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SUMMARY

THE RESEARCHERS OF THE SLAVONIC BELIEF ABOUT THE OTHER WORLD
Mirjam Mencej

The text presents the so far made researches in the field of Slavonic mythology that concern the Slavonic conception of the land of the dead. The researchers do not see eye to eye about the question whether the Slavonic conception of the land of the dead, which is separated from the land of the living by water, is autochthon or has been taken over from the Greeks (and the corresponding burial ceremony or cremation in the ships from the Scandinavians). The author speaks in favour with the opinion that it is all about a conception that is common to many cultures, most probably a conception that is even older than the formation of the Indoeuropeans as a special language-community and that the Slavs must have known it as a part of "common heritage".

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE CREATION OF A SLOVENIAN NATIONAL CULTURE[1]

Eastern Europe is an area of the world that has confused commentators and desisted the efforts of theorists from both the left and the right to come up with a convincing and comprehensive analysis of its distinctiveness. This theoretical 'gap', can in some sense explain the political confusion in the West about the Yugoslavian wars of dissolution.

Mark Thompson has aptly described the "sort of smugness in Britain (that) nourished the haughty attitude to nations that, as it were, suddenly had the gall or presumption to individuate themselves in our sight".[2] Unfortunately there is still wide spread confusion and political inertia concerning the 'rights' and 'wrongs' of the new nations in Eastern Europe.

Recent debates about the validity of the Slovenian national project, I would argue, form part of a much more long term discourse amongst and about the peoples of Central and Eastern part of Europe, particularly with reference to the idea that the Slovenes are "a people without history".[3] In this paper I will attempt to sketch how this ideological position was ar-

rived at by looking at the growth of Slovene national culture from the sixteenth century onwards. The second part of the article will examine the creation of an independent Slovenia.

Economic and social differences between Central and Eastern Europe are certainly long term and complex. To some extent the hegemony of Austrian and Italian culture in the Slovene lands can be accounted for by peripheral nature of the economy in this region. Nevertheless, a crude base-superstructure model cannot alone explain the failure, for example of the Slovenes to sustain a national culture after the fifteenth century. In the late middle ages the native nobility in the Slovene lands was largely replaced by a German speaking Habsburg nobility aristocracy, so that we might conclude that the Slovenes did not attain statehood as a people until the twentieth century for reasons that are cultural as well as economic and political.

The Reformation in the provinces of the Holy Roman Empire where Slovene was spoken followed a similar pattern in linguistic terms to other parts of Central Europe. In 1584, a Bible was printed based on a combination of the dialects of Dolenjska and Ljubljana which effectively created a literary language from largely unrecorded provincial dialects. In doing

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so, the Protestant reformers created a demarcation line between those peasants who could understand the dialects of Carniola and those who could not and also gave the vernacular an importance that it had largely lost in high culture. Slavic dialects were spoken across the Eastern Alps and across the South East of Europe from the sixth century onwards. The recording of the dialect of Ljubljana and Dolenjska created a subgroup from amongst those Southern European Slavs and resulted the the gradual implosion of a 'Slovenia' towards the centre of Ljubljana in the following centuries. The Slavic language has now waned both in Austrian Carinthia (which was once the centre of an early mediaeval Slovenia or Karantanija) and in the Slavic-Romance borderlands of Friuli Venezia-Giulia.

Since the sixteenth century, Slovene national distinctiveness has been based entirely on language. It is the fluctuating status of the language and the speakers of that language which has determined the subsequent fate of this nation. Nationalities can, of course be established on the basis of different criteria of which language is only one. Max Weber stated that the Swiss nation was formed and consolidated on the basis of cantons having common political and economic interests. Weber also observed, and not without regret, that the experience of the French Revolution had made German-speaking Alsatians into patriotic French citizens.[4] Despite differing criteria for what constitutes a nation, by creating a distinct literary language from unrecorded dialects the Protestant reformers created a potential Slovene nation, albeit at the level of popular culture, that existed for over four hundred years before political independence. The question is not therefore whether a Slovene nation actually exists, it is what form do the political and other expressions of this national culture take?

Texts in literary Slovene continued to appear but the banning of Protestantism in the Slovene speaking estates of the Habsburg Monarchy effectively ended this development. Between approximately 1630 and 1780, the Slovene language experienced what Carlo Ginzburg has described elsewhere as a "cultural assault" in the form of the Counter-Reformation and the Enlightenment.[5] Publication of texts in Slovene virtually ceased and the language was kept alive by a largely illiterate peasant population. This is also a period during which relentless Germanisation and Italianisation occured.

In the Habsburg lands this process of acculturation was largely carried out by the minor nobility. Baron Valvasor's book Die Ehre dess Herzogthums Crain published in 1689, is one of the most outstanding ethnographic and topographical surveys that exists for the early modern period.[6] It, like the Encyclopaedie and so many dictionaries and reference books published in the eighteenth century is a "huge ledger"[7] of Slovene peasant culture, which it appropriates and simplifies.

In the hundred and fifty years between 1630 and 1780 the status of the Slovene people of East-Central Europe changed from that of a provincial peasant estate within the Habsburg Monarchy to that of a subject people, defined by their relationship to the German or Italian speaking urban centre, inhabitants of what David Blackbourn has called Central Europe's "Celtic Fringe".[8] It is these dual aspects of ethnicity and language which explain the Slovenes demotion into the leagues of Eastern Europe's Untertanen.

After the sixteenth century, the peasants in both Western and Eastern Europe became internally colonised, their cultures codified, appropriated and then romanitised. In the case of the Austrian Slavs, the 'exclusion' from the mainstream of middle class European culture is marked even more strongly by linguistic barriers between classes within the Habsburg Monarchy before 1918. What we normally refer to as Herderian romantic nationalism is a product of this 'cultural assault'. The very discovery of a different kind of Volksgeist for Slavs by Herder effectively moved those central European Slavs that bit further 'east', radicalising them from their neighbours in their own autocthonous regions.[9]

Can we say that the relationship between Central and Eastern Europe was similar to the relationship between the West and the colonised world. Although the events and the chronology might differ somewhat, the relationship that Central European culture has had with Eastern European culture particularly in its Jewish and Slavic varieties certainly has many parallels with the relationship between Western Europeans and their colonial 'others'. The French implicitly recognise this parallel by using the phrase L'Autre Europe to mean Eastern Europe. Stuart Hall has also made this point, stating cautiously that "Eastern Europe doesn't (doesn't yet? never did?) belong properly to the West".[10] Whether or not they had a similar hegemony over Eastern Europe, Central Europeans certainly borrowed some of the rhetoric and vocabulary of British and French Imperialism. For example, Chateaubriand placed the "Orient" east of Trieste "on this coast where bar-

4   H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. The Nation, p. 173.*

5   *Carlo Ginzburg, Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm. In: Myths, Emblems, Clues. 1990, p. 115.*

6   *J. W. von Valvasor, Die Ehre dess Herzogthums Crain. Nürnberg/Ljubljana 1689.*

7   *Carlo Ginzburg, Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm, p. 115.*

8   *This expression was used by Prof. David Blackbourn during a seminar at Birkbeck College, University of London, in 1986.*

9   *On Herder see, for example, Ernst Bilke, Herder und die Slawen. In: Walter Hubatsch (ed), Schicksalswege Deutscher Vergangenheit. Beiträge zur Geschichtlichen Deutung der Letzten Fünfzig Jahre. Düsseldorf 1950, pp. 81-102.*
    On Herder, I disagree with Isaiah Berlin who makes a fundamental distinction between non-agressive nationalism exemplified in the work of Vico and Herder and agressive nationalism (see Nathan Gardels, Two concepts of Nationalism: An Interview with Isaiah Berlin. In: New York Review of Books, November 21st 1991, pp. 19-23.) In theory, as I argue in this paper, it is impossible to distinguish between such nationalisms. In practice, however, there is every difference between those who are prepared to exert force and those who are not. But is this difference a philosophical one?

10 *Stuart Hall, The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power. In: Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (eds.), Formations of Modernity. Oxford 1992, pp. 275-332.*

barism starts".[11]

By the eighteenth century that Slavophone Istrians were generally alienated from the mainstream of culture in Trieste. The sense of distance between the civilised inhabitants of Western Europe, inheritors of classical values and arbiters of taste and morals and those Slavic peasants of the other Europe can be seen by examining a passage written by C. J. Latrobe. Latrobe was a visitor to Trieste in 1830 and described how the Triestine bourgeoisie received their food from the surrounding countryside where Slovenes farmed the land.

"Hundreds of these white-headed people are seen entering the city early in the morning with bread for city consumption, that being chiefly made in the farms. They have a singularly shaped head and a very peculiar cast of countenance and are evidently a distinct race from the inhabitants of the opposite shores. The population of the inland parts of Carniola, Istria and Dalmatia is still in a half-savage state: and the roads of the country are reputed unsafe for the solitary wanderer."[12]

This passage is obviously influenced by contemporary phrenology and other nineteenth century radicalising sciences. Božidar Jezernik has made the links between representations of Croat women, particular in the work of the Venetian Abbe Alberto Fortis, and representations of so-called 'savages' in the late eighteenth century such as Buffon's Samoeide women and Hottentots.[13] It would of course be entirely possible to interpret the arrival of bread in Trieste every morning quite differently, for example as peasants selling their produce in an example of normal city-country relations, but the point here is that La Trobe emphasises the gap between Italian Trieste and the 'half-savage' countryside as if these Slavic peasants have no legitimate place in the city.[14] Similar descriptions of the Adriatic port and its hinterland are so commonplace in late eighteenth and nineteenth accounts that they should be regarded as more significant than a sort of textual 'accident'.[15]

This radicalisation between Trieste and its hinterland can in part be e plained by the processes of state formation and the growth of cultural nationalism since the late eighteenth century. The rise of the nation state is conventionally dated after the French revolution on continental Europe. Indeed the French concept of nationalism, initially liberating to subject peoples of South-Eastern Europe, with the short lived, but not forgotten creation of the Illyrian states by Napoleon which elevated the cultural and bureaucratic status of local lan-

guages. The modern problems of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe begin in the context of territorial nation building. Central European nationalisms of the ninetenth century, particularly German but also Italian, adapted French revolutionary nationalism, and it is in this Central European context that the concept of historic and non-historic nations appears, and an inequality of rights to national self-determination also appears. This is because building a state based on language group rather than region ipso facto threatened the territorial tenure of less numerically or politically powerful groups.

It has been argued the Serbs of Lusatia are the most German of all the people of Central Europe, because they are the only ethnic group that lives exclusively in Germany. Much the same can be said for the Slovenes: more Austrian and more Kaisertreu than any other linguistic group in the former Habsburg monarchy, because only a fraction of them lived outside the monarchy.[16] Ivan Trinko the priest who collected the poetry of Beneška Slovenija even wrote under the pseudonym Zamejski.[17]

By the nineteenth century, the Slovene lands are often represented as lacking in civilisation in texts written by foreigners. Murray's Handbook for Southern Germany from 1876 is typical;

"Carniola is generally speaking, not well adapted for pedestrian excusions /.../ the habits and (Slavonic) language of the people diminuish the pleasure which its natural objects of interest might afford."[18]

The further stage of this 'cultural assault' can be characterised as the denial by writers from the dominant cultures that their subject have any history. This can particularly clearly seen in German language scholarship of the nineteenth century, which presented the Slovenes as a 'people without history' (geschichtslos). Perhaps the most well known example of this comes form the work of Friedrich Engels, writing in the Neue Rheinische Zeitung in 1849.

"...the Austrian Slavs have never had a history of their own /.../ they are entirely dependent on the Germans and Magyars for their history, literature, politics, commerce and industry..."[19]

A. A. Paton writing in 1862 demoted the status of the Slovene's 'non-historic' language and mocked the efforts of Slovene writers to perpetuate their mother tongue:

"...the Winds (Slovenes) have given the Germans very little trouble, and are not likely to do so, although they once

11 N. Powell, Travellers to Trieste. 1977, p. 79.

12 C. J. Latrobe, The Pedestrian. A Summer Ramble in the Tyrol and some Adjacent Provinces. London 1832, p. 197.

13 Božidar Jezernik, O metodi in predsodkih v delu Alberta Fortisa. Prispevek za zgodovino antropologije. In: Traditiones 17. Zbornik Inštituta za slovensko narodnopisje. Ljubljana 1988, pp. 71-85.

14 Some recent works on the 'ethnic' history of Trieste include Boris M. Gombač, Trst/Trieste. Dve imeni, ena identiteta: Sprehod čez historiografijo o Trstu. Trieste/Trst 1993; and Glenda Sluga, Trieste: Ethnicity and the Cold War, 1945-54. In: Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 29/1994, pp. 285-303.

15 See, for example: Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Reise nach Italien (1803). Rütten und Löning. Berlin 1979.

16 This point is made, most famously, by Joseph Roth in his novel Radetzkymarsch. 7th edition. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag. München 1988.

17 Zdenko Čepič et al., Zgodovina Slovencev. Cankarjeva založba. Ljubljana 1979, p. 476.

18 Murray's Handbook for Southern Germany. London 1876, p. 410.

19 Friedrich Engels, Democratic Pan-Slavism. In: Neue Rheinische Zeitung 15-16. 2. 1849. Reprinted in: David Fernbach (Ed.), The Revolutions of 1848. Penguin. Harmondsworth 1973, pp. 236-237.

formed a nation which covered the whole of the South-East of Germany, and many names of places denote, such as Vindobona (now Vienna) and Gradetz (now Gratz) etc, etc. Their language still exists as a familiar but not literary dialect: at least the movement of a few young men in Carniola is a very feeble one: for while the Croatian regards all the Ragusan authors as his national classics, the Carniolan has no literature of any value that he can call his own: and while Bohemian literature and nationality fell from its high estate in the Thirty Years War, that of the Winds never rose at all, and is rather a matter of antiquarian speculation than of urgent vitality."[20]

Since about 1780, the Slovenes themselves have reacted against this 'assault' and attempted to create a native culture, or at least a form of 'national' culture most valued by the section of the Slovene population that moved in to the towns from the mid eighteenth century and developed into a native middle class. The use of the Slovene language was revived by the activities of intellectuals, often under the patronage of Baron Žiga Zois in the later eighteenth century. From 1809-13, the Slovene lands were incorporated into the Napoleonic Empire as the 'Illyrian Provinces'. Although they were then regained by the Habsburgs in 1815, the French occupation had a lasting impact on Slovene national consciousness. In the period up to 1848, Slovene intellectuals continued to forge a new national and cultural identity along Herderian lines. The poet France Prešeren produced some of the greatest work in the language, including the current National Anthem, Zdravljica.

In 1848, the Habsburg dominions were shaken by revolutions in the provincial capitals and some Slovene intellectuals openly proclaimed a policy of Zedinjena Slovenija. During the period 1850- 1914, the nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy became 'Slavist' of an Austroslav or 'Yugoslav' orientation, defining ethnicity or more precisely language as the basis for future political organisation.

Slovene national consciousness was raised to the level of political expression by the experience of being incorporated into the two Yugoslavias (Inter-War Royalist Yugoslavia and Post-War Socialist Yugoslavia); The first Yugoslavia created a proto-Slovenia in the form of the 'banovina' of 'Dravska'. The creation of a socialist Slovenian republic in 1945 then created the precise territorial basis for a future independent state. It was during the period 1945-1990 that the Slovene language flourished for the first time as an 'uradni jezik' (executive language) allowing the Slovenes to operate their own mini-state

in confederation with the rest of Yugoslavia. It was when the Slovenes linguistic (and thus both cultural and political) autonomy was threatened, particularly during legal clashes with the Yugoslav People's Army in the 1980's that particular and exclusive Slovenian nationalism began to develop. The result of this move was the birth of the Republic of Slovenia.

In many respects the Slovene antithesis to German or Italian nationalism has been remarkably similar in form and function. The Slovene speaking Burghers of Ljubljana searched for their own national spirit, which was often a distilation of the most kitsch and derivative elements of older national symbols from Western Europe. British historians have noted that such items as the highland kilt or even the Guy Fawkes bonfire are 'invented traditions' of the nineteenth century.[21] France Prešeren would not have been remembered for his German language poetry which was largely imitative of literary currents outside the Slovene lands. His real innovation was to rework this medium into something distinctively Slovene.

But poems operate largely on a symbolic or aesthetic level. There is, of course, a much more serious point to nationalism. That is the implicit claim within nationalist discourse to the political rights to a territory for one particular group. British nationalism, or more specifically what Linda Colley has called 'Britishness' was created at a time when the English attempted to bring the whole of the British Isles under the political control of London,[22] French nationalism consolidated the ricketty Bourbon state, German nationalism created a German speaking Central European state bringing in areas which were Slavic speaking or multilingual, so it follows that Slovene nationalism had as its long-term political programme the creation of a discrete national unit.

The important link in political terms here is the link between Land and Volk. The Slovenes laid a cultural claim to the land long before the creation of Slovenia. In the words of Peter Vodopivec, Herder preceded Hegel.[23] I think an example of this is the 'slovenisation' of Triglav, the mountain that adorns stamps and banknotes. Triglav was first scaled by Alpinists in the nineteenth century, but it subsequently became a symbol of the link between Sloveneness and the very landscape. At the summit one is supposed to proclaim Zdaj sem pravi Slovenec.[24] National self-definition tends to exclude by its very nature the other group from rights to territory or at least to an important political stake in it. Ethnic Germans had lived around Triglav for many hundreds of years, but it ceased in

20 A. A. Paton, Researches on the Danube and the Adriatic. Vol. 1. London 1862, p. 437.
21 See, for example: Hugh Trevor-Roper, The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland. In: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge University Press, Canto editions. Cambridge 1992, pp. 15-41.
    See also David Cressy, The Fifth of November Remembered.In: Roy Porter (ed), Myths of the English. Polity Press, Cambridge 1992, pp. 68-90.
22 Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837. Yale University Press 1992.
23 Peter Vodopivec, The Slovenes and Yugoslavia. In: East European Politics and Society, Vol. 6, No. 3, Fall 1992, p. 241.
24 Mathias Kipar, Na svidenje, Triglav! In: Slovenija, Vol. 3, Summer 1989, p. 17.
    To climb Triglav in the twentieth century is a symbol of Sloveneness, rather than of regional loyalties. By way of contrast, Janez Bilc was told in 1862: "You are an Inner Carniolan, but you haven't yet seen our Cerknica. Come with me tomorrow and you won't be sorry that you have done what I said". J. Bilc, Tri dni v Cerknici. In: Slovenski glasnik, No. 8/1862, p. 11. Reprinted in: Janez Šumrada, Slovenski opisi Cerkniškega jezera s konca 18. in iz 19. stoletja. Društvo notranjskih kulturnikov Krpan. Cerknica 1991, pp. 466-75.

some sense to be their mountain once it became a Slovenian national symbol.

As a parallel to the rediscovery of Slovene culture by a native middle class since the late eighteenth century, there were also attempts to write a national history of an imagined community of Alpine Slavs from the earliest settlements. In 1791 Anton Linhart, one of the first writers to define the Slovenes as a distinct national ethnic community, completed a history of Carniola.[25] Milko Kos felt that ethnic group was a suitable subject for historical research per se and he strongly influenced subsequent historiography.[26] In practise this retrospective ordering of the Slovenes into a 'complete' historical ethnic community, has meant that Slovene scholars in the twentieth century have spent a great deal of time and energy trying to locate their language on a historical sound map. Many histories have been written by Slovenes themselves (or those sympathetic foreigners), which mimic the political histories of Western Europe by placing ethnic Slovenes at the centre of 'events' and depicting Slovene history as a kind of Golden Thread from the dark ages to the present day. Perhaps the most notorious example of this was the attempt by Joseph Felicijan to infer a link between the inauguration (ustoličevanje) of the Carinthian dukes in the ninth century by Slovene peasants on the ducal stone (knežji kamen) and the ideas of the American revolutionists. Thomas Jefferson did annotate his copy of Jean Bodin's description of the Carinthian ceremony, but here the link probably ends.[27] Useful though many alternative 'grand naratives' could be in political terms, in effect, by inserting Slovene peasants into the drama of American independence, the scholar is denying that a 'cultural assault' ever took place and this in turn has led to a staggering historiographical (at least, until recently) neglect of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Slovene Untertan thus began to perceive himself as the Übermensch.

Nationalism in its exclusivist political form came thus to dominate Slovene historiography or the ways in which Slovenes have chosen to represent themselves in the past. Typically, Slovenia is represented as a microcosm of a perfect proto-state, whose only problem was its comparative smallness. For example, Maja Žvanut, in an otherwise well put together book called Slovenci v šestnajstem stoletju:

"Due to historical events, the Slovene people found themselves acting as a bulwark of European civilisation in the 16th century. All social classes took part in the bitter struggle against the Turks, which lasted more than a century. They did this in regular and irregular armies, as defenders of towns and peasant encampments and as victims and taxpayers. They were also in effect the defenders of Western civilisation. All this was quite a contribution to European affairs for such a small nation!"[28]

In the long term an analysis of the Slovene condition and late evolution to statehood which is based on lack of numbers is totally insufficient. Undoubtedly size is important, but cannot be regarded as a general explanation. So how then could Slovenes become 'historic' and 'reclaim' their past without resorting to mimicry of Western nationalist historiography and indulging in ethnocentric fantasies? One apparent answer to the problem of exclusivist nationalist discourse has been the adoption of an approach to the historiography of East-Central Europe that is regionally based: a historiography that endows Slovene, Croat, German or Friulian popular culture with some virtue and acknowledges the intellectual depth and intricacy of these cultures.

Regionally based historiography in East-Central Europe could indeed be an antidote to a history that leaves the Slovenes out entirely and history that put them back in with all the glory. Indeed there have been developments of this nature already. This trend was clearly discernable in the work of Jože Pirjevec in the collection Slovenski glas, Pirjevec and other historians and writers put the case of the Slovenes of Trieste skillfully mixing political narrative, oral accounts and cultural reflections.[29] They are, of course, writing in a city where neo-Nazis have organised an anti-Slovene party, the Lista per Trieste, where the Slovene Library has been petrol bombed and where right-wing students have demonstrated on the street whenever bilingual roadsigns have been erected. Partly under the influence of Pirjevec, Claudio Magris and Angelo Ara have rewritten sections of the book Trieste: Un Identita di Frontiera to include the hitherto hidden element of Slovene culture in Triestine history.[30] The emergence of Trieste as an alternative to Ljubljana-centred world view for Slovenes has undoubtedly been important in the politics of East-Central Europe.[31]

Nevertheless, one of the effects of the work of apparent historiographical regionalists has been the revival of the Slovenian national programme and a massive growth of Slovenian nationalism in the last decade. Regional historiography could almost be described as a 'strategic non-essentialisation', which has slipped the Slovenian national programme in by the back door. It represents the triumph of the Golden

[25] *Anton Linhart, Versuch einer Geschichte von Krain und Übrigen Südlichen Slaven Österreichs. 2 Vols. Ljubljana 1788-91.*

[26] *For example, see Milko Kos, Odnosi med kolonizacijo in oblikovanjem narodnostih meja. In: Zgodovinski časopis, No. 9/1955, pp. 140-5. On the subject of Kos' historiographical influence, Carole Rogel has written that "his study of the mediaeval period focusses on the problem of establishing and maintaining the territory of Slovene ethnic frontiers. Defying changing political boundaries and foreign domination, the community remains a living entity and can best be understood by identifying economic, social and topographical factors that continue to shape it." Carole Rogel, Slovenia. In: Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism, Vol. 9/1982, p. 103.*

[27] *Joseph Felicijan, The Genesis of the Contractual Theory and the Installation of the Dukes of Carinthia. Družba sv. Mohorja. Klagenfurt/Celovec 1967, pp. 35-53.*

[28] *Maja Žvanut, Slovenci v šestnajstem stoletju. Narodni Muzej. Ljubljana 1986, p. 51 (my translation).*

[29] *Jože Pirjevec (ed.), La Voix Slovene/Slovenski glas/La Voce Slovena. Trieste/Trst 1986.*

[30] *Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris, Trieste: Un Identita di Frontiera. Einaudi. Torino 1987.*

[31] *The contacts between Slovenes in Ljubljana and those in Klagenfurt and more particularly in Trieste had almost no equivalent amongst the other nationalities of former Yugoslavia.*

threaders or mimic men. Some recent histories of Slovenia almost emit the two Yugoslavias, ironically the period that nursed Slovenian political independence. Slovenes and Croats have fallen over themselves to join 'Europe' and to distance themselves from the Serbs, who were once hailed as anti-fascist heroes. As Dimitrij Rupel the former foreign minister put it: "To be truly independent, the move from the Balkans to Central Europe must be irreversible".[32] Given that the Slovenes last experience of 'European independence' was partition between Mussolini's Italy and the Third Reich his remark must be viewed with some irony. Many articles written since the war of independence in 1991 could be described as a gluttony of nationalist sentiment and smug self-absorption. 'Europeaness' is frequently evoked by Slovene nationalists or other simpatizzanti, as a way of legitimising Slovenia's break with Yugoslavia.[33] Jože Pirjevec who has written with such passion about the plight of Slovenes in Trieste wrote a article in the American Journal Nationalites Papers describing the Communist bloc after 1945 as part of 'Asia',[34] using the same sort of intentionally negative vocabulary as Chateaubriand. Using a similar sort of pseudo-scientific geography, Ivan Gams makes the same sort of point:

"Yugoslavia has been the only European Country to join nations from the West on the one hand and from the border areas of Southeast and Eastern Europe on the other. The result is evident: ethnic turmoil and general discontent."[35]

In the last few years dissenting voices have been ignored or railed against. Perhaps the most famous anti-nationalist is the Austrian playwright Peter Handke, himself half-Slovene, who has criticised the recent cultural revolution in Ljubljana stating that "the Slovenes are totally absorbed by their own folklore and they have upheld it, in their usual manner, until their it has become rancid." He has also criticised their "longing for history".[36]

The terلency of Slovenes to assert their superiority over other former Yugoslavs is a denial of so much about their past and a collective forgetting of their struggle for national rights in the Habsburg monarchy and the first half of the twentieth century because it is based on flawed assumptions about their historic role in Europe. Therefore to merely advocate the adoption of regional approaches to historiography would be to forget the Hegelian dialectic and the lessons of recent history. If we are to interpret the ethnocentrism now apparent in Central and Eastern Europe as largely the product of the internal colonisation of Europe, we might conclude that those apparently postmodern phenomena - the decentering of centres and a distrust in Grand narratives hardly apply in Slovenia, let alone in Croatia, Serbia or even Poland. Ethnocentrism in Central and Eastern Europe, far from indicating the decline of the 'West' as some commentators would have it, rather suggests that the West is still in fine form.[37]

Having defined some forms of Slovenian nationalism as reactive and chauvinistic towards other Yugoslavs, is it now possible to go on to argue that the creation of a independent Slovenia was legitimate, necessary and even desirable? I have previously stated that nationalism threatens the territorial status of other linguistic or ethnic groups in Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, Slovenian politicians handled their own struggle for independence by the book, preceding slowly by democratic means and by opening their doors to the rest of the world. In a very real sense the overwhelming majority of Slovenians voted to be national citizens. Personal feelings of distate, for example, the ubiquity of kitsch national symbols and the shoddy treatment of 'southerners', should not be allowed to obscure a political point.

Pragmatists tend to argue that the problems started when the principle of a united Yugoslavia was challenged. Others, perhaps in the same vein, have moarned the passing of the Habsburg Empire.[38] In a sense this is logical, but static, even ahistoric. The deconstuctionists of the national idea have tended to stress its recent nature.[39] This is of couse true. It would be nonsense to describe sixteenth century scholars such as Servetus, Erasmus, or Copernicus primarily or exclusively as Spanish, Dutch, or Polish as they clearly belonged to a Europe-wide community of intellectuals. But to deconstruct the national idea now as if it is no longer useful, had its day, a historical anachronism, surely misses the political point. It assumes that there a point in time beyond which no new good nations can be made, to paraphrase Lee Bryant[40] and that those that got left out for one reason or another in the nineteenth century or earlier cannot be regarded as politically or culturally on a par with the older historic nations.

32 Dimitrij Rupel, Nedokončano osamosvajanje Slovenije. In: Slovenci in prihodnost. Nova revija, July 1993, p. 407. (English summary).
33 For a more detailed analysis of this problem see, Wendy Bracewell, Europeanisation versus Orientalism. In: Dennis Deletant and James Gow (eds.), Semantics and Security: The Meaning of the Balkans, forthcoming.
34 Jože Pirjevec, Slovenes and Yugoslavia. In: Henry Huttenbach and Peter Vodopivec (eds.), Nationalities Papers. Special Issue: Voices from the Slovene Nation. Spring 1993, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 114.
35 Ivan Gams, The Republic of Slovenia - Geographical Constraints of the New Central European State. In: Henry Huttenbach and Peter Vodopivec (eds.), Nationalities Papers, p. 26.
36 Christian Ankowitsch, Interview with Peter Handke. In: The Guardian 15/11/91, p. 19.
37 For instance Robert Young writes: "Today at the end of the twentieth century, as 'History' gives way to the 'Postmodern', we are witnessing the dissolution of the West". See: Robert Young, White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West. London 1990, p. 20.
    One cannot help but wonder if the Bosnians would agree with this after several years of war or can it be that the dissolution of the West can only be observed from a window in Wadham college, Oxford?
38 See, for example, Chris Cviic, An Antidote to the Present. In: The Spectator, 3rd September 1994, pp. 16-17.
39 I am thinking here particularly of Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. New Left Books. London 1983; and Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780. 2nd edition. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 1992.
40 Lee Bryant in a personal communication.

A secure nation state brings innumerable benefits to its citizens, a solid cultural identity and stable traditions in political culture which can surely only be mocked by writers with either a very stable sense of their own political identity or a very poor sense of the balance of power in continental Europe. In 1990, the Slovenians voted to be a nation, to become 'historic' with all its ethnocentric overtones, to have the sort of identity that people in the West take for granted.[41]

This point was made by Milan Kundera in an interview in the early 1980s: In it he stated:

"The Czech anthem begins with a simple question: 'Where is my homeland?' The homeland is understood as a question. As an eternal uncertainty. Think of the British national anthem 'Victorious, happy and glorious...'/.../ You see if you're English you never question the immortality of your nation because you are English... You may question England's politics, but not its existence."[42]

As Kundera says, like the English, the Slovenians have a desire to answer the question 'where is my homeland?' and consequently to have some sort of say in the political composition of their state rather than being lumped into a larger, multinational state in order to make bigger, but workable polities that don't offend people by their small size. Smallness apparently does irritate and offend some. Eric Hobsbawm dismisses Kleinstaaterei and describes the existence of small states as "welcome to philatelists",[43] demoting these political creations to the realms of an 'imagined community', as if they were not somehow really tangible or legitimate.

A tremendous problem still remains at a discursive level. We persist in emotionalising the division of Europe between East and West, between historic and aspiring non-historic by our commonplace use of radicalising vocabulary and by dwelling on notions of 'historic rights'. For example, it is often noted that South-Eastern Europe is a 'Balkan Babel', a patchwork of different ethnic cultures and groups. On the other hand, we never refer to the Alpine Babel, in spite of the existence of a different dialect in every valley of this mountain range. This is because this an area of relative political stability. (I think that Jörg Haider could hardly be compared to Karadžić in his political impact, in spite of the provocative nature of his views). The long term result of this discursive division is the failure on a practical level to distinguish between chauvanistic nationali n, which is "pompous and self-regarding"[44] and aggressive nationalism which threatens lives, attacks democratic states and occupies regions on the most spurious ethnic claims dating back to 1389 or therabouts.

In essence, English, German, Slovene or even Serb nationalism are no more stupid or irrational than any other, although their political effects may be currently be preoccupying us. They all have at their heart an ethnic chauvinism which both embraces and excludes. But clearly there are peaceful and democratic ways of negociating around the apparently ancient and inscrutable ethnic divisions in Eastern Europe. The Slovenians have demonstrated that non-violent resistance to military force can work and have demonstrated a greater faith in democracy than Western leaders. On the other hand, the Serbs have understood perfectly the scientifically illogical, but politically effective appeal to a Volksgeist. In spite of the apparent diplomatic recognition of Croatia, the rest of the world was prepared to tolerate or at least not intervene in a Serb-Croat war in areas of Croatia which had Serbs living in it, as if ethnicity somehow gave a group a right to subvert the democratic process and declare war on its neighbours. The same principle of ethnicity over democracy was applied in Bosnia where a putative 30% of the population has been allowed to hold the rest captive.

Instead of taking an idealist stance, we need to view nationalism a bit more pragmatically and with a sort of historical leniance. Nationalism does equal chauvinism in both theory and practice, but are Slovenes who talk negatively about 'Asia' and respond negatively and legislatively to 'southerners' more guilty of chauvanism than those who would deny the right of some nations to exist? Anthropologists tell us that polytaxis is as normal as monolingualism, but it is the issue of statehood and citizenship which is the really important aspect of nationalist discourse. It is possible for an Istrian to be a loyal subject of Croatia or Slovenia, without losing their Italian mother tongue or wanting to vote for a government in faraway Rome. The recent offer of dual nationality to these people by the Italian government is not a cultural gesture, but a deliberate attempt by the Italians to destablise their neighbours for their own political ends.

At this moment in time, national identity is something that most people want, simply to be part of the 'United Nations'. Of couse nationality is a crude way to divide people, which clearly offends those who might prefer other 'we-group' definitions based on class, gender or sexuality. Entirely new formations may supercede the nation state in the next century, based on different sorts of political self-definitions. Who can say? But if we deconstruct nationalist discourse to the extent that we fail to see its function we are led into the realms of ineffectual metaphysics or to a political stance that effectively shores up the policies of reactionary or incompetent governments in the West. Western Governments should not have clung on to their policy aim of keeping Yugoslavia together in 1991 because this meant that they had to flagrantly disregard the democratic movements in the republics and to contradict their own rhetoric. Besides, Western politicians can only dream of the sort of mandate for independence given to both Tudjman and Kučan at the end of 1990. In pragmatic terms and for the future peaceful resolution

41 *A similar point about the right and political need to appropriate the past in the context of South America is made by Bill Schwarz in Latin America: exiled from historical time?. In: History Workshop Journal. p. viii. He writes, "Modernity still is organised by differing histories and uneven development. We need more than ever to think historically, and at the same time globally".*
42 *Ian McEwan, Interview with Milan Kundera. In: Granta, No. 11/1983, p. 26.*
43 *Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780, p. 32.*
44 *Cathie Carmichael, Interview with Mark Thompson, p. 72.*

of conflicts, it is vital that democracy and openness is seen to prevail over physical violence.

The map of Europe can never be regarded as fixed for eternity. There should also be no dates in history to which we can appeal for arbitration, or we will find ourselves like the Croats and Serbs arguing about King Tomislav's claim to Krajina or the battle of Kosovo polje. But what use, then, is history? Is it possible to use an historical analysis of national problems in Europe without letting notions of 'historic rights' or traditions obliterate the rights of people now alive? Surely a point can be learnt from the creation of the Slovenian state. The Slovenians have successfully challenged the notion of 'history' and have perhaps done much more. As Edward Kovač has written:

"Through the establishment of thought, cultural and ethical models, Slovenia may affirm the ancient Greek principle which was also developed by Rousseau, that only small nations are capable of democracy."[45]

POVZETEK

NEKAJ MISLI O USTVARJANJU SLOVENSKE NACIONALNE KULTURE
Cathie Carmichael

Razprave o dogajanju v Vzhodni in Srednji Evropi po padcu komunizma so v marsičem sporne, še posebej tiste, ki poskušajo analizirati nastanek novih držav in krepitve nacionalizmov. Razprave na to temo so v marsičem ideološke, zato avtorica poskuša prikazati ideološki pogled s strani zahoda o "ljudstvih brez zgodovine" in ga primerjati z razvojem slovenske nacionalne kulture od 16. stoletja dalje. V drugem delu besedila pretrese ustanovitev neodvisne Slovenije. Ob formiranju modernih zahodnih držav so vzhodni del Evrope obravnavali kot del "drugega sveta" ali kot "barbarski Orient", ki se po Chateaubriandu začne pri Trstu. Angleški popotniki so še v 19. stoletju slovenskim deželam odrekali status civiliziranega sveta. V istem obdobju se začne prebujati tudi slovenska nacionalna zavest. Avtorica opozarja na pomembno povezavo - v političnem smislu - med pojmoma "dežela" in "ljudstvo" (narod). Tako kot drugod v Evropi je mogoče govoriti o prisvajanju obeh (na primer s slovenizacijo Triglava). Druga plat je rast srednjega razreda in pisanje nacionalne zgodovine ter odkrivanje ljudske kulture.

Razvoj dogodkov po prvi in drugi svetovni vojni je najbolj zahodni del Jugoslavije postavil v nov položaj, ki so ga Slovenci tu in tam artikulirali z novim občutkom večvrednosti. Osamosvojitev je sklepni del daljšega procesa, vendar je bila izpeljana po demokratični poti brez pretiranega šovinizma. V sedanjem trenutku je nacionalna identiteta pač tisto, kar si večina ljudi želi.

45 *Edvard Kovač, Slovenija kot izziv Evropi. In: Nova revija, July 1993, p. 409. (English summary.)*