

Rajko Muršič

Contested and Reified Symbols and the Eclipse of the Critical Reason: Some Remarks on Socialist and post-Socialist Culture, Ideology, Religion, and Freedom in Slovenia - and Around

»Svobode prebivalcem teh krajev ni nihče podaril. Ni prišla niti na bajonetih kakšne zahodne velesile niti kot del paketa prikrite operacije kakšne zahodne obveščevalne agencije. Svobodo smo si pač vzeli. Vzela si jo je mularija, ki je brenkala in bobnala, vzeli so si jo mediji in publicisti.«

[“Nobody gave freedom to our people. It did not come on bayonets of some Western superpower nor as a part of covered operation of some Western intelligence agency. We have simply taken our freedom. It was taken by the youths who played guitars or drums, it was taken by media and publicists.”]

Ali H. Žerdin (2001: 4)

Let me begin with an anecdote. In 1997 Ljubljana hosted the European Cultural Month. The cultural elite of the city persuaded itself and the citizens that Ljubljana had finally become recognised as a European Metropolis of Culture. One of the Slovene left-liberally oriented philosophers had the opening speech. He had supposedly explained to the audience that the Slovenes constitute a very unique nation, because they do not have its own military history – they were literally built of culture. For example, he supposedly continued, Italy is well known for its Mafia, but we, the Slovenes, have culture.

The story has already become a part of the city folklore, although it is not said if the audience laughed or applauded, or was silent. The only thing I remember from that occasion is that, at the same opening ceremony, Laibach performed together with the Slovene Philharmonic Orchestra. The famous rock group's noise and appearance provoked some eminent guests to leave the venue in protest (among other 'protesters' was the former/then Archbishop of the Slovene Catholic Church, Franc Rode, to whom we shall return towards the end of this article).

Such ridiculous ideas of the nation-building from (high) culture can often be found and claimed among the Slovene present-day intelligentsia. When Slovenia commemorate the death of its most famous poet, France Prešeren, with a public holiday on February 8, the public speakers often stress that this “culture holiday” proves that culture was important for the emergence of the Slovene nation long before any “Slovene” political and military appearance. Although it is not entirely true, the Slovenes believe that they did not have any significant political or military history before WWI, or even until the independence in 1991. The cultural notion of the “Sloveneness” (*slovenstvo*) is an extremely important part of the Slovene national identity (see Gow and Carmichael 2001). Despite sharp criticisms of its conception in anthropology (cf. Keesing 1990; Brightman 1995; Stolcke 1995; Wright 1998; Kuper 1999), culture is nowadays a common omnipresent concept and widely used in political, economic and entertaining discourses.

A belief in power of culture - and its civilizing mission - was one of the crucial corner stones of liberal ideology. The very emergence of the notion of culture has been an important part of historical development in Europe during the last three of four centuries (cf. Williams 1976). The recognition of irresistible power of culture is deeply embedded into the rise of the West - in opposition to the rest. Culturised - and culturising - elites firstly 'cultivated' the common people with general education. Then, they began to cultivate the rest.

Infected by the derivation of the same idea practiced within the Schengen fortress of the European Union, former socialist countries, and especially newly established nations, were being cultivated by their new anti-communist elites.

Their reformation efforts were/are rather conservative and directed against the common socialist "workers" or "people's" culture, if not openly/overtly nationalist. This cultural lustration may be at the same time highly elitist endeavor and extremely trivial.

In its elitist form, suppressed or forgotten seemingly nationally important authors and cultural heroes are evoked and celebrated, while in its populist form, kitsch and different kinds of trivialities are not only tolerated but promoted in the name of free market, enterprise and media.

At my opinion, it is not at all a coincidence that Serbian turbo-folk culture was finally successfully introduced and accomodated in Slovenia after the winning of rightist-

populist coalition at the elections in 2004. With national funds, the coalition got control over economy, replacing successful (post)communist managers. With other measures they later got control over public and private media and other institutions. The coalition can now easily represent itself as the only political alternative in the country. This situation is in many aspects very similar to the one under Milošević in Serbia - the golden era of Serbian turbo-folk.

But Europe is supposed to be different, especially concerning shifts in cultural policies of various European countries in past few decades.

The majority among the highly developed European countries have been recently (especially between the early 1980s and the late 1990s) investing substantial amounts of money in culture. This unprecedented awareness of the importance of culture was based on circumstantial new awareness of growing profits from copyright and cultural industry, dominated by the big multinational companies, and specific demands of European countries for preservation of cultural diversity, i.e. national uniqueness, which may easily evoke national(ist) sentiments.

Recent economic projections in the EU were based on the presumption that culture is the next important profit-maker, therefore there were investments in cultural infrastructure, especially in various aspects of popular culture, attractive for younger audiences, or various kinds of festivals in order to increase the unintended cultural consumption (see, e.g., Terho 1998; Brown, O'Connor and Cohen 1998; švedski festivali). In London, thousands of the so-called part-timers are seeking out their chance in the growing global cultural market inadvertently endowing the city with the youngest average population in Europe (Blake and Jeffery 2001).

Implementation of new economic paradigm with a so-called new, softer economy still fits well into the good old notions of culture as a value in and of itself. It is seen as a viable political motivator, "discovering" (read: inventing) a common European culture as one of the pillars in the creation of the united Europe. This is going on alongside military alliance(s), common market and currency, and efforts to co-ordinate foreign policy. Nonetheless, it so far possible only with common restrictions along the external borders of the Union.

Eastern (and Central, if one would like to make a distinction) European countries are still far from understanding culture as an economic category. Despite some lone voices claiming something opposite, the dominant attitude in Slovenia is still based on the assumption that culture is either honourable activity or a user of the budget (see the discussion on cultural policy in Čopič and Tomc 1998; Čopič, Tomc and Wimmer 1997). Too often, a notion of culture is based on old ideologies from the 19th century (Cetinski 2001).

At varying speed of 'adjustment', Slovenia's cultural policy is gradually being adjusted to the European standards, whatever that might mean. Similar processes are going on in other Central/Eastern European countries, but there is still no trace of larger investments in culture. Nonetheless, our countries are "Europeanising" rapidly. Instead of introducing a common cultural policy among the EU countries and newcomers, the EU is trying to propose minimal common standards. Therefore, each individual case mostly depends on solutions imposed from outside (read: from centres of international capital). Only in its "success" each country is different.

Worship of Culture and Symbols in Slovenia

What is perhaps specificity of Slovenia, is a highly politicised sphere of culture. On one hand, the current political struggles are seemingly the most clearly articulated in culture, while on the other, Slovenes definitely take symbolic manifestations and expressions very seriously. After all, it was Laibach (Neue Slowenische Kunst) who declared (back in the early 1980s) that politics is the highest and all-embracing art, and they, who create the current Slovene art, should be called politicians (see Laibach 1985). And where you have politics, you have struggles.

This was quite clear for me when I was becoming involved in underground/alternative movements in the 1980s. Maybe this is the reason why I do not see any other option than to describe the present-day situation in the Slovene culture as "culture war" situation. As an anthropologist, however, I am well aware of the dubiousness of the term culture (cf. Jackson 1989; Keesing 1990; Brightman 1995; Wright 1998; Kuper 1999; Stolcke...). There are many arguments against "promotion" of reified abstractions, but we still need a

general, abstract and emptied notion of the phenomena we put together into the category of “culture”. Besides, until now, nobody has proposed more applicable alternative.

Whenever, I will use the term culture, I will understand it within a good old materialist/critical theoretical framework which has proven valuable in the studies of cultural conflicts. Naturally, my perception of “culture wars” (not only in Slovenia) is strongly biased, not only because of my personal alternative “background”, but because my theoretical position is inseparably tied to my political, i.e. leftist views.

Central and Eastern European countries still have many difficulties in the development of their basic economies, therefore they can not afford to treat culture as the economic or developmental factor. This does not mean, however, that culture is set completely aside. After all, invention, reinvention, and protection of culture had been important part of public policy in our part of the world for quite a long time. The problem is that the liveliest parts of cultural activities are usually not included in the official cultural policies. Avant-garde and underground cultural movements and what can be defined as the alternative are typically excluded from the “national culture” policies and, together with culture industry, left to find their own way of survival on the margins of social and economic systems. And exactly these spheres of contemporary public culture are among the most important for further development of these countries. They are the sites of permanent public contest – if not combat, and not only symbolically.

In the 1990s, two streams of cultural production and its projections have been crystallised in Slovenia. They were in no way new. On the contrary, they were based on much older heritage of cultural struggles in the country which had obviously survived through decades. Very simplifying said, the two streams reflect the conflict between the cultural paradigms of the 19th and 21st centuries, articulated in modernist and postmodernist movements of the 20th century. It is rather obvious that these streams are in permanent conflict.

Defending the alternative rock group Strelnikoff, who was sued for the seemingly “offensive” cover of their album *Bitchcraft*, I became in a way involved in one of the most exposed manifestations of these conflicts in past few years (see Muršič 2000). For me, it was the final proof that ongoing political (and economic) struggles have gradually, almost imperceptibly, shifted into the spheres of culture. And precisely because those

struggles were successfully transferred into those spheres, they effectively cover (and enforce) the unchanging brutal capitalist exploitation of the “human resources” in peripheries of the world capitalist system, both within and beyond existing political borders of “the West”, especially the youths, domestic and “imported” workers, educated people from the second – post-socialist – and the third world, and impoverished populations around the world.

The term “culture wars” has nothing in common with Huntington’s ridiculous idea of the clashes of “civilisations”. This commonly accepted deceptive idea is the worst possible symptom of the shift from modernist age (industrial society) to the post-modern one (post-industrial society), from the role of pure economic capital to its redefined power, strengthened by symbolic capital. We must be aware of this shift in public culture from pure politics to culture – especially witnessing fearfully unanimous international media and political approval of Huntington’s vision after 2001 events in New York and Washington.

Radical criticism of such Orientalist, racist, prejudicial, hegemonic and militant ideology is our moral duty. I am not sure if my crusade against deeply rooted European sense of superiority (based on Greek philosophy of being, Semitic monotheism, and Western European technological and military power) will have any effect, but I am certain that, as anthropologists, we must become the advocates of the universal conscience of the humanity, although screaming from our small culturally shaped “national” (and mega-national, i.e. European) enclaves might well be ignored. Maybe this is why I am quite a radical (too radical?) critic of “my/our” culture.

It seems Marx’s analyses of the capital need some updating. Appropriation of the surplus of meaning is still the way how hegemonies are being re-established in post-socialist countries. However, it seems plausible to claim that, in the age of information, symbolic capital is becoming more important than economic. The uncovered efforts of the US administration to impose copyright legislation throughout the world are a clear confirmation of the shift.

The Death of the Subject and Deceptions of Culture

In the 1960s, when French philosophers announced the death of the subject, it seemed that any imagined new horizons were certainly achievable by a human society. The old structures were seemingly disappearing and the new world was being imagined by student and counter-cultural movements in the sixties. However, history again proved its unpredictability. Instead of implementing at least some of the radical utopian ideals of the sixties, the counterrevolutionaries successfully transformed the egalitarian ideas into marketing products, into *simulacra*. Indeed, we are all equal as consumers. The basis of this post-war development was the victory of the liberal principle of the universal mutual recognition, leading to the fulfilment of *thymos*, the universal human striving for recognition (cf. Fukuyama 1992). The old social struggles and tensions were gradually sinking into the “end of history”. But something went wrong.

History came back. Not as a farce, but as a tragedy. Again and again: Lebanon, Palestine, Somalia, Etiopia, Iran, Iraq, The Gulf War, Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan... The so-called ethnic wars, jihad, crusades, interventions... Ideas of homogenising culture(s) (no matter if in the shape of ethnic or religious affiliation) suddenly appeared to become an unacceptable threat for the liberal capitalist paradise. Culture? Which culture? What culture? The culture of power or the power of culture? As the international politics was becoming more and more “culturalised” (even on its mega-level, speaking of American, European, Asian, or African politics), many scholars, especially anthropologists, started to claim for the uselessness of the very concept of culture. It is rather easy to name reasons why culture should be tossed out as a scholarly concept in anthropology, but there are still some good old questions to be answered first.

We can easily agree that (any) culture is a pure invention and a transitory, actually non-existing social construct, very often imposed to people by external agents, but we can not easily explain why it is capable of mobilising people so effectively. It is indeed a very old problem to explain why and how the idea people live with (or, sometimes, for) turns into the idea to die with (or for). Marxist answer is too obvious: it is social, interpersonal relations that are materialised in things people exchange, while ideas (ideologies) only serve to disguise cover and/or confirm the existing relations of power. Why, then, are some ideas that obviously collide with existing regimes of power, so persistent? The pre-war ideas of elites from Central and Eastern Europe, “frozen” for more than four decades,

reappeared “alive and well”, although they do not fit into the present-day liberal capitalism, not to mention the seemingly revived ideas of ethnic or religious affiliation. These are not going to disappear just like that. Rather, we are cursed to speaking in tongues while being possessed by demons in discourse (van Loon 2002). Furthermore, religion and different forms of belief in supreme beings will survive, despite promises of all kinds of disenchantment and secularisation (cf. Lacan 2006).

Culture may be a construct, a reified abstraction, or an imagined reality, but it is, it seems, the inevitable component of any social power. It is rather easy to treat it as an illusion, but there are still no effective remedies against horrible consequences of belief in various powerful illusions of culture, no matter if they express racial, ethnic and national innateness or ideological and religious fundamentalisms. These ideas are so often beyond control of the good-willing individuals, no matter if their critics recognise them as reified or not.

The true secret of reified abstractions (on the possible understanding of the term in anthropology see Keesing 1990) is their very powerful and – nowadays, with disfavour of the good old Marxist materialism – the most overlooked feature: their inevitable material appearance. Ascribed meaning of materialised abstractions carries power, although there is no idea outside people’s minds. Abstractions are not agencies themselves: it is socially used material that mediates imagined power.

Culture is thus a pure transcendental category. By and large, it consists of symbols, but it is not only symbols that shape the human living world. Webs of meaning do not necessarily form a safe human nest. What we define as culture is experienced and materialised, not only imagined and symbolically mediated. What we perceive as symbolic is only that what is symbolizable: a meaning is structured by the limits of a given material into which it is inscribed.

In an attempt to cope with these problems, it is plausible to apply Lacanian division of the human living world (I use the phenomenological concept of *Lebenswelt* to avoid eventual psychological reductionism, although Lacan did not use this concept) to the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary (see, e. g., Miller 1983; Lacan 1996). The Real stands not for material reality, but for “the other scene”, more real than a reality, but again incomprehensible: non-symbolisable threats and manifestations of the human existence –

as well as its facets beyond comprehension – of the symbolic order. It can be a manifestation of knowledge gained through practice – habitus, “history, transformed into nature” (Bourdieu 1977: 78-79), but it is not the unconscious. The unconscious is structured as speech, thus symbolisable. It is “the Symbolic” which is structured the same way as speech. The Imaginary are the complexes of recognition, knowledge, and reflection, made possible after the “mirror stadium” in which the split Subject emerges (Lacan 1996).

With this theoretical framework – the manifestation of the Real in the “provocative” works of art – I will analyse some recent cases in which publicly presented pictures in Slovenia caused public scandals that lead into juridical or other manner of official and unofficial repercussions. They will clearly show that the pattern of scandalisation was the same during socialism and after, under the new, post-socialist capitalism. The language of art is universally powerful, indeed, and discourses of power elite are typically simple-minded.

A black sheep of the psychoanalytic community, Jacques Lacan – expelled from the psychoanalytic society at the very beginning of his professional career as a clinical psychiatrist – introduced the Real, not to denote the real in its physical sense – in that regard the reality is always to some extent beyond human imagination – but to define the unsymbolisable part of the human existence. Thus he invented another pure transcendental category and delineated the true demons of human existence. There is a whole universe of the unsymbolisable Real. It can become manifested or revealed in the fearful creatures of the night, it can as well appear embodied in the acts of the Other. Creatures from beyond the symbolic universe shared by a particular group of people, The Others, are therefore experienced as alien, uncontrollable and unsymbolisable fearful entities – the Real in Lacanian sense, a kind of inverted symbols threatening the existing symbolic order. In defence, imagination is employed to sew up the hole made by the break of the Real into the Symbolic. The Imaginary is the final result of this never-ending story of the subjectification (which can not happen without the mirror “picture” of the Other). In the process of any kind of identification – the process from which identity is derived – the Subject is split – or dead. Lacan uses the formula of the striked-through S to define a critical situation of the subject. And more clear it is that

the Subject is dead (that means, uncompleted, split, dispersed), more imagination (i.e. “culture”) it employs to fulfil the primordial gap.

This fear of the Other and the idea of the Supreme Being as the regulator of the order as opposed to chaos are among the results of symbolic subjectivation of the human being. The unavoidable fear of the Other manifests itself in (ethno)nationalisms and fascisms, the idea of the Supreme Being in religious and ideological fundamentalisms. The very symbolic “nature” of the humanity is the reason why it is condemned to suffer. Just as there are no utopias possible, the end of history is just another illusion. And precisely because we are aware of innate reasons for human suffering based on power and limitations of symbolic apparatus (ultimately revealed in Lacan’s psychoanalysis), we must do whatever we can to decrease it.

The Lime-twig of the Symbolic and the Seduction of the Tricky Webs of Meanings

Transformations of the Eastern European societies are an impressive example of suspension in the post-modern purgatory between ideologies of unmasked utopianism and seductive, liberal “end of history”. Radical social changes provide us almost a unique opportunity to consider our everyday life as a part of a huge natural experiment. After more than a decade and a half of never-ending “transition”, we should be able to make some conclusions. However, we rarely do large-scale comparisons or carefully designed case studies (this is a self criticism as well; cf. Brumen and Muršič 1999). It seems we do not know how to use anthropological methodology across such a transnational range – despite recent discussions about doing transnational research world-wide (Hannerz 1989; Appadurai 1990; Marcus 1995).

Although I have some experiential knowledge of the situation in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Russia and former Yugoslav republics, I am far from being able to give any transnational assessment of the post-socialist transformation except to make some basic remarks and observations on particular developments in popular culture (see Muršič 1999). Instead, I will only present a few examples from Slovenia. My point will not be the postsocialist social change, but its underlying continuities. And not only

continuities of the socialist period, but continuities that could be defined as structural (or paradigmatic) continuities of the *longue durée*.

A fear of disorder remarkably shaped the postsocialist Eastern-European countries. Typically, almost forgotten ideas would reappear, be they religious mysticism, speculations of the origins of particular nations or for several decades hibernated political programmes, compromised before and during WWII (alive, though obsolete, among the political emigration). The most horrible of these reanimated “ghosts” from the Second World War were/are the so called ethnic conflicts in former Yugoslavia (but not exclusively there).

When and how did it start? With the discovery of the remains in Serbia (the holy bones of Saint *Sava* were carried around the country to be reburied in the late eighties), the revaluation of the WWII victims in Croatia, or in the Katyn forest, with search for remains of the Royal family in Russia, symbolic burial of the after-war executed anti-Communist Nazi collaborators “*domobranci*” in Slovenia... These were not “just” symbolic acts. They did not close the traumatic chapters of history. On the contrary, they brought these “lost” (and for decades forbidden and denied) histories back on the scene. Are the most tragic episodes of history at all symbolisable? Violence, terror, oppression – are they symbolisable? No, there always remain parts of reality which are not symbolisable. Social imagery transfers it into the Real. And that is how the tradition of the dead generations becomes a nightmare in the minds of living people (Marx 1979: 452).

The first example in the powerful manipulation of visual symbolic expression was the poster made for the annual relay organised in former Yugoslavia to celebrate youth and Tito’s birthday. It was a typical socialist ritual connecting people from the most remote places of the country, where local relays were organised, and the final act on May, 25, when the so-called *Relay of the Youth* was given to the President Tito (and his successors after his death in 1980). The organiser of the show was the Socialist Youth Alliance of Yugoslavia. In 1987, the Slovene youth organisation was in charge of its organisation. Together with federal representatives, they chose the most attractive poster from among those sent on application. Soon after the poster was publicly presented, an anonymous reader recognised it as a Nazi poster from the 1930s. A huge scandal followed, the poster

was banned, and the authors from the art group *Novi Kolektivizem* (a part of the *Neue Slowenische Kunst*) were sued. At the end, they were not sentenced because there was no law to prosecute them. However, it so happened that this was the last Relay of the Youth ever organised in former Yugoslavia.



The action of Novi Kolektivizam was not intentionally provocative. On the contrary, they knew well that the young communists will recognise the mobilising appeal of the poster. The problem was that without recognition of its “original” all the symbolic masquerade would serve well. But when Nazi past of the poster was revealed, it was not possible to cover the gap in the symbolic universe. The Real (Nazi component of the poster) completely undermined the symbolic order, and the imagery based on this order lost its power. The message that was clear was: if we are attracted by the Nazi poster, are we any different? Symbols used on the new poster successfully replaced Nazi ones, but otherwise the poster was unchanged. (As a matter of fact, the Nazi poster was itself a remake of the older Norwegian poster for the sport competition, but this no longer mattered much.) Only at the Imaginary level was it possible to “recognise” the poster, but not its message – the entering of the Real disturbed the symbolic order so profoundly that new imagery of the Yugoslav symbolic system was to be re-built. The old one had proven itself useless. Thus a simple reassignment of symbols had enormous social and political consequences.

A year later another similar scandal occurred, although it did not achieve “the heights” of the poster scandal. One of the first actions of Slobodan Milošević, who came to power as the head of the Communist Party in Serbia in 1986, was replacement of the liberal redaction of the Belgrade student newspaper *Student*. Soon afterwards, another boards followed, which meant that replaced people had possibility of publishing their works. Slovenian student newspaper *Katedra* from Maribor offered them four pages as a regular appendix. In 1988, the picture was published showing Slobodan Milošević as an angel (or a saint) at the fresco of the ancient Orthodox Church. In Belgrade, that issue of *Katedra* was seized (not so in Slovenia) and the author of the collage was sued. Some reliable sources explained that Milošević personally became extremely upset with the picture. Again: the Real was threatening the symbolic order. Milošević, at that time a hardcore communist, could not imagine himself as a saint (or any in any way connected to the Church). But he already knew that people would soon begin to adore him as a redeemer of a nation. It would be simply too soon for the public to recognise his true ambitions. A minor symbolic switch (placing a leading communist in a religious milieu) was obviously very powerful.

Вундеркинд са Звездаре
Тамо где расту крила



ART: MILENKO MIHAJLOVIC

BELI ANĐEO NA HRISTOVOM GROBU, MILEŠEVA, sl. I

The final example of such symbolic perturbations is the most recent symbolic act which profoundly affected the Slovene society. In February, 1998, the alternative rock group

Strelnikoff released a record *Bitchcraft* with a song under the same title in five different versions: Radio Vatikan Edit, Satan Himmelfahrt Remix, Torquemada Remix, Ali Agça Remix and Endlösung Remix. It is obvious that these names do not fit. The lyrics of the song were strongly criticizing women who had “committed” abortion:

Why did you kill your unborn baby?

/.../

You are the poison in our nation's veins!

/.../

Someone's gotta stop it!

/.../

You live to breed and not to question!

We will teach you right from wrong!

/.../

You live to serve and obey the Lord!

These lyrics were a response to the Archbishop Franc Rode's objections to the Article 55 of the Slovene Constitution which prevents passage of any law that would ban abortion. But crucial was the record cover showing the well-known (in a way sacred) picture of the Virgin Mary with a rat in her arms.



The reaction of the Church started after Archbishop Rode wrote an article for the weekly *Družina* (Rode 1998) asking himself: “Mother, what have they done to you?” Authors of the record were sued. In less than a day after he received denouncement from the Young Christian Democrats, the Slovene General public prosecutor decided to arraign two leading members of the group. Initial issue was not blasphemy, but “insult to religious symbols” and “provocation of religious hatred”. However, there was no ground to prosecute them under those articles of the Criminal Law. The public prosecutor in Celje did not bring a bill of indictment. Therefore, the general public prosecutor gave the case to the public prosecutor in Maribor. At the end of June, 1999, the bill of indictment was based on the article that incriminates violent behaviour. The trail was delayed, until, only in early 2004, the public prosecutor announced withdrew of all the charges.

It is obvious that the cover was provocative. But was it offensive? And to whom? As in both previous examples, the rat represents the Real, the entering of something horrible to the place where it does not belong. Symbolic order was obviously disturbed. The role of the Imaginary was to prevent the destruction of the symbolic order. The Imaginary was thus supposed to employ imagery which could close the abyss of the Real. And which imaginary was mobilised? The national one. The offended part of the public did not

recognise blasphemous switch of the places between God and a rat as the most problematic. It employed much more powerful imagery: the soiling of the Holy Mary, “the Queen of the Slovenes”. Everyone knew that the Real at the picture was unimaginable, but the public reaction was defined with existing imagery. From the very beginning, the issue was not theological, but political. And the Real showed the most effectively what was going on with the society. The rat was already there.



Marija Pomagaj
Mati in Kraljica Slovencev

Ringling of the Revolution

The postsocialist transformations brought the past back to the present, at least the past that some of us thought would never return again. Postmodern chaos was a perfect time to experience revival of the 1930s and the 1940s in the misleading victory of “human rights” and liberal capitalism. Giving back nationalised pre-war property was one of the most important acts in postsocialist countries. The Act of Denationalisation in Slovenia was one of the most radical, designed to give back property in nature, including feudal property. At the same time, Eastern Europe was easily colonised by multinational corporations.

These processes were taken for granted. Only exceptional cases became a political issue. This is a proof that there are no true leftist parties in our country, as is the case with the rest of Europe. And that is why the ongoing social tensions found their expression predominately on a cultural level. One of the recently established NGOs in Slovenia was literally named The Society for the Defence of Atheist Sentiments. Do not misjudge its mission: it is a cultural institution organising concerts, theatre shows and other cultural activities.

The for the Defence of Atheist Sentiments was an agent of the ongoing culture wars in Slovenia, described above by announced trial against the rock group Strelnikoff. And it was based in the alternative cultural centre Metelkova City in Ljubljana – an alternative squat – or a “city” within a city, situated in an occupied barrack that will sooner or later be retaken by the authorities. And the struggle will continue.

References:

Appadurai, Arjun

1990 ‘Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.’ *Public Culture* 2(2): 1-24.

Blake, Andrew, and Graham Jeffrey

- 2001 “‘Community Music’: Whose Community, Which Music?’ Paper presented at the 11th Conference of International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Turku, Finland, July 6th to 10th 2001.
- Bourdieu, Pierre
- 1977 (1972) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press.
- Brightman, Robert
- 1995 ‘Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification.’ *Cultural Anthropology* 10(4): 509-546.
- Brown, Adam, Justin O'Connor and Sara Cohen
- 1998 ‘Local Music Policies Within a Global Music Industry: Cultural Quarters in Manchester and Sheffield.’ In: *Popular Music: Intercultural Interpretations*. Tôru Mitsui, ed. Kanazawa: Kanazawa University, pp. 246-260.
- Brumen, Borut, and Rajko Muršič, eds.
- 1999 *Cultural Processes and Transformations in Transition of the Central and Eastern European Post-Communist Countries*. Etnološka stičišča/Ethnological Contacts/Zbie_no_ci etnologiczne 9. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta.
- Cetinski, Uršula
- 2001 ‘Dinozavri izginjajo: O ideologiji 19. stoletja, ki straši po slovenski kulturi.’ [Dinosaurs are Disappearing: On the 19th Century Ideology Which Haunts in Slovene Culture.] *Mladina* 36[10. 9. 2001]: 75.
- Čopič, Vesna, and Gregor Tomc
- 1998 *Kulturna politika v Sloveniji: Simpozij*. [Cultural Policy in Slovenia: A Symposium.] Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.
- Čopič, Vesna, Gregor Tomc and Michael Wimmer
- 1997 *Kulturna politika v Sloveniji*. [Cultural Policy in Slovenia.] Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede.
- Fukuyama, Francis
- 1992 *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Penguin Books.
- Gow, James, and Cathie Carmichael

2001 *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe.* (2nd. Impression.) London: Hurst & Company.

Hannerz, Ulf

1989 'Notes on the Global Ecumene.' *Public Culture* 1(2): 66-75.

Jackson, Jean

1989 'Is There a Way to Talk About Making Culture Without Making Enemies?' *Dialectical Anthropology* 14: 127-143.

Keesing, Roger M.

1990 'Theories of Culture Revisited.' *Canberra Anthropology* 13(2): 46-60.

Kuper, Adam

1999 *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account.* Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press.

Lacan, Jacques

1996 *Štirje temeljni koncepti psihoanalize.* [Four Basic Concepts of Psychoanalysis.] Ljubljana: Analecta.

2006 ... o religiji. Problemi...

Laibach

1985 *Laibach.* (LP record sleeve.) Ljubljana: Škuc, ULP 1600.

Marcus, George E.

1995 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95-117.

Marx, Karl

1979 (1852) 'Osemnajsti brumaire Ludvika Bonaparta.' [18th Brumaire of the Napoleon Bonaparte.] In: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Izbrana dela.* [Selected Woks.] Vol. 3. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, pp. 445-574.

Miller, Jacques-Alain

1983 (1980) 'Pot skozi Lacana.' [Pathway through Lacan.] In: *Gospodstvo, vzgoja, analiza.* [Domination, Education, Analysis.] Slavoj Žižek, ed. Ljubljana: DDU.

Muršič, Rajko

1999 'On Globalisation, Westernisation, Popular Music and Similar Issues in the Times of the Transition of Post-socialist Countries.' V: *Cultural Processes and Transformations in Transition of the Central and Eastern European Post-Communist Countries*. Etnološka stičišča/Ethnological Contacts/Zbie_no_ci etnologiczne 9. Borut Brumen and Rajko Muršič, eds. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, pp. 139-156.

2000 'Provocation and Repression after Socialism: The Strelnikoff Case.' In: *Changing Sounds: New Directions and Configurations in Popular Music. IASPM 1999 International Conference Proceedings*. Tony Mitchell, Peter Doyle and Bruce Johnson, eds. Sydney: University of Technology Sydney, pp. 309-318.

Rode, Franc

1998 'Merili so v srce.' [They Pointed to the Heart.] *Družina* 47(8)[22. 2. 1998]: 3.

Stolcke, Verena

1995 'Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe.' *Current Anthropology* 36(1): 1-13.

Terho, Henri

1998 'A Tale of Two Festivals: Music and Festivals in Manchester, England, and Turku, Finland.' In: *Popular Music: Intercultural Interpretations*. Tôru Mitsui, ed. Kanazawa: Kanazawa University, pp. 240-245.

van Loon, Joost

2002 'Social Spatialization and Everyday Life.' *Space and Culture* 5(2): 88-95.

Williams, Raymond

1976 *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London: Fontana Press.

Wright, Susan

1998 'The Politicization of "Culture".' *Anthropology Today* 14(1): 7-15.

Žerdin, Ali H.

2001 'Zadnji pogo.' [The Last Pogo.] *Mladina* 49[10. 12. 2001]: 4-5.