

Ilija Tomanić Trivundža*

“Eritreja, moja dežela”: Photoreportage and Positive Representation of a Distant Other**

IZVLEČEK

»ERITREJA, MOJA DEŽELA«: FOTOREPORTAŽA IN POZITIVNA REPREZENTACIJA DALJNEGA DRUGEGA

*Prispevek analizira reprezentacijo daljnega drugega na primeru fotoreportaže »Eritreja«, ki je izhajala med avgustom in novembrom 1988 v tedniku *Mladina* in velja za najobsežnejšo fotoreportažo, ki je bila kdajkoli objavljena v slovenskem tisku. Za analizo besednih in slikovnih strategij za konstrukcijo drugosti je uporabljena multimodalna analiza okvirjanja novic, ki jo dopolnjuje metoda poglobljenih intervjujev z ustvarjalcema fotoreportaže. Analizirana fotoreportaža odstopa od takratnega novinarskega poročanja in dominantnih novičarskih okvirov, ki so Etiopijo in Eritrejo povezovali skoraj izključno s tematikama vojne in lakote. »Eritrejina« drugačnost izhaja iz njene vpetosti v domače politične boje (slovenski boj proti jugoslovanskemu centralizmu) in Mladinine takratne uredniške politike (boj za svobodo izražanja skozi napade na tabuizirane teme jugoslovenskega političnega sistema).*

Ključne besede: fotoreportaža, reprezentacija drugega, komunikacijska neenakost, okvirjanje, Etiopija

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ABSTRACT

*The article analyses how distant Others are represented in “Eritreja” photoreportage, that appeared in ten consecutive issues of the *Mladina* magazine between August and November 1988 and is regarded as the most extensive photoreportage ever published in Slovenian printed media. Multimodal framing analysis complemented with semi-structured interviews with the photographers are conducted to the examine verbal and visual strategies for the construction of Otherness. The divergence of this particular photoreportage from the leading news topics (famine and war) and its positive representations of the distant Other are traced to the photoreportage’s resonance with the domestic political agenda (Slovenia’s struggle against the centralisation of Yugoslavia) and *Mladina*’s editorial policy (advocating freedom of speech via challenging taboo topics in Yugoslavia).*

Keywords: photoreportage, Othering, communication inequality, framing, Ethiopia

Introduction

Although photography has been vital for creating and cementing the visual imaginary of the nation by appearing in periodical press since the end of the First World War and been an indispensable and routine part of news reporting in Slovenian media at least following the end of the Second World War,¹ the Slovenian history of journalism largely remains the history of the written word. While the recently published *On the Other Side: Slovenian Photoreportage*² managed to set up a tentative framework for such a project, a comprehensive history of Slovenian photojournalism has yet to be written. This article seeks to help fill the mentioned gap.

Between 12 August and 4 November 1988, the political weekly magazine *Mladina* published multi-part photoreportage on the political and living conditions in war-torn Eritrea. Produced by the brothers Gorazd and Jože Suhadolnik, *Mladina*’s exclusive “report from the ground” ran for ten consecutive issues of the magazine and is regarded as the most extensive photoreportage ever published in Slovenian printed media. The significance of *Eritreja*³ photoreportage for the history of Slovenian (photo)journalism lies not only in its unprecedented scope. First, at the time *Eritreja* was a relatively rare application of the genre of photoreportage to report on politically significant international topics, hotspots and events. It is not that these topics were not high on the

1 Ilija Tomanić Trivundža et al., “Photoreportage in the Slovenian Press. A ‘small history’ in four turns,” in: *On the other side: Slovenian photoreportage, No 1, Introduction*, ed. Julija Hoda (Ljubljana: Galerija Jakopič, 2021), 126–32.

2 Julija Hoda et al., eds. *On the other side: Slovenian photoreportage. No 1, Introduction; No 2, Identity; No 3, Power; No 4, The Everyday* (Ljubljana: Galerija Jakopič, 2021).

3 Throughout this text, *Eritreja* (Slovenian spelling) is used to refer to *Mladina*’s photoreportage while Eritrea (English spelling) is used to refer to the territory.

political or media agenda, but visual coverage of them was scarce, notably of political events and life in the countries of Yugoslavia's political allies in the Non-Aligned Movement. Such coverage was typically reduced to sporadic spot-news images and protocol photographs of country's political elites or diplomatic meetings. Due to their scarcity, the few photoreportages which were produced, provide important material for studying the processes of *imagi(ni)ng* geographically distant Others. Second, *Eritreja* is important for its context – it is inseparably connected with *Mladina*'s struggle for greater freedom of public expression during the second half of the 1980s by provocatively challenging taboo topics in socialist Yugoslavia, such as 'the life and work' of Marshal Josip Broz Tito and 'accomplishments of the revolution', namely, the self-management system, the foreign policy doctrine of Non-Alignment, and the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA).

In the late 1980s, tensions started to mount between the federal YPA and the both reformist and increasingly nationalistic political elites in Yugoslavia's constituent republics. *Mladina* often placed itself at the forefront of these debates, championing topics like civil military service and criticising the plans to increase military spending. The relationship between *Mladina* and the YPA escalated in February 1988 when *Mladina* openly criticised the Federal Secretary of Defence Admiral Branko Mamula's visit to Addis Ababa, calling him a "merchant of death" for selling arms to famine-stricken Ethiopia. This turned into an open confrontation between *Mladina* and the YPA, lasting throughout the spring of 1988 and culminating in the arrest of *Mladina*'s journalists and editors Janez Janša, David Tasić and Franci Zavrl, along with YPA officer Ivan Borštner on charges of having revealed military secrets. Their subsequent trial before the military court (popularly known as the JBTZ trial), with which the YPA intended to tame Slovenia's reform aspirations, became a galvanising moment in the process of its succession from Yugoslavia.

Given its position at the intersection of domestic and international narratives, *Eritreja* is both a unique and informative example for studying the representation of distant Others. The article commences by situating *Eritreja* within a specific trajectory of the development of photoreportage as a genre within the context of Slovenian (photo)journalism. The main research question considered in the article – *How is the Other represented in the Eritreja photoreportage?* – is addressed through a two-step multimodal framing analysis. The first step focuses on reports appearing in *Delo* and *Mladina* in the spring of 1988 when Yugoslavia's arrangements for arms sales to Ethiopia amidst the burgeoning humanitarian crisis had drawn journalistic criticism. In this step, the competing dominant news frames are identified. Against this contextual background, the second step in the analysis focuses exclusively on *Eritreja* and its representation of Otherness. In an attempt to trace the factors influencing the content and look of the published photoreportage, the multimodal framing analysis is complemented with semi-structured interviews with the authors of the photoreportage.

Slovenian Photoreportage and Imaging of Distant Others

Over the past century, Slovenian media has chiefly used the genre of photoreportage for domestic stories, harvesting its visual storytelling potential to create and maintain the 'imagined community' of the Slovenian nation. The idiosyncratic development of photoreportage in Slovenia⁴ is an outcome of constraints in the political context (e.g. pre-war censorship or the post-war, one-party system), difficulties of operating in a small market (e.g. limited resources and audience), the (un)availability of printing technology, the perceived social role of journalism and the status assigned to photography as a means of journalistic reporting. While tracing the main shifts in the perceived role of the photojournalist and of the status attributed to photography within journalism, Tomanic Trivundza, Babnik and Skočir⁵ identify four major periods in development of photoreportage in Slovenia during the 20th century: *nationally-conscious photoreportage*, typical of the pre-war period, *socialism-building photoreportage*, characteristic of the post-war reconstruction and social transformation, socialism reform-oriented *initiative-giving photoreportage*, which emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and *watchdog photoreportage*, which gradually appeared in the late 1980s and dominated the post-independence journalism in the 1990s and early 2000s. *Eritreja* falls in the category of *watchdog photoreportage*, which was not solely driven by the desire to "record and show the conditions on the ground". During the late 1980s, *watchdog photoreportage* was both a fact-finding and fact-checking operation in which photographs supplied visual proof of verbal accounts. It was initially used in Slovenian media as part of efforts to break out of the information silos of the Yugoslav republican media⁶ and the official information diet. As the tensions between Yugoslav republics grew, Slovenian media commenced independent investigations of the situation on the ground, initially related to the 'Kosovo question' and later to stories indicating the failures of Yugoslavia's self-managed economy.

Slovenian media's use of photoreportage for imaging distant Others is naturally closely linked to Yugoslavia's leading role in the Non-Aligned movement (NAM) and the federation's associated economic, military, educational and cultural cooperation with developing countries. The media's interest in using photoreportage as a vehicle to narrate Yugoslavia's increasingly global economic and political engagement gradually developed in the 1970s and early 1980s, albeit it was by no means a large-scale or systematically supported endeavour. The main news outlets invested in acquiring exclusive

4 Tomanic Trivundza et al., "Photoreportage in the Slovenian Press."

5 Ibidem.

6 Yugoslavia's media landscape was a patchwork of republic-based media which, due to the relative political autonomy of the republics and linguistic obstacles, focused on their national/republic-based audiences. In 1986, 2 years before *Eritreja*'s publication, printed news was conveyed to Yugoslav citizens by 27 daily newspapers and over 1,400 weeklies and periodicals. Only a handful of them sold more than 10% of their circulation outside of the republic in which they were based. – Slavko Splichal, "Razvoj množičnega komuniciranja v socialistični Jugoslaviji," in: Slavko Splichal and France Vreg, *Množično komuniciranje in razvoj demokracije*, (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1986), 73, 74, 76–80.

information on international affairs, developing their own proprietary networks of foreign correspondents⁷ to complement the already extensive network of foreign correspondents of the Yugoslav press agency Tanjug.⁸ However, these were investments in journalism of words, not images. Even after Tanjug became the coordinating institution of the pool of press agencies from the Non-Aligned countries (NAPAP) and thus led the movement's struggle against the domination of information flows coming from Western international news agencies, the resources were committed to independent textual rather than visual news reporting.⁹

Limited resources meant that much of the published photoreportages in Slovenian dailies (mostly *Delo*, but also *Dnevnik*, *Večer*) and weeklies (initially *Tovariš*, later *Teleks* and *7D*) were 'marriages of convenience' whereby journalists were given cameras to supply images for their own stories. Another common type of the reportage was a 'side job' produced by professional photojournalists covering official (diplomatic or sporting) events abroad. Professionally produced 'mission-specific' photo-reportages were generally limited to sporadic accounts of international conflicts relevant to Slovenia/Yugoslavia (e.g. the Iraq–Iran conflict due to the presence of Yugoslav construction workers in Iraq) or to liberation movements whose struggles resembled or were inspired by the Yugoslav Second World War resistance (e.g. Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, West Saharan Polisario Front). These exclusive journalistic accounts typically succeeded in presenting the topic to domestic audiences from a distinctly Slovenian/Yugoslav perspective, although the extent to which they offered an immersive visual experience of the situation in the field and a 'home-grown' representation of distant Others is debatable. In part, this was a result of the limited frequency and space given to photoreportage. Even more importantly, it may be attributed to the restricted selection of topics (conflict and official politics) and their visual style. Unlike the genre's earlier post-war applications in the magazine *Tovariš*, the photoreportages in question did not follow a clear formal template, such as the array of different types of shots and motives, or used the more engaged, personal or even artistic approach typically fostered in the genre.¹⁰ As is shown below, *Eritreja* is an example of photoreportage that departs from this approach and marks the gradual transformation of the (photo)journalist's perceived role from that of socio-political worker to one of professional observer.¹¹

7 In 1988, *Delo*'s own network consisted of 10 foreign correspondents and a number of regular contributors.

8 In 1983, Tanjug had 30 foreign correspondents, including 1 in Addis Ababa. – Velimir Budimir, *Tanjug: četiri decenije* (Belgrade: Tanjug, 1983).

9 Ilija Tomanić Trivundža, "Many Voices, One Picture: Photographic Coverage of Foreign News in Slovenian Daily Press (1980, 2004)," *Javnost / The Public* 13, 2 (2006): 21–40.

10 Stylistically, they were closer to the 'home-grown' style of news photography. For more on this, see: Hanno Hardt, "Predstavljanje osamosvojitve: podoba/tekst slovenskega fotožurnalizma," *Teorija in praksa* 40, 4 (2003).

11 Tomanić Trivundža et al., "Photoreportage in the Slovenian Press."

Framing Ethiopia: Outlining the Boundaries of the Controversy

Eritreja was not a project in its own right but came in response to a charged domestic political debate. This means analysis of these contestations must also chart the pre-existing boundaries of the controversy. Drawing on Entman's¹² conceptualisation of news frames as ways in which journalists define problems, provide causal interpretations, assert moral evaluations or suggest desirable action in relation to reported events, a range of dominant, complementary and oppositional frames is identified. This rudimentary qualitative inductive framing analysis does not aim to quantify the frames but to trace the dynamics of frame formation and contestation¹³ and map the range of legitimate positions from which *Eritreja* could address *Mladina*'s readers before its journalists had even entered Eritrea. In total, 25 articles from *Delo* and 24 from *Mladina* were analysed. For *Delo*, a database of articles published between December 1987¹⁴ and May 1988 was searched using designated keywords (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Avgust Pudgar, Branko Mamula, *Mladina*) and the articles directly relating to the arms-trade affair and conflict in Ethiopia were selected for further analysis. The search for topic-related articles in *Mladina* was manual and covered the period from December 1987 to December 1988. Qualitative interpretation of text and images, salient keywords, metaphors, labels, and an evaluation of actors and actions were conducted on the levels of topical and event-specific frames.¹⁵ In the second stage of the analysis, the process was applied to all ten chapters of *Eritreja* and their announcements in *Mladina*.

On Thursday, 4 February 1988, the last page of *Delo* prominently featured a commentary by its Nairobi-stationed foreign correspondent August Pudgar. In the 700-word-long text entitled *Admiral in the midst of hunger*,¹⁶ Pudgar reflected on the visit by Yugoslavia's Federal Secretary of Defence to Ethiopia during which an agreement on military cooperation between the two countries was signed. Although the line between presenting the concerns voiced by (unnamed) Western and African press and the correspondent's own concerns is in places blurred, the overall condemnatory tone of the commentary is undeniable. Amidst a great humanitarian crisis, threatening the lives of 5 million people, Yugoslavia had been selling guns to the hunger-stricken undemocratic regime rather than saving civilian lives by donating humanitarian aid. The visit is explicitly labelled as grotesque, noting that even the biggest exporters of arms to Ethiopia were currently focusing on delivering humanitarian aid to the

12 Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, 4 (1993).

13 Robert Entman, *Projections of power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 48.

14 Although the controversy started in February 1988, the sample was extended to cover Mengistu Haile Mariam's visit to Yugoslavia in December 1987 during which the invitation for Mamula's subsequent visit was made by the Ethiopian side. Interestingly, neither *Delo* nor *Mladina* reported on Mengistu's visit in December.

15 Stephen Reese, "Finding frames in a web of culture: The case of the war on terror," in: *Doing news framing analysis*, eds. Paul D'Angelo and Jim Kuypers (New York: Routledge, 2010), 17–42.

16 Avgust Pudgar, "Admiral sredi lakote," *Delo* 4 February 1988, 16.

country. In the commentary, two complementary frames appear alongside the central frame of the immorality of prioritising arms trade over humanitarian relief. The first concerns Yugoslavia's foreign policy of Non-Alignment, namely, its stated advocacy of peace and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and its principled support for liberation movements. Not only is the Yugoslav position questioned (the policy of peacefully resolving conflict and becoming one of the leading arms exporters to developing countries), but Pudgar also raises the question of the "just recipient" of Yugoslav support by labelling the Eritrean side as "resistance" movement fighting for independence from Ethiopia. The second complementary frame concerns the YPA's role in dictating political and economic life in Yugoslavia given the substantial contribution made by the arms trade (then estimated at USD 2 billion) to the struggling national economy.

The publishing of this commentary caused a commotion in circles of the military and the federal government. Two days later, *Delo* published an article of comparable length on the same part of the last page – a standard feature of a correction but not labelled as such – which listed various forms of Yugoslav economic and educational collaboration with Ethiopia. Pressure began to mount on *Delo* and Pudgar. The Belgrade-based daily *Borba*, the official newspaper of the Yugoslav League of Communists, published a rebuttal written by the Yugoslav federal Secretary for Information Svetozar Duritović which also demanded that *Delo* correct its "serious errors of editorial judgement". Pudgar was called in for an interview at the Yugoslav embassy in Nairobi.¹⁷ Duritović's rebuttal introduced three oppositional frames which were to dominate the federalist perspective in the following months: unfounded attacks on the YPA, Yugoslav foreign policy's consistent commitment to emancipatory struggles and the principles of Non-Alignment, and the dangerous propositions of Slovenia's reform aspirations, complemented by an emphasis on Yugoslavia's continuous developmental support for Ethiopia. *Delo* reprinted the *Borba* article on 10 February together with an editorial response by Danilo Slivnik who dismissed Duritović's accusations and argued for *Delo*'s editorial independence. This signalled a move from event-specific to topical framing in which the visit to Ethiopia was no longer important in itself but served merely as an example pointing to need for public scrutiny of the YPA.

On 12 February,¹⁸ 2 days after *Delo*'s response to *Borba*, *Mladina* published an editorial on the subject entitled *Mamula go home*.¹⁹ Signed collectively as "editors", it was penned by *Mladina*'s journalist Gorazd Suhadolnik who labelled the head of the Yugoslav delegation Admiral Branko Mamula a "merchant of death". "The chief editor Zavrl showed me Pudgar's article, asking if I would write an editorial", as Suhadolnik recalls the event: "Looking back, this no longer seems to me as spontaneous as it

17 According to Mamula, Pudgar claimed during the 'interview' at the Yugoslav that his commentary had been heavily edited by *Delo* to give it a more condemnatory tone. See Igor Mekina and Svetlana Vasović, "Poslovil se je admiral Mamula", *Insajder* 21 October 2021, <https://insajder.com/slovenija-intervju/poslovil-se-je-admiral-mamula%C2%A0vse-ki-so-sodelovali-pri-tem-bi-najprej-poslal-v> (25 January 2022).

18 On 11 February, *Delo*'s weekly magazine *Teleks* published an editorial critical of the unaccountability of the YPA. However, the editorial did not question the Yugoslav engagement in Ethiopia and presented quite a lengthy discussion on the need to reform the YPA. – Andrej Novak, "Generals and generations," *Teleks* 11. February 1988, 2.

19 "Mamula go home," *Mladina*, 12 February 1988, 1.

did back then. He knew I would do it very emotionally".²⁰ *Mladina's* editorial framed Mamula's visit to Ethiopia in a similar way to *Delo's* commentary. The dominant frame was the immorality of arms sales amid a humanitarian disaster. Yet, Suhadolnik's editorial was written as a much more direct and personal attack on the Federal Secretary of Defence. Mamula was not only a personification of the army, the charge of immorality by the YPA was transferred to him personally as he is openly labelled a morally objectionable individual. The dominant frame rendering the YPA "worthy only of contempt" is complemented by the frame of the two-faced foreign policy (the hypocrisy of selling "guns with flowers of Non-Alignment in their barrels" and advocating the policy of non-interference while knowing that the guns would be used to fight civil wars and guerrillas). Like *Delo's* commentary, *Mladina's* Friday editorial was swiftly denounced by *Borba* on Monday (15 February), making similar accusations.

The tensions escalated throughout February and March. Aided by federal institutions and the Serbian media, the YPA launched a two-pronged attack on Slovenian media and the Slovenian political elite, leaving the League of Communists of Slovenia to weigh up its reformist agenda against the mounting threat of a declaration of a state of emergency in Slovenia. The YPA concluded that it had been the victim of a "special warfare" attack instigated by the Yugoslav immigration and foreign secret services with the intention of breaking up Yugoslavia. According to the YPA, as the principal exponents of this attack the Slovenian media needed to "fall back in line", as did the Slovenian political elite.²¹

In interviews he gave in the 1990s and in his memoirs,²² Mamula insisted that the military delegation's visit to Ethiopia had been grossly misrepresented by the Slovenian media. Minutes of the 185th meeting of the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia dated 3 February 1988, when Mamula was reporting on the delegation's visit to Ethiopia, and the written report submitted by the military cabinet of the Presidency seem to support his claim.²³ Apart from arranging the conditions for the use of an already existing earmarked and only partly drawn down loan, Mamula appears to have been quite a reluctant "merchant of death" in Addis Ababa. He reports on Mengistu Haile Mariam's plans to build up Ethiopia's military industry as "completely unrealistic" and "beyond the boundaries of reason". The feasibility study the Yugoslavia side committed itself to preparing in the controversial agreement is seen as a way for "grounding" Mengistu's plans and postponing the decision to enter

20 Gorazd Suhadolnik, interview.

21 A more detailed description of this multi-layered confrontation cannot be given due to space limitations. It included heightened tensions between the YPA and (Slovenian) political authorities, tensions between the Yugoslav federal and Slovenian authorities (on both the level of federal government and the League of Communists), frictions between federal and republic institutions (public prosecutor's office), difference in stances between the Slovenian League of Communists and the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia, as well as open confrontation with Belgrade-based media. For a condensed description of this, see Viktor Meier, *Yugoslavia: A history of its demise* (London, Routledge, 1999), 58–64. Branka Magaš, *The destruction of Yugoslavia* (London: Verso, 1993), 115, 116 or Kenney Padraic *A carnival of revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 225–27.

22 E.g. Mekina and Vasović, *Poslovil se je admirral Mamula*. See also Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija*. (Podgorica: CID, 2000), 122, 123.

23 RS AJ, DT 42/1, folder 282.

into extensive military collaboration. Extreme caution is advised given the political sensitivity of the matter and Ethiopia's inability to finance the venture. Interestingly, a day before Pudgar's commentary was published in *Delo*, Mamula raised concerns regarding – in his opinion – the exaggerated publicity that the Ethiopian side had given to the event, noting that the event's visibility while withholding information about details of the agreement had led to speculation "in other countries about what we want and what we are doing. I think it provoked criticism in the Arab countries".²⁴

Following the initial standoff, *Delo* continued to publish Pudgar's articles on political events in sub-Saharan Africa²⁵ and with sporadic reports on Ethiopia following the event-based paradigm of journalism. While these news reports on famine and conflict²⁶ also provided ample background information on the Eritrean liberation struggle and exposed the atrocities committed by the Ethiopian regime, they no longer clearly connected the conflict with Yugoslavia's foreign policy or the YPA. Instead, the dominant humanitarian frame was now complemented with the frame of Eritrea's just struggle for liberation, while the debate on Ethiopian arms trade and the YPA moved from the news to the readers' letters section of *Delo*'s Saturday supplement *Sobotna priloga*, where it remained present until the end of June 1988.

Unlike *Delo*, *Mladina* decided to escalate the conflict. In the process, it harvested the framing potential of the visuals – namely photographs, but also illustrations. The 19 February edition thus carried both a commentary responding to Belgrade's criticism and a full-page mock advertisement – a photo of a visibly starved African begging for food, captioned with a quote attributed to Hermann Göring ("Guns will give us power, we will only get fat from butter") and a phrase used as justification for the Yugoslav arms sales ("If we will not do it, someone else will"). In the next five issues, *Mladina* published a special section entitled *Afrika, moje dežela*,²⁷ featuring a total of 14 articles. The frames advanced in the *Afrika, moja dežela* section were the humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia, the immorality of the Yugoslav arms sales (labelled e.g. as "a contribution to the global image of hell"), especially to regimes with a dubious democratic record. The frame questioning the extensive contribution of arms sales to the Yugoslav economy also appeared, supporting the claim for the need for public control of the YPA. Unattributed images of starved Ethiopian children, familiar from the 1984–1985 Ethiopian famine, prominently accompanied several articles. While photographs promoted the humanitarian crisis frame, editorial illustration was used to support the immorality of the arms trade to undemocratic "friendly" regimes (e.g. the magazine cover from 8 April 1988). Parallel to this, *Mladina* also exposed how Admiral Mamula's seaside villa was being built using conscripts as unpaid labour,²⁸ reinforcing the frame

24 Ibidem, 490, 491.

25 Although for the rest of February, news on Ethiopia came from the Tanjug news feed and Tanjug's correspondent Radomir Sekulović.

26 E.g. Avgust Pudgar "Drama na severu Etiopije," *Sobotna priloga* 16 April 1988, 25. "Eritrejski uporniki o etiopskem nasilju," *Delo* 19 May 1988, 1. "Etiopska vlada se je trdno odločila uničiti gverilce," *Delo* 25 May 1988, 7.

27 The slogan referenced Slovenia's popular tourism promotion slogan *Slovenija moja dežela*.

28 The exposé ran over four issues between 4 and 23 March 1988.

of the YPA's immorality. *Mladina's* reporting is hence a combination of topical (YPA and arms trade) and event-specific frames (Ethiopia). In April, event-specific frames gain greater prominence as *Mladina* publishes a letter from Eritrean exchange students from Ljubljana,²⁹ followed by a short photo-interview under the title *Eritreja must be free!*³⁰ With this, *Mladina's* emphasis moves from analysing the situation in Ethiopia to advancing the arguments for the justness of the Eritrean struggle for independence from the centralist and undemocratic Ethiopian regime. Within this frame, the parallels between Eritrea and Slovenia are unmistakably present and Eritrea (rather than Ethiopia) is promoted as the side which should be on the receiving end of Yugoslavia's policy of supporting decolonisation and resistance movements.

70 Films and 20 Interviews – (Re)Framing the Distant Other in *Eritreja*

It is within these pre-existing boundaries of controversy that in late July *Mladina* published a one-page announcement of forthcoming photoreportage. Entitled *The Eritreans are winning*,³¹ it features six small photographs with captions highlighting the first-hand experience, exclusivity and timeliness of the upcoming photoreportage. "Mladina's journalists have just returned from a 3-week trip around Eritrean liberated territory", reads one caption: "They have shot around 70 films and [conducted] 20 interviews". In total, *Eritreja* consists of ten 3-page chapters published over ten subsequent weekly issues of the magazine. A total of 45 photographs were published, with a further 11 being used for one magazine cover and three announcements of the reportage.

One of these announcements³² features a full-page photograph of the partly decomposed corpse of an Ethiopian soldier, accompanied by a handwritten caption: "He is in the army now". The blunt juxtaposition of image and text, typical of *Mladina's* often sarcastic (and politically incorrect) style of "page 6" rubric, is by no means a neutral announcement of the upcoming content. It instead reminds readers of *Mladina's* initial motivation for producing *Eritreja* (a critique of the YPA and Yugoslav foreign policy) and advances the magazine's general anti-military stance and comments on the rhetoric and celebratory rituals of the YPA's conscription service.

The Suhadolnik brothers travelled to Eritrea in search of traces and consequences of the Yugoslav military aid to Ethiopia, but soon discovered that the 'real story' lay elsewhere. Only *Eritreja's* initial chapter³³ focused directly on the conflict, describing

29 "Eritreja be free!!!!," *Mladina*, 8 April 1988, 14.

30 "Eritreja must be free!" *Mladina*, 15 April 1988, 6.

31 "Eritrejci zmagujejo," *Mladina*, 22 July 1988, 6.

32 "He is in the army now," *Mladina*, 12 August 1988, 6.

33 Gorazd Suhadolnik and Jože Suhadolnik, "Smrt in svoboda v Afabetu," *Mladina* 12 August 1988, 41–43. Chapter 5 also addressed the conflict more indirectly via a story of a refugee who had survived the 12 May massacre in She eb. Gorazd Suhadolnik and Jože Suhadolnik, "Priča iz doline," *Mladina* 23 September 1988, 38, 39.

the EPLF's recent ground-breaking victory in the battle of Afabet. The descriptions of the effectiveness of the EPLF's guerrilla warfare and the Ethiopian army's military tactics, especially its attacks on the civilian population, leave no room for doubt concerning who the aggressor is. And while this supports the Eritrean "just cause" frame, other frames that demarcate the pre-existing boundaries of the controversy are conspicuously absent. The Eritrean "just cause" frame is even more saliently articulated in next chapter of *Eritreja*,³⁴ a group interview with high representatives of the EPLF who stress that Eritrea's right to independence has been ignored by foreign powers due to their own strategic and economic interests. According to them, the same is true for Yugoslavia, whose economic interests deny Eritrea "the right to choose its own path" of development and modernisation, as advocated by the NAM. In the interview, the question of Yugoslav military aid is brought up and while the EPLF representatives confirm its existence, they do not ascribe it with much weight.³⁵

The Yugoslav military cooperation with Ethiopia appears not to be *the story* from the Eritrean viewpoint. Once on the ground, *Mladina*'s journalists reach a similar conclusion – that the *real story* was not the intended exposé of "the hypocrisy of Yugoslav foreign policy, which supports the Ethiopian dictatorship". They struggled to find traces of Yugoslav military aid on the ground: "In places where fighting had occurred, we would for example look for it, but for example on crates of ammunition the Cyrillic inscriptions were in Russian, not in Serbian".³⁶ Interviews with POWs were also not incriminating. The "real story" of the "expedition" was the "discovery" of Eritrea itself. "I saw no hungry children in Eritrea", recalls Jože Suhadolnik: "Since we travelled with the UN representative [due to the limited budget], we were more exposed to the humanitarian perspective than to direct combat. We saw the investment in the education of children, the effectiveness of the healthcare system, [gender] equality /.../ and these were at the time truly big topics for Africa in general".³⁷

Mladina's editorial from 2 September³⁸ acknowledges the importance of the "real story" and its unexpected relevance for Slovenia. What is at stake, claims the author, is not the cover-up of the hypocrisy of the Yugoslav foreign policy and the immorality of the YPA, but something bigger. "Like Christopher Columbus", the Suhadolnik

34 Gorazd Suhadolnik and Jože Suhadolnik, "Ali so sovjetska ljudstva res proti eritrejskim?", *Mladina*, 26 August 1988, 34–36.

35 The cooperation dated back to the 1950s and continued after the 1974 revolution, regardless of Yugoslavia's close ties with the Selassie regime, due to fears of growing Soviet influence in the NAM countries. By 1988 however, the collaboration was small-scale in nature due to Ethiopia's reliance on the Soviet Union. – Milorad Lazic, "Arsenal of the Global South: Yugoslavia's Military Aid to Nonaligned Countries and Liberation Movements," *Nationalities Papers* 49, 3 (2021): 428–45. The limited extent of collaboration between the two countries is seen in a report on the Yugoslav delegation's visit to Ethiopia submitted to the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The report notes that Ethiopia had used up just 30 of the 200 USD million of previously earmarked Yugoslav loans and outlines how the last USD 40 million tranche of those set aside loans would be used to establish an ammunition production facility.

RS AJ, DT 42/1, folder 282, pp. 270–84. Regardless of the relatively small scale of the collaboration, the visit by the Yugoslav military delegation met with disapproval from the Soviets, then the largest supplier of arms to the regime. See Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija*, 122, 123.

36 Jože Suhadolnik, interview.

37 Ibid.

38 Robert Botteri, "Eritreizacija," *Mladina*, 2 September 1988, 1.

brothers “have discovered for us a new country. A different Eritrea, a country entirely different from what it should be like according to our media.”³⁹ Botteri argues that the false, stereotypical mental image of Eritrea is in fact a result of communication inequalities. Due to control over the flows and content of information imposed by official institutions, “our mass media” fail to accurately report the events. The problem is larger than the resulting false images in our heads. It is about missed opportunities to learn from others: “we could learn from the Eritreans, that civil society, in the absence of an independent state, needs to self-organise /.../”⁴⁰ With exception of the first two chapters, the bulk of *Eritreja* focuses on this ‘real story’: Eritrea’s healthcare (chapter 3) and education systems (chapter 4) and its connection to the economy and agriculture (chapter 8), the institutionalised care of orphans (chapter 7), the treatment of Ethiopian prisoners of war (chapter 6), advancement of women’s rights (chapter 9), and self-organisation and humanitarian aid (chapter 10).

Eritreja’s narration is a mix of surprising finds and semi-disguised admiration. Conveyed through factual accounts of Eritrean institutions, at times consisting of unusually detailed descriptions of their organisational structure and policies, the chapters are narrated through a combination of eyewitness accounts and interviews. Even if the narrative is factual and the photographs visually vouch for the text, *Eritreja* does not subscribe to the objectivity ideal promoted by the American paradigm of journalism. The journalists are clear about the fact they have picked a side, not in advance, but based on what they saw and heard in the field. “It became a rather rapturous report on the liberation movement /.../ We were captured by the enthusiasm of people, this is how I imagined the spirit in Yugoslavia in 1945 or ’46, the thrill of building their own vision of socialism, equality...”⁴¹

This makes it easy to see why *Mladina*’s reporting was labelled by the Ethiopian side as enemy propaganda.⁴² *Mladina*’s journalists were well aware of their limited access to information (e.g. they did not visit larger cities), but they assign this largely to their lack of financial resources and language barriers rather than to EPLF propaganda. Still, the significant overlap of the main topics advanced by *Eritreja* with those

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Gorazd Suhadolnik, interview.

42 During the publication of *Eritreja*, *Mladina* also published a lengthy interview with the consul of the Ethiopian embassy in Belgrade (“Mi jih imenujemo teroristi in banditi,” *Mladina*, 5 August 1988, 42, 43) and a 2-page open letter from the Association of Ethiopian students in Yugoslavia, that accused *Mladina* of advancing counter-revolutionary propaganda and even of becoming an international coordinator of terrorism (“Eritreja se ne bo odcepila od matične Etiopije!!!,” *Mladina*, 9 September 1988, 36, 37). Still, the framing of these rebuttals indicates that *Mladina*’s motivation for their publication was not to present the arguments of the other side, but to draw parallels between the official propaganda of the Ethiopian and Yugoslav regimes (e.g. charges of counterrevolutionary activities), and to pair the policies of Addis Ababa with those of ‘Belgrade’ (e.g. centralism, denial of the right to a referendum on independence). Interestingly, Mamula’s position on Ethiopia and the EPLF appears to have been very similar to *Mladina*’s. In his classified briefing to the Yugoslav presidency, he explicitly disagreed with Ethiopia’s official line, saying “We know what Eritrean and other movements are”, compares Ethiopia’s forceful relocation of civilians from Eritrea and Tigray with concentration camps and criticises the regime for straying away from proper socialism. – RS AJ, DT 42/1, folder 282, pp. 485, 486.

present in Avgust Pudgar's article from 25 May 1988⁴³ suggests at least some degree of successful information handling and framing by the EPLF's press office.

On the pages of *Mladina*, Eritrea's struggle for independence emerges as a story of a well-organised, advanced, progressive and in many aspects ingenious liberation movement successfully fighting a much stronger and brutal enemy. The narrative, reminiscent of the Yugoslav national liberation's struggle during the Second World War, would be immediately recognisable to *Mladina*'s readers: guerrilla warfare, active participation of female resistance fighters, networks of secret hospitals, sub-terrain factories, lively educational and cultural activities in liberated territories, introduction of gender and social equality, humane treatment of POWs, protection of war orphans, the enemy's brutal and indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population. Even the derogatory label used for the Eritrean resistance fighters by Ethiopians echoed the all too familiar "Banditen" used by the Nazis to refer to the Yugoslav Partisans.

Eritreja does not advance the humanitarian or white saviour frame typical of Western media news from Ethiopia (and other developing countries) at the time, which was also strongly present in some of *Delo*'s reports. *Eritreja* proposes that Eritreans are not in need of our humanitarian help but our political recognition.⁴⁴ They are not presented as passive victims but as members of a functioning, self-organised community. They are neither helpless nor the threatening African Other, they are in fact very much like us. If anything, Eritreans resemble a better version of our socialist selves, or at a minimum a version of our better former socialist selves. Eritreans as a distant other are given agency on the levels of both words and images. On the level of text, this is most prominently achieved via interviews. In six chapters, the journalistic eyewitness accounts and factual information are extensively complemented with fragments of interviews with civilians and EPLF representatives while four chapters are in fact transcripts of interviews (with high-ranking EPLF representatives, a female rights activist, an Eritrean refugee, and Ethiopian POWs), accompanied only by Suhadolnik's brief introductions and concluding commentaries. The chapters are not without the author's presence, the typical genre characteristics of a (photo)reportage, but descriptions of newswork, logistic practicalities and personal impressions are neither the story in itself nor the driving force of the narrative. Similarly, the presence of the author⁴⁵ is not asserted via the genre's openness to more expressive uses of language and its flirtation with literary forms of expression.⁴⁶ Jože Suhadolnik's photographs also depart from the typical conventions of the genre, such as the stylistic and

43 Avgust Pudgar, "Etiopska vlada se je trdno odločila uničiti gverilce," *Delo* 25 May 1988, 7.

44 Unlike in Ethiopia, where starvation was threatening an estimated 5 million people, there was no hunger in Eritrea in the summer of 1988 according to *Mladina*'s journalists who attribute the difference to Eritrea's more advanced methods of farming, better education of farmers, collective labour efforts, and fairer allocation of crops.

45 Unlike several of the previously published Slovenian international political photoreportages (e.g. Uroš Lipuček and Joco Žnidaršič, "Edini prijatelj – gore," *Teleks*, 11 January 1980, 22–24), *Eritreja* is not about spotlighting the journalist.

46 Smilja Amon, *Ustroj reportaže v luči raziskovanj teorije novinarstva in literarne teorije* (University of Ljubljana, MA thesis, 1974).

topical ones criticised for example by Lutz and Collins,⁴⁷ or those linked to the more macro level critique of exploitative humanitarian voyeurism advanced by Sontag⁴⁸ and numerous others. In *Eritreja*, Eritreans as the distant other are principally portrayed as subjects rather than objects. They are not reduced to (passive) images of picturesque elderly, ethnic types, exotic or sexualised black beauties or smiling children⁴⁹, but are depicted as active members of society, performing a range of complex tasks (from the production of pharmaceutical drugs to medical examinations and teaching). Neither are they reduced to a backdrop: in the majority of photographs (34 out of 45), they are depicted through individualised portraits or appear in small groups of three to four people in which their faces are still identifiable.

Although *Eritreja* is not without images typically associated with modes of othering, these are consistently offset by images which give agency to the distant Other. Chapter 9 on female emancipation and the struggle against female genital mutilation for example opens with a full-page mosaic of portraits of Eritrean women, three of which are reminiscent of the “ethnic type” approach (the origins of which can be traced to racist biological and physical anthropology⁵⁰), yet they are offset by subsequent photographs depicting a female welder, the portrait of the interviewed female EPLF activist, and two images depicting the entry to her underground office, and her work desk. In a similar vein, although the chapter on orphans in a refugee camp features images of smiling and playful children, it opens with an atypical full-page photograph of an Eritrean orphan holding Lego blocks. The smiles of the orphaned children are not appeals for humanitarian aid but testimonies to their decent living conditions.

The photographic renunciation of Othering is also achieved via several visually inconspicuous, even boring photographs depicting interviewees and interview settings, which are reminiscent of the uneventful domestic political news photographs prevalent at the time. This visual domesticity was further promoted by the images’ almost complete subservience to the text. Rather than allowing for autonomous storytelling, there are several instances in *Eritreja* where photographs are crudely and directly made to support the written text. The contrast between sophisticated and more prosaic images is indeed quite blunt. This was a result of *Mladina*’s editorial practice in which the selection and layout of photographs is a privilege held by the editors and designers.⁵¹ “I had no say in the final selection of images, they did the standard gig, selected or cropped the images according to the text. They treated images as fully subservient to words, not as equals. /.../ Of course, I wasn’t pleased with the result”.⁵² From a purely visual standpoint, *Eritreja* was unlike *Mladina*’s photoreportages in its use of portraits instead of candid

47 Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

48 Susan Sontag, *On photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977).

49 Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, 87–118.

50 Elanor Hight and Gary Sampson, “Introduction: Photography, “race” and post-colonial theory,” in: *Colonialist photography: Imag(in)ing race and place*, eds. Elanor Hight and Gary Sampson (London: Routledge, 2002), 3.

51 The practice, still prevalent in Slovenian media, remains a permanent source of frustration for photojournalists and is a lasting indicator of the second-rate status held by photojournalists within newsrooms. See Ilija Tomanč Trivundža and Igor Vobič, “The photojournalist as a worker within the contradictions of the history of journalism,” in: *On the other side: Slovenian photoreportage. No. 3, Power*, ed. Julija Hoda (Ljubljana: Galerija Jakopič, 2021), 68–87.

52 Jože Suhadolnik, interview.

street photography or a typical everyday life scene approach, resulting in readers feeling closer to the depicted subjects than usually happened with the magazine's photoreportages of the time depicting (closer) Others, such as Kosovo Albanians.

Conclusion and Discussion

As a news story, *Eritreja* went against the prevailing news narrative of the time that framed reports from Ethiopia as either stories of armed struggle or famine. It was instead a story about the absence of the latter and the transformative social impacts of the former, set against domestic policy agendas (Yugoslav foreign policy, public control of the military, the democratisation of Yugoslavia) and the magazine's advancement of its editorial policy (freedom of press, investigative reporting).

From the perspective of the main research question, *Eritreja* is a clear example of a news story where distant others are not represented as Others. However, irrespective of the similarities revealed (e.g. a self-organised 'indigenous' version of socialism, parallels with the Partisan movement) and lack of negative treatment, they are not presented as one of 'us'. Eritrean otherness is not the (neo)colonial cultural or civilisational Otherness. *Eritreja* does not subject Eritrea to the Eurocentric gaze in which 'black Africans' emerge as largely helpless victims of poverty, violence and/or natural disasters in need of 'our' help, a narrative which renders the role of capitalism and the history of (neo)colonialism invisible. The all too familiar visual template of famine victims, 'pot belly' children and white aid workers, with which *Mladina* initially confronted the YPA, is completely missing from the photoreportage. Images of everyday life in a country at war vastly outnumber the macabre photographs of armed struggle.⁵³ The Otherness is avoided in both text (e.g. the focus on self-organisation and giving voice via interviews) and images (e.g. steering clear of travel photography tropes). Although a developmental perspective and comparative framework are still present in the photoreportage, their unpacking requires careful contextualisation within the NAM framework. Just as Betts⁵⁴ warns that Tito's protocol photographs cannot adequately be read by a straightforward application of the mainstream post-colonial analytic apparatus that would reduce the images to the visual trope of white coloniser, the narrative of the 'backwardness' of traditional Eritrean society must be contextualised within the third-world claims for the right to develop alternative, 'indigenous' models of development and modernisation, and accompanying discourses of socialist revolution. Claims of the backwardness of traditional Eritrean society – voiced by the interviewees and not by *Mladina*'s journalists – are inseparable from the claims of revolutionary progress and the EPLF's vision of social reorganisation.⁵⁵

53 Of the 56, only 2 depict fallen (Ethiopian) soldiers.

54 Paul Betts, "Crveni veteri promene: afrička štampa o Titovim posetama Afriči tokom procesa dekolonizacije," in: Radina Vučetić and Paul Betts, *Tito u Afriči: Slike solidarnosti* (Belgrade: Muzej Jugoslavije, 2017), 66, 67.

55 The different views of Eritrean and Western feminists on women's liberation, presented in chapter 9 (Gorazd Suhadolnik and Jože Suhadolnik, "Lepe Eritrejke," *Mladina*, 21 October 1988, 38–40), are illustrative example of this.

Further contextualisation (which lies beyond the scope of this paper) would be needed to situate *Eritreja* in the trajectory of journalistic representation of Ethiopia in Slovenian press from the early days of the ‘special relationship’ between Haile Selassie and Josip Broz Tito through to the fading days of the non-alignment struggle. Regardless of its special place in Yugoslav foreign policy⁵⁶ and its continuous presence in textual news reports, the ‘image’ of Ethiopia appears to have been markedly absent from Slovenian and Yugoslav press, reduced to a visual register of protocol photographs and Eurocentric imagery of (Western) press agency spot news coverage.⁵⁷

But even without this further analysis, *Eritreja* shows that the question of the representation of distant others cannot be reduced to information dependency or the scarcity of resources alone. *Mladina*’s sudden discovery of the ‘real story’, of the ‘real image’ of Eritrea not only raises questions about information dependency, but also to failure of the spot news paradigm as such. In itself, it is an insufficient mode of representing social reality and must be complemented by investigative multimodal long-form journalism. Moreover, *Eritreja* demonstrates the extent to which the representation of distant Others depends on the editorial policy of the news outlet involved, as well as the broader political milieu⁵⁸ structuring the politics of objectification and mediated pity.⁵⁹ As shown above, *Eritreja* is as much, if not more, a story about ‘us’ than it is a story about ‘them.’ This is also evident in the ‘clear cut’ from the topic made by *Mladina* following the publication of *Eritreja*’s last chapter. Events in Eritrea were only picked up by *Mladina* 12 years later, in a macabre photoreportage by Aleš Slatenšek⁶⁰ that focused on yet another iteration of the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia. By that time, the *Eritrean* regime was far from being a beacon of progressive social reform. No reference was made to *Eritreja*.

One of the more lasting effects of *Eritreja* on the Slovenian mediascape is that it exposed the potential and benefits of ‘indigenous’ photoreportage as a journalistic strategy for reporting on important international events or hotspots. Throughout the 1990s and first decade of the 2000s, *Mladina* and *Delo* (but also *Dnevnik* and *Večer*) resorted to photoreportage, giving in-depth accounts from a domestic perspective. A number of photographers and photographer-journalist tandems came to master the genre. Yet, this proliferation of the genre should not be mistaken for systematic support for it among the media outlets. In the vast majority of cases, the published

56 Ethiopia was the first sub-Saharan country with which socialist Yugoslavia established diplomatic relationships. It was also one of the first recipients of Yugoslav military and developmental aid. See Lazic, “Arsenal of the Global South.” Cf. Paul Betts, “Crveni veter promene.”

57 This is for example evident in Tanjug’s photo-service archive on Ethiopia (AJ, Tanjug, folder 60, 169, 223).

58 The ‘Afro-pessimism’ and its underlying structure of the West as subjects and aid givers and ‘Africans’ as objects of pity, as victims of natural forces and destiny, which brushes aside the questions of (colonial) history and (neo-colonial) economy, is an ideological and, by extension, a political project (see e.g. Beverly Hawk, ed., *Africa’s Media Image* (New York: Praeger, 1992)). The Western media coverage of Ethiopian famines during the 1980s was substantially influenced by the Cold War frame, presenting the failings of a “communist country”. On recent variations, see Mel Bunce, Suzanne Franks and Chris Paterson, eds., *Africa’s Media Image in the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

59 On the structure of the latter, see e.g. Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorskikh of Suffering* (London: Sage, 2006).

60 Aleš Slatenšek, “Eritrejska polja smrti,” *Mladina* 26 June 2000, 38–43.

stories were – like *Eritreja*⁶¹ – the result of the journalists' and photojournalists' convincing pitch of a story or the successful sale of an already completed assignment. Unsurprisingly, this bottom-up culture ran out of steam⁶² as the main print outlets faced the dual crisis of falling revenues and the Internetisation of news consumption, which made projects like *Eritreja* mythological episodes from a bygone journalistic era. *Eritreja* itself became lost in the myths of a bygone era, eclipsed in Slovenian state-building narratives by the story of the JBTZ trial which ran parallel to it.

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61 *Eritreja* was not born as a top-down editorial decision but out of Gorazd Suhadolnik's successful pitching of the idea. Their remuneration was minimal. "I had to pay for the films myself, I developed them, I even printed the photographs at my own expense. All I got [paid] was a travel allowance", Jože Suhadolnik, interview.

62 For more on this, see Nika Perne, "Contemporary Slovenian photoreportage," in: *On the other side: Slovenian photoreportage, No 1, Introduction*, ed. Julija Hoda (Ljubljana: Galerija Jakopič, 2021), 184–91.

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Ilija Tomanč Trivundža

**»ERITREJA, MOJA DEŽELA«: FOTOREPORTAŽA IN
POZITIVNA REPREZENTACIJA DALJNEGA DRUGEGA**

POVZETEK

Prispevek analizira reprezentacijo daljnega drugega na primeru fotoreportaže »Eritreja«, ki je izhajala med avgustom in novembrom 1988 v tedniku *Mladina*. S svojimi desetimi poglavji in skupno 45 objavljenimi fotografijami velja »Eritreja« za najobsežnejšo fotoreportažo, ki je bila kdaj objavljena v slovenskem tisku. Fotoreportaža je nastala v kontekstu *Mladininega* boja za svobodo javnega izražanja in kritike državnih institucij, v prvi vrsti Jugoslovanske ljudske armade. Ta je februarja 1988 prerasla v odkrito konfrontacijo s tedanjim vodstvom Jugoslovanske ljudske armade z objavo uvodnika »Mamula go home«, v katerem je *Mladina* kritizirala obisk Zveznega sekretarja za ljudsko obrambo SFRJ Branka Mamule v Etiopiji kot nemoralen (trgovanje z orožjem med veliko humanitarno krizo), jugoslovansko zunanjou politiko pa kot dvوليčno in nedosledno. Konfrontacija je postopoma prerasla v širšo kritiko Jugoslovanske ljudske armade, jugoslovansko zunanje politike in jugoslovenskega centralizma ter poleti 1988 kulminirala v »procesu proti četverici«.

Motiv za nastanek fotoreportaže »Eritreja« je bil »preveriti situacijo na terenu«, preiskati sledi jugoslovenskega trgovanja z orožjem z Etiopijo in prikazati, kako je uporabljeno v boju proti eritrejskemu ljudskemu osvobodilnemu gibanju. A rezultat tritedenskega raziskovanja »na terenu« ni pripeljal do obsodbe »trgovanja s smrtno«; namesto jugoslovenskega orožja sta *Mladinina* reporterja Gorazd in Jože Suhadolnik »odkrila Eritrejo«, ki jo *Mladinim* bralkam in bralcem skozi fotoreportažo prikažeta kot družbeno in politično progresivno nastajajočo državno tvorbo.

»Eritreja« je z vidika študij (zgodovine) novinarstva na Slovenskem pomembna na dveh ravneh. Z vidika razvoja fotoreportaže kot vrste novinarskega sporočanja zaznamuje prehod iz »pobudniške« v »poročevalsko« fotoreportažo, v kateri novinar in fotoreporter ne nastopata več v vlogi družbenopolitičnih delavcev, temveč kot neodvisna poročevalca – očividca, ki temo »na terenu« preiskujeta v imenu obveščenosti javnosti. Ob tem predstavlja »Eritreja« eno zgodnjih aplikacij te vrste novinarskega poročanja za pokrivanje pomembnih mednarodnopolitičnih dogodkov in žarišč. Hkrati je pomembna tudi z vidika reprezentacije oddaljenega drugega. Je namreč primer fotoreportaže, ki odstopa tako od dominantnega etnocentričnega in (neo)kolonialnega pogleda, v katerem je oddaljeni drugi reducirani na podobe tujosti in eksotičnosti (Drugosti), kot tudi od takrat uveljavljenega vizualnega narativa o Etiopiji, zamejenega na podobe lakote in vojne.

Analiza besednih in slikovnih strategij za konstrukcijo drugosti pokaže, da se »Eritreja« konstrukciji Drugosti na besedilni ravni izogiba predvsem skozi »dajanje glasu« eritrejski strani v obliki dolgih izjav in prepisov intervjujev ter odsotnost

odkritega vrednotenja reporterjev. Na vizualni ravni so ekvivalent te strategije veliko število portretnih fotografij, ki ne podlegajo konvencijam upodabljanj eksotičnega Drugega, ter podobe, ki kažejo lokalno prebivalstvo kot aktivne člane družbe pri opravljanju raznolikih kompleksnih opravil, ne pa kot žrtve ali zgolj pasivne prejemnike pomoči. Vizualno in besedno je strategija preseganja Drugosti utemeljena na iskanju vzporednic med slovensko/jugoslovansko in eritrejsko družbo, ki slednjo predstavlja skozi *Mladininemu* občinstvu domačne vsebinske in interpretativne okvire jugoslovanskega narodnoosvobodilnega boja in povojskih prizadevanj za izgradnjo naprednejše družbene ureditve. Multimodalna analiza okvirjanja novic, ki jo dopolnjuje metoda poglobljenih intervjujev z ustvarjalcema fotoreportaže, pokaže, da drugačnost »Eritreje« v veliki meri izhaja iz *Mladinine* takratne uredniške politike in tematske vpetosti fotoreportaže v domače politične boje.