizations voicing concern about the rising Slovenian xenophobia. In the case of media coverage of 'illegal migration', existing analyses provide also some insight into the position of women magazines; *Jana*, *Ona* and *Glamour* mainly did not create xenophobic opinion and *Glamour* published also some critical reflections (cf. Jalušić 2001). Finally, articles published by the Intolerance Monitoring Group (Petković [ed.] 2001; Petković [ed.] 2003) established at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana in 2000, as well as articles published in the periodical *Media Watch* issued by the same institution, were central to the articulation of arguments critical of racism in the public sphere in Slovenia after 1998.

Another important part of the new symbolic geography arising on the territory of former Yugoslavia and being put into practice with devastating results in the early 1990s was the equation of religious and national communities (cf. Vrcan 2003; Perica 2002). In the new Constitution adopted in 1991, Slovenia opted for a clear demarcation of State and Religion, comparable to the one characteristic of France, yet some elements of legislation, for example those regarding the role of religious institutions in education, depart from this model. Moreover, on the level of media representations, Catholicism, or at least Christianity, appear as inextricably related to Slovenianess, thus making it rather impermeable for non-Christian religions. This has become apparent again in recent disputes regarding the building of an Islamic cultural centre with a mosque in Ljubljana (the first mosque to be built in Slovenia); a number of discussions were held about every conceivable argument why the construction of a mosque would be harmful for the Slovenian national character (cf. Dragoš 2003: 47-53). In the period from September 2001 to February 2002, mass media have participated in the perpetuation of the dominant perception of the Muslim community and Islam as inherently alien to Slovenia. However, they would only rarely foster explicitly intolerant views; in the period in focus, intolerant articles were almost entirely limited to the weekly *Mag* (Dragoš 2003: 37-47).

Moreover, on the basis of existing analyses one can also infer that the dominant frames proved resistant to the full integration of the Roma into the Slovenian population. As in the case of media representations of homosexuality, existing analyses (Erjavec et al. 2000; Peković 2003) point to an increase of representations that are critical of intolerant attitudes towards Roma. Slovenia has recently seen also the publication of the first critical assessment of another institutionalized practice crucial for the perpetuation of racism and intolerance towards the Roma. As Alenka Janko-Spreizer has shown (2002), the dominant, and until now the only available model of scientific treatment of the Roma in Slovenia – namely the model of ‘romology’ – amply participated in the perpetuation of representations which enhanced the social division between the Roma and the rest of the population in Slovenia.

Yet another social group that was stigmatized in media discourses in Slovenia in the 1990s are drug users. In 30 articles published in three different dailies and four weeklies in 2001, analyzed by Mojca Pajnik (2001), drug addicts were, as a rule, designated as violators of the existing norms and values.

In sum, judging from existing analyses of media coverage of various topics after 1990 in Slovenia, a number of mass media are repeatedly featuring among those that initiated public discussion on various aspects of social exclusion in Slovenia or countered exclusive discourses gaining ground in the public sphere with relation to such issues. Among these, the weekly *Mladina* and various publications issued by the Peace Institute, together with individual journalists writing for the dailies *Delo*, *Večer* and *Dnevnik*, played a prominent role. Women’s magazines, while participating in the reproduction of at least some of the aspects of the traditional gender roles (especially the perception of motherhood and family life as crucial for women), proved more resistant to some exclusivist discourses, such as nationalism or racism, at least in their overt forms. On the other hand, the weekly *Mag* and especially the daily *Slovenske novice*, one of the most popular Slovenian tabloids, were repeatedly among those periodical print media that were most prone to various forms of exclusivist discourses.

Conclusive Remarks: Obstacles to the Development of Non-Exclusivist Media Discourses

In the previous pages we have presented a short – and more or less lapidary – overview of the post-World War II development in the ‘quality press’ in Slovenia, but also listed some of the engagements and implications which went along with the political, economic, legal and also mental changes, focusing on the period after 1990. In the concluding section, we will point to

some of the most important obstacles to the further development of non-exclusivist media discourses in Slovenia. The limitations of the existing legal and economic arrangements of media production have been already presented above and explored elsewhere (Bašić and Hrvatin 2001). Therefore, we will limit our discussion to two further aspects which, in our view, have not yet received appropriate attention.

Firstly, it must be noted that while overt forms of intolerance are becoming increasingly rare towards the late 1990s, the same lines of exclusion still persist in less explicit forms, and are also still being supported by an important part of the population. A number of authors analyzing representations appearing in print media in Slovenia have argued that the largest part of the responsibility for the perpetuation of exclusivist discourses in media lies with the state authorities, especially the government. Instead of introducing legal measures that would secure an equality of citizens regardless of their sexual orientation, the authorities keep referring to the public opinion, claiming that the population is not yet ready for such a change, at the same time forgetting that they are themselves one of the instances affecting the changes in public opinion (Kuhar 2003: 92). A similar conclusion was reached also by Srečo Dragoš (2003) in his analysis of media representations of Islam and discussions on the level of local authorities in Ljubljana regarding the location of the mosque. Those most responsible for the emergence of intolerance are the largest and most influential political parties that form the government coalition and, as far as the religious communities are concerned, those most responsible are the representatives of the majority religion. At this point, it is important to note the discrepancy between the persistence of illiberal attitudes in Slovenia after 1990 and the actual composition of the political sphere. Apart from a two-year period immediately after the introduction of political pluralism in Slovenia (1990-1992), and a short interlude in 2000, the state power in Slovenia has been constantly in the hands of coalitions which have included the Liberal Democratic Party, i.e. the only political party in Slovenia which overtly presents itself as liberal. Despite this self-characterization, representatives of the party at both state and local levels have often shied away from presenting liberal arguments, and have themselves contributed to the perpetuation of nationalism, racism, chauvinism, religious intolerance and heteronormativity.

Another factor which has surfaced in a couple of analyses and is crucial for the assessment of recent changes in media representations in Slovenia is the fact that many policy changes introduced in the late 1990s and leading towards greater equality of citizens, constituted part of Slovenia's preparations for European integration, and were constantly presented as such by the authorities and the media. For example, the preparations of legislation guaranteeing equal human rights for both hetero-, bi- and homosexuals was presented as a necessary part of Slovenia's

preparations for entering the European Union (Kuhar 2003: 39). Similarly, the introduction of new policies regarding the Roma population in Slovenia was presented by the state authorities as a necessary requirement that Slovenia must fulfil in order to be favourably assessed by the European Union. On the other hand, opponents of the new legislation relativized the importance of European institutions' standards regarding minority protection (cf. Petković 2003: 67-68.) And finally, also the changes in immigration policies guaranteeing more protection for refugees, asylum seekers and other non-registered migrants were represented as unavoidable adaptations to the demands of the European Union (cf. Mihelj 2003b). This specific use of 'Europe' in public discourses and also decision-making in Slovenia needs particular attention, since it allows for a shift of responsibility for political decision making onto the European Union. The differences in the representations of 'Europe' appearing in media representations of Bosnian refugees in 1992 and those characterizing representations of non-registered migration are particularly telling in this respect.

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