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“The Case of Comrade Dragiša Pavlović”

The Yugoslav Media Space and Its Perception Through the Example of the Main Political Weeklies’ Coverage of the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia***

IZVLEČEK

»PRIMER TOVARIŠA DRAGIŠE PAVLOVIČA«
JUGOSLOVANSKI MEDIJSKI PROSTOR IN NJEGOVO DOJEMANJE NA
PRIMERU POROČANJA OSREDNJIH POLITIČNIH TEDNIKOV O OSMEM
PLENUMU CENTRALNEGA KOMITEJA ZVEZE KOMUNISTOV SRBIJE

Prispevek obravnava vprašanje homogenosti jugoslovanske medijske krajine, ki je že v sodobni literaturi in časopisju bila obravnavana kot izrazito republiško usmerjena. Za vsebinski okvir analize sta avtorja iz množice tem v politično razgretih osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja odbrala poročanje o dogajanju na osmem plenumu Centralnega komiteja Zveze komunistov Srbije. O tej temi so najboljširneje in najbolj poglobljeno poročali redki jugoslovanski politični tedniki, ki so v prispevku predstavljeni, analiziran pa je tudi

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njihov diskurz. Iz analize se nakazuje zaključek, da so politični tedniki sicer bili usmerjeni v republiško okolje, vendar pa so zaradi široke mreže povezav med obravnavanimi mediji in novinarji bili bistveno bolj jugoslovansko usmerjeni, kot so to menili v času njihovega izhajanja.

Ključne besede: Slovenija, Jugoslavija, mediji, politični diskurz, politična zgodovina

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the question of the homogeneity of the Yugoslav media landscape, which is already considered to be distinctly republican in modern literature and newspapers. From a variety of topics in the politically heated 1980s, the authors chose reports on events at the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia as the basis for analysis. The rare Yugoslav political weeklies reported on this issue most extensively and in detail, and article deals with presenting and analyzing their discourse. The analysis suggests that the political weeklies focused on the republican environment but, because of the extensive network of connections between the media outlets and journalists in question, were significantly more Yugoslav-oriented than they were thought at the time of publication.

Keywords: Slovenia, Yugoslavia, media, political discourse, political history

The Unity of the Yugoslav Media Space?

In the Slovenian historical memory of the media landscape of socialist Yugoslavia during the 1980s, the period between 1987 and 1991 has made the most prominent impression. At that time, the tensions between the Slovenian and Serbian political leadership led to the outbreak of the so-called "media war", which put a heavy strain on the mutual relations and did not come to an end until the very disintegration of the common state. On the other hand, this war was distinctly unequal, as, on the Serbian side, we can observe the silent takeover of the most important media players, which then allowed for the consolidation of the new Serbian Party leadership; while on the Slovenian side, the Party leadership attempted to control the social unrest mainly by implementing technical measures (occasional seizures of the individual issues of the disobedient press). In response to the critical articles coming from Serbia, Jože Smole, the president of the Republic Conference of the Socialist Alliance of Working People at the time, asked in the daily newspaper *Borba*: "Why are certain objectionable texts published in the Slovenian press, being responded to with prominent commentaries that reach millions of readers and are thus provided with unacceptable publicity?"¹

1 Krste Bijelić, "Slovenija i Jugoslavija: zašto (1): Sindrom 'paralelnog toka,'" *Duga* 359, 28 November – 11 December 1987, 67.

However, this process – popularly called the “Slovenian syndrome” in the “newly composed journalism”² of the second half of the 1980s – was not a novelty: it had dominated the Yugoslav media landscape for a decade or more before the escalation of the problems³ and processes of differentiation,⁴ which became a constant in the Yugoslav politics and society after the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia. Even before, this issue had been a part of ideological campaigns, and the individual republics’ policies towards the opposition were very different. “In the second half of the 1980s, the attempts at all-Yugoslav ideological campaigns became uncommon, mostly due to the interest in exposing particular environments to criticism – especially Kosovo and Slovenia, and by the end of the 1980s Croatia as well.”⁵ In this context, it can be argued that no single media space existed in Yugoslavia, although the processes taking place in the environments of the various republics and media companies were essentially quite similar. In his pioneering work on the position of Slovenians in Yugoslavia,⁶ Božo Repe thus stated: “In the 1980s, cultural and economic differences, poor mutual familiarity and stereotypical ideas about each other – despite living together for decades – started to increase in the 1980s. News systems functioned mainly within the individual republics.”⁷

Such observations were nothing new: Mitja Gorjup, a prominent expert on the Yugoslav journalism and editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Delo*, had already addressed these issues in the 1970s: “To sum all of this up, I will focus on the basic problems of the Yugoslav press in general, which can be reduced to a single predominant theme: the entire Yugoslav press is essentially not Yugoslav enough. It does not nurture the Yugoslav dimension enough in terms of information and the political presentation of events and trends.”⁸ This question was on the minds of the journalists themselves:

2 The term stems from a somewhat pejorative expression for the so-called newly composed folk music, a type of popular music that was becoming increasingly loaded with nationalist symbols. – Rory Archer, “Assessing Turbofolk Controversies: Popular Music between the Nation and the Balkans,” *Southeastern Europe* 36, No. 2 (2012): 179.

3 In 1974, the editor of the *Delo* daily newspaper addressed this issue in an editorial: “During the festive days leading up to the New Year, the Yugoslav press focused on ‘Slovenian topics’ a lot. One of the most interesting of these was the recruitment of workers from the other republics in Slovenia.” Thus, the Slovenian syndrome started becoming apparent already very early on: “And precisely because the problem exists and because it is serious – and because we should write about it and discuss it rather than ignoring it – we should also underline that just as quickly as writing or speaking carelessly and insensitively can leave a bad taste, it can also create dilemmas in people, introduce a kind of an intimate agitation which, if abused, can become political, to which we must pay particular attention to in Yugoslavia ... / ... In its famous series of articles about Slovenia, NIN from Belgrade has already ... / ... What worries me most is the undertone that can be felt in some of the Yugoslav press. Perhaps the NIN magazine expresses it most evidently.” – Mitja Gorjup, “Da bi se bolje razumeli,” *Delo*, 4 September 1974, 7.

4 “Not everything in Yugoslavia can be made uniform. We would be happy if we had many more alternative solutions to all of the important issues that we have now. We cannot accuse everyone who disagrees of being anti-communist.” – Ibidem.

5 Božo Repe, *Slovenci v osemdesetih letih* (Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, 2001), 22.

6 Božo Repe, “Zakaj so Slovenci vstopili v Jugoslavijo in zakaj so iz nje odšli?,” in: *Jugoslavija v času: devetdeset let od nastanka prve jugoslovanske države*, ed. Bojan Balkovec (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2009), 36.

7 Precisely this theme was underlined in the report about the 10th Congress of the League of Communists of Slovenia in the political weekly *NIN*. “The differences in the development of Slovenia and the rest of Yugoslavia is completely obvious, but, on the other hand, the gap between Slovenia and its western neighbours has been increasing in recent years.” – Ščepan Rabrenović, “Slovenija na jugu,” *NIN* 1843, 27 April 1986, 9.

8 Mitja Gorjup, “Preveč vase zaprta kultura (Iz razprave na sestanku osnovne organizacije ZKS ‘Delo’ – časopisi), 16. januarja 1974,” in: Mitja Gorjup, *Samoupravno novinarstvo* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1978), 96.

in 1985, a consultation of Yugoslav journalists was held in Novi Sad, titled “Yugoslav Contents in the Public Press”, which saw the unity of politics as the precondition for the unity of the Yugoslav news system. In this regard, Jug Grizelj, an exceedingly Yugoslav-oriented journalist of the Serbian magazine *NIN*, pointed out that this did not refer to the statistical calculations of Yugoslav contents in the individual media (these averaged between twenty and thirty percent – a piece of information that the speakers at the conference kept pointing out as proof of disunity). However, the fact remained that various environments perceived the same process differently, even though Grizelj justified it with the globally present processes of decentralisation, democratisation, and personalisation of information.⁹

In 1977, Gorjup also raised the question of the Yugoslavianisation of the newspapers of the individual republics. “I think we are too narrowly focused on the republics. Of course, we are primarily republican newsletters, but we need to provide our readers with as much information about Yugoslavia as possible. We are not succeeding, though. In addition, a kind of mentality is spreading that the affairs of the individual republics should only be discussed in the newspapers of those republics...” Thus, he underlined the problem related both to the “Slovenian syndrome” and later to the media war, as “the notion that one should only mind one’s own business and leave one’s neighbours alone”¹⁰ was also a problem.

“I believe that this issue is taking on very problematic proportions. Such behaviour inevitably leads to closing ourselves within the republican borders, which is certainly not beneficial. Another issue I think is problematic is the over-sensitivity of the Yugoslav environments to what is written about them elsewhere. What is happening now is that we often write about events in the other republics unproblematically and uncritically. Thus a kind of an idyllic image of Yugoslavia is being created in the mass media, suggesting that there are no problems, difficulties, or misunderstandings. This is, of course, at odds with reality... / ... The public media simply avoid any ‘non-idyllic’ information, leading to a paradox: because of this, people often refuse to believe us. We need to shape the public opinion in such a way that people know that the state, through its constitutional mechanisms, is capable of resolving all the objective socio-economic and political contradictions without any political drama and scandals.”¹¹

Therefore, the critical Serbian journalist Ivan Torov describes the period before the process under consideration as one of relative media freedom: “The first five or six years after Tito’s death – after an initial lull due to the uncertainty inevitably provoked by the departure of a great leader – will certainly be remembered as a period of a more notable liberation of news outlets from the political shackles they had been

9 Jug Grizelj, “Jedinstvo nije u rukama novinara,” *NIN* 1832, 2 February 1986, 19.

10 Thus, the President of the Slovenian Assembly Miran Potrč gave a lengthy interview for the weekly magazine *Nin*, which came across as a justification in front of the Serbian public, as it was essentially devoted to his previous statement for the British BBC regarding the issue of the distribution of foreign-exchange assets in the Yugoslav federation. – Ščepan Rabrenović, “Čije su devize: predsednik Skupštine SR Slovenije Miran Potrč govori za *NIN*,” *NIN* 1864, 21 September 1986, 13–16.

11 Mladen Peše, “Pravi pogum je povezan z znanjem,” in: Mitja Gorjup, *Samoupravno novinarstvo*, 145, 146.

subjected to. Critical analyses of the economic and political realities were approached more and more courageously, many scandals and abuses were exposed, and free professional journalism was increasingly successful in filling the empty space resulting from the lack of cohesion in Serbia and Yugoslavia. Already in the first half of 1985, it was believed that Serbian journalism, along with many other newspapers in the other republics, was experiencing a democratic development that would be difficult to stop. Publications such as *Borba*, *Duga*, *NIN*, *Mladost*, and *NON* dictated the rhythm in this new wave and doubtlessly had a significant impact on the increasingly visible changes in the leading media companies...¹² A similar trend could also be attributed to the developments in the Slovenian media, most prominently among weeklies. After 1984, the previously benign if not almost boring newsletter of the Socialist Youth League of Slovenia *Mladina* became clearly radicalised.¹³ Along with the magazine *Teleks* from the *Delo* newspaper company, it developed into the most important Slovenian political weekly.

When asked about it, Jure Apih, the first editor of *Teleks*, agreed that at the time, this magazine represented a medium through which the society communicated with itself since the only official newsletter of the League of Communists, *Komunist*, simply adhered to the Party directives, while in the daily newspaper *Delo*, reporting was restricted to what had been agreed upon with its official founder, the Socialist Alliance of Working People.¹⁴ Thus, he actually responded to a claim made by the former editor of *Delo* Mitja Gorjup when the *Teleks* weekly was being conceived: “With the advancement of technical possibilities and the increasing flow of information, journalistic work is starting to influence the public opinion more and more, while the public opinion also keeps gaining more and more influence on the political decisions. On the one hand, this offers the information media greater opportunities and power, but, on the other hand, it also confronts them with greater responsibility, as by highlighting and interpreting information, the press can make a significant contribution to the creation of a certain public climate.”

As Ljubomir Tadić wrote, the task of the press was therefore clear because “under socialism, the public opinion appears as a form of social consciousness for the purpose of coordinating the interests in tackling social issues or as the qualified, competent, clear, and understandable reasoning of the working people regarding the general activities of the community.” In this sense, it is a permanent and important mental presupposition of socialist democracy.¹⁵ The activities of the Socialist Alliance of Working People (SZDL), officially the broadest socio-political organisation in Yugoslavia that represented a much wider forum than the League of Communists, was thus one of

12 Ivan Torov, “Sunovrat srpskog novinarstva (delovi iz knjige),” in: “*Antibirokratska revolucija*: (1987–1989), eds. Bojana Lekić, Zoran Pavić, Slaviša Lekić and Imre Sabo (Beograd: Statusteam in Službeni glasnik, 2009), 270.

13 Sonja Merljak Zdovc, “Slovenska revija *Tovariš* in njeni revialni ‘tovariši’ v drugi polovici dvajsetega stoletja,” *Prispevki k zgodovini slovenskih medijev*, ed. Maruša Pušnik (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2008), 535.

14 Ervin Hladnik Milharčič, “#intervju Jure Apih, časnikar: prej so se časopisi delali za partijo, mi smo ga delali za bralce,” *Dnevnik.si*, 24 October 2020, <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042941784>, accessed on 1 March 2022.

15 Ljubomir Tadić, *Javno mnenje u savremenom društvu, javno mnenje o Prednactu novog Ustava* (Institut društvenih nauka: Beograd, 1964), 31.

the forms of public opinion – a place where the public gathered and was shaped, and where the common consensus of the self-managers was being developed. On the other hand, the SZDL was simultaneously the factor of the broadest social control. “The organisational structure of the SZDL and the way in which it operates allow it to initiate, discuss, propose, and agree on solutions to various social issues. Meanwhile, the mass media as a form of shaping and expressing the public opinion is of particular significance. Moreover, the SZDL also formally possesses ‘its own’ daily press (*Borba* as the newsletter of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia, *Vjesnik* as the newsletter of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Croatia, etc.). The institution of editorial and programme councils in other major media (weeklies, magazines, radio, TV) allows the SZDL to notably influence their policies.”¹⁶

The shape of the media landscape in Yugoslavia was therefore also dictated by the political structure. In 1986, Joža Vlahović, the first editor of the Zagreb weekly *Danas*, thus stated the following: “For a long time, we have not had a situation where the main newspapers would simultaneously be Party newsletters. That is how it used to be. Everything published today, except newspapers like *Komunist*, of course, is a kind of a voice, if not a body, of the Socialist Alliance – from *Borba* and *Politika*, *Vjesnik* (*Delo*, author’s note) and so on...” The manner of writing was still controlled, though – as it is evident from the example of the *Teleks* magazine, where the editors Apih and Anton Rupnik were dismissed due to the negative reviews of the articles on the socialist morality, while the cause for the replacement was the publication of an interview with the controversial Italian publicist Oriana Fallaci.¹⁷ A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the popular fortnightly *Duga*: in terms of contents, this publication was quite similar to the early *Teleks*, and according to the editor of the *Danas* weekly, it had been a victim of political pragmatism before a thorough editorial change in 1985. “Unfortunately, pragmatism is most important for newspapers. Certain weeklies end up in serious conflicts with the ‘daily’ pragmatic policy and can easily get a shady reputation, although some of them rightfully so and for a good reason. In terms of their spirit and mission, weeklies should fight for more room for their activities (for the strategic goals of the society) and are not obliged to submit to the dreary and often narrow-minded daily politics... / ... I think it was precisely *Duga* that has experienced a lot of this firsthand. If I can put it this way, it was the very magazine that would often get caught in the pitfalls of pragmatism, but with the overtones of politics I could not agree with. Well, now I read about the better assessments by both the Party organisation and the board of your magazine...”¹⁸

In this context, Joža Vlahović was probably referring to the report from the *Duga* publishing board,¹⁹ which radically altered its orientation in October 1985: “We are

16 Katarina Spahnjak, “Narodni front Jugoslavije (SSRNJ – razvoj, programsko-teorijske osnove i procesi u društvenoj praksi 1945–1983),” *Povijesni prilozi* 3, No. 3 (1984), 67.

17 Merljak Zdovc, “Slovenska revija Tovariš in njeni revialni ‘tovariši’,” 537.

18 Tatjana Tagirov, “Ne pučaj na novinara: Joža Vlahović, Borac sa prave strane barikade,” *Duga* 332, 15 – 28 November 1986, 10–14.

19 The official founder of the magazine was the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Serbia, but it was published under the auspices of the prominent publishing house BIGZ.

firmly decided to create a newspaper with an unequivocally Yugoslav, socialist, and self-management orientation as the best bulwark against nationalism, anti-communism, and dogmatism. During this time, we have gathered thirty journalists from twenty Yugoslav editorships and many scientific, cultural, and socio-political workers from practically all parts of the country. We believe that in this way, we can free ourselves from the stereotypes that have accompanied *Duga* for a decade – that it is a kind of a dissident if not even a Greater Serbian newspaper...”²⁰ However, even after that, the publication did not manage to avoid controversy: in 1986, it published a lengthy interview with Dimitrij Rupel, whose views managed to inflame the Slovenian-Serbian relations. The editorship therefore faced a long conversation/justification with the Slovenian political leadership.²¹ The magazine itself will not be the subject of the analysis of the events surrounding the Eighth Session of the League of Communists of Serbia. However, it is intriguing as an example of a publication that became one of the first to take the side of the Session winners because of the previous actions that had been taken against it due to its orientation and its handling of “hot topics”.

The role of political weeklies among the media was important, as their way of reporting differed considerably from that of daily newspapers. The period under consideration was their golden age, despite the drops in circulation during the times when the editorships were being disciplined, resulting in less public attention. The more they were perceived as “Party newspapers”, the lesser their influence. This trend can be observed in the examples of *Teleks*, *Danas*, as well as *NIN* and *Duga*. This made the weekly political newspapers more independent from the day-to-day politics.²² The editor of *Danas* agreed: “Political weeklies – as well as other similar publications – are, by their very design, a synthesis of all the dailies at the end of the week. Therefore, they do not share the excuse of the daily newspapers, which are often forced to react hastily and superficially. At the same time, as soon as weeklies attempt to conduct deeper analyses, they end up in a delicate situation, as they more often face unpleasantness, clash with certain individuals from politics but also from the economy and culture, and frequently stumble upon the interests of the daily politics and strategic orientations.” During the period we are researching, the main Slovenian daily newspaper *Delo* was much more neutral than the writing of the political weeklies *Teleks* and *Mladina*. After 1986, the Zagreb-based *Danas* paved the way for the positioning of the Croatian politics that was not evident from the writing of the daily owned by the parent media company *Vjesnik*. Finally, the Serbian *NIN*, published by the newspaper company of the daily *Politika* – which became the first proponent of the new political trends in Serbia – still resisted this trend in the first months of 1988. Already in 1983, *Danas* and *NIN* were recognised as the most important political weeklies in Yugoslavia.²³ In

20 Grujica Spasović, “Produžite vašom ulicom: Sednica izdavačkog saveta Duge,” *Duga* 331, 1 – 14 November 1986, 38.

21 Marko Zajc, “Poletni aferi kritičnih misli: Tomaž Mastnak in Dimitrij Rupel, slovenska kritična intelektualca med jugoslovansko in slovensko javnostjo v letu 1986,” *Studia Historica Slovenica* 20, No. 3 (2020), 921–55.

22 Merljak Zdovc, “Slovenska revija Tovariš in njeni revialni ‘tovariši,’” 530.

23 “Nekatere ocene vsebinske naravnosti in ekonomskega položaja revije *Teleks* v letu 1983,” *apih.si*, <http://www.apih.si/nekate-ocene-vsebinske-naravnosti-ekonomskega-polozaja-revije-teleks-v-letu-1983/>, accessed on 1 March 2022.

this regard, we should also note that all the weekly newspapers under consideration expressed their Yugoslav orientation, including the Cyrillic *NIN*.²⁴ With ample references to the writing of the other weeklies, by reprinting articles from the Yugoslav press or by commenting on them, the Yugoslav dimension was usually maintained by all the weekly publications.²⁵ However, as it was established in the assessment of the content and orientation of *Teleks* in 1983, “a review of these articles revealed that the *Teleks* readers could get the impression that everything was wrong in the other provinces and republics, that there was nothing but scandals, affairs, and economic failures, that they were only fighting among themselves, arguing, scheming against each other, and that they were rife with nationalist outbursts. The *Teleks* readers only learned the most ‘juicy bits’ of long interviews published in other newspapers.”²⁶ To return to the claim that no common media space existed in Yugoslavia – or rather that the media spaces of the individual republics were prevalent²⁷ – the actual reach of these publications in Slovenia is also evidenced by the results of the Slovenian Public Opinion survey for the year 1988, carried out in June 1988. *Teleks* and *Mladina* reached between 30 and 50 percent of the population, while the political weeklies from the other republics had a much smaller reach, e.g. 11 % for *Danas*, less than 8 % for *Duga*, and only 5 % for *NIN* – and even in these cases, the readers indicated that they very rarely consulted the press from the other republics. Compared to the daily newspapers, the difference was even greater, with *Delo* reaching 65 % of the Slovenian population and Zagreb’s *Vjesnik* 11 %, while less than 5 % of respondents had ever got their hands on *Politika*, the most notorious newspaper at the time.²⁸

The “Eighth Session” and the Beginning of the Collapse of the “Eighth Republic”

The thesis of the disunity of the Yugoslav media space is almost ubiquitous in the contemporaneous literature and even more so in the media themselves. On the issue of reporting about the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, Svetislav Spasojević wrote the following in the *NIN* magazine: “It is not necessary to develop the thesis about the connection between the leaderships of the republics and provinces and their press, but in this connection lies a part of the

24 “Ohrabrenja u vremenu iskušenja,” *NIN* 1853, 6 July 1986, 16.

25 For example, in the summer of 1987, the *Nin* magazine reprinted extracts from the most controversial texts from the Slovenian media on several pages. – “Slovenačko ogledalo štampe,” *NIN* 1963, 23 August 1987, 20–24.

26 “Nekatere ocene vsebinske naravnosti in ekonomskega položaja revije *Teleks* v letu 1983,” *apih.si*, <http://www.apih.si/nekater-ocene-vsebinske-neravnosti-ekonomskega-polozaja-revije-teleks-v-letu-1983/>, accessed on 1 March 2022.

27 In this context, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a slight exception: there, *Danas* and *NIN* had a large readership, the main local newspaper company *Oslobođenje* published the weekly newspaper *Nedjelja*, while the youth newspaper *Naši Dani* was probably more influential in the period under review.

28 Niko Toš, “Slovensko javno mnenje 1988 [Podatkovna datoteka],” *Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov* (Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, 2000), https://doi.org/10.17898/ADP_SJM88_V1, accessed on 1 March 2022.

reason why some of the assessments of the press in Ljubljana and Zagreb about the political situation in Serbia were met with unusually harsh reactions in Belgrade...". Then Spasojević returned to the metaphor of the eight mirrors held up to the public by the media of the Yugoslav republics and provinces.²⁹ Was the Yugoslav media space truly as fragmented as the contemporaneous analyses and some historical interpretations suggest? We will attempt to answer this question by analysing the media visibility of the rise and consolidation of Milošević's domination in Serbia, with the emphasis on the famous Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia (23 – 24 September 1987).

The authors of the present article are particularly interested in how the Yugoslav magazines (especially the Serbian *NIN* and Croatian *Danas*) and Slovenian magazines (*Teleks*, *Mladina*) reacted to Milošević's consolidation of power in Serbia. The *NIN* and *Danas* weeklies were both aimed at the Yugoslav public, even though they were also influenced by the political and media circumstances in Serbia or Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, the Slovenian socio-political magazines counted on the Slovenian audience: they were Slovenian in terms of language as well as content, although they were also a part of the broader Yugoslav media space. In the middle of the 1980s, the Yugoslav media space was undergoing a process of democratisation, and the editorships were breaking free from the confines of the political forums, especially in the larger centres (Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana).

The Rise of Milošević in Serbia and the Media

From the very outset, the rise and the establishment of the authoritarian Milošević's regime were linked to the media landscape in what was then the Socialist Republic of Serbia. According to Miodrag Marović, a researcher of the history of the *Politika* newspaper, in the 1980s, *Politika* was not only a victim of political manipulations like in the previous decades but also became a public means of retaliating against the editorial offices that refused to accept the new "single-mindedness" in its nationalist manifestation. After Tito's death, several personalities appeared at the top of the Serbian political forums until Slobodan Milošević assumed control with a Party putsch in October 1987. The rise of the ambitious economist and banker was the result of factional struggles between the two most powerful leaders of the Serbian League of Communists: Dragoljub (Draža) Mihajlović, one of the leaders of the 1972/73 showdown with the Serbian Party liberalism, and Petar Stambolić. In 1984, the Serbian leaders sought a replacement for Dušan Čkrebić, as he moved from the position of the leader of the Serbian League of Communists to the post of the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. Petar Stambolić ensured that his cousin Ivan Stambolić, who had previously headed the Belgrade City Committee of the League of Communists, was appointed to the vacant position. Ivan

29 Svetislav Spasojević, "Kako preživeti štampu," *NIN* 1927, 6 December 1987, 12.

Stambolić's previous position was filled by Slobodan Milošević. As the leader of the Belgrade Communists, Milošević – in cooperation with his wife Mira Marković, who headed the University Committee of the League of Communists – created a scandal over Marxism as a compulsory subject at the University, which was opposed by prominent Party intellectuals. Already as the head of the Belgrade League of Communists, Milošević started to take issue with the youth press (*Student, Mladost, NON*), which opposed his and Mira Marković's plan to make Marxism a compulsory subject at the faculty. Although this episode revealed that Milošević had broader ambitions, in 1986, Ivan Stambolić, who then took over as the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, nevertheless nominated him his successor as the leader of the Serbian Communists. Before the Congress of the League of Communists of Serbia in 1986, Draža Marković – the uncle of Milošević's wife Mira Marković – publicly opposed Milošević's selection for the highest Party position in Serbia but was not successful. In May 1986, at the Congress of the League of Communists of Serbia, Milošević was elected as the President of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia. After his election, Milošević immediately tried to take control of the central Serbian newspaper company *Politika*, and he appointed his confidant Živorad Minović (the former *Politika* correspondent from Požarevac) as the president of the Commission for Information of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia and as the deputy director of *Politika*. When Stambolić's candidate was chosen as the director of *Politika*, Živorad Minović took over this newspaper's editorship.³⁰

In January 1987, *Politika* and the Serbian media landscape were shaken by a scandal made possible precisely by this newspaper's new editor. *Politika* published a defamatory article titled "*Vojko i Savle*" (Vojko and Savle), in which an unknown writer slandered, beyond any decency, two prominent Serbian academicians: the medical doctor Gojko Nikoliš and the physicist Pavle Savić. The publication of this satire, which was below any level of journalistic standards, caused a cultural and political scandal of Yugoslav proportions. A group of *Politika* journalists organised a petition condemning the publication of the article and demanded that the editor be held accountable. The petition was signed by 67 journalists from *Politika* and 47 of their colleagues from the other publications of the *Politika* newspaper company, which represented a minority of this company's journalists. The petition demanded that the true author be revealed, but the editor refused. According to Sonja Biserko, the goal of the defamatory article was to intimidate the increasingly vocal and prominent critics of the system, and allegedly, it was also related to the media disclosure of the planned Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, published by the newspaper *Večernje novosti* in September 1986. Meanwhile, Milošević kept actively suppressing the journalists' attempts at emancipation, meddling in the personnel policy of the Serbian media, and installing his supporters in various positions. By visiting Kosovo polje at the end of

30 Miodrag Marović, *Politika i Politika* (Beograd: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2002), 215–33. Nebojša Vladislavljević, *Antibirokratska revolucija* (Beograd: Arhipelag, 2020), 86–106.

April 1987, Milošević supported the Kosovo Serbs spectacularly.³¹ According to the historian Vladimir Petrović, the visit marked the beginning of a new media strategy. The presentation of the visit on RTV Belgrade enthroned Milošević as the national leader. His statement “*Niko ne sme da vas bije*” (no one is allowed to beat you) became a television attraction in Serbia: it was broadcast endlessly on the Belgrade television, allegedly by the RTV Belgrade Deputy Director Dušan Mitrević, Milošević’s personal friend.³²

Meanwhile, Milošević’s former mentor Ivan Stambolić was unhappy with the development in the direction of Serbian nationalism: he believed that the radicalisation of the Kosovo question was undermining the Serbian efforts to change the relations between the republic and the autonomous provinces and opening the door for nationalist hysteria. While Stambolić avoided a confrontation with Milošević, the Serbian media kept underlining the conflict between “Ivica and Slobo”. Milošević was supported by *Politika* with Žika Minović at the helm and by the Serbian television. In this tense atmosphere, on 4 September 1987, an incident took place at the military barracks in Paraćin, where an Albanian soldier killed four soldiers and wounded several others. The Belgrade press, led by *Politika*, commented on the tragedy in an anti-Albanian manner. In his memoirs, Ivan Stambolić wrote that after the incident, *Politika* started to incite Serbia “as if on command”. The head of the Belgrade City Committee Dragiša Pavlović, a social scientist and university professor, attempted to calm the nationalist hysteria in agreement with Stambolić. At a meeting with newspaper editors on 11 September 1987, Pavlović underlined the dangers of Serbian nationalism regarding Kosovo. Pavlović’s associate Radmilo Kljajić illustrated the described phenomena of Serbian nationalism with examples from the newspapers *Politika*, *Politika Ekspres*, and *Intervju*. In the following days, *Politika ekspres* and *Politika* launched a media onslaught against Dragiša Pavlović. As the president of the League of Communists of Serbia, Milošević took advantage of the comments in *Politika Ekspres* as a reason to convene a meeting of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, where Pavlović’s statements would be discussed. The famous Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia (23 – 24 September 1987), broadcast live on Belgrade television, represented a complete defeat for Dragiša Pavlović and Ivan Stambolić. In his action against them, Milošević used mainly the loyal and previously unestablished cadres from the province. Dragiša Pavlović was dismissed from the leadership of the League of Communists, and at the beginning of 1988, he was even expelled from it. Meanwhile, Stambolić, who held the post of the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, was increasingly attacked by the mainstream Serbian media under the influence of Milošević until he resigned under public pressure at the end of 1987. Simultaneously, the purge in the managements and editorships of media companies continued. Party commissions demanded “accountability” at all levels. Apart from the function of the editor of *Politika*, Živorad Minović also

31 Kosta Nikolić, *Niko ne sme da vas bije, Slobodan Milošević u Kosovu Polju 24 – 25 April 1987* (Beograd: ISI, 2006).

32 Vladimir Petrović, “Uloga medija u učvršćenju vlasti Slobodana Miloševića,” *Istorija 20. veka*, 2 (2013), 183–204.

assumed the post of its director. The *NIN* weekly was the publication that managed to resist Milošević's purges the longest. At the beginning of 1988, Milošević replaced its editor-in-chief, but the journalists rebelled and refused to write in accordance with the new guidelines. The ultimate destruction of the journalistic independence of *NIN* took place in June 1988, when the local municipal committee of the League of Communists organised a commission of inquiry, which interrogated the *NIN* editors and journalists and imposed harsh Party punishments on them.

Vladimir Petrović noted, however, that it had not been the media that had brought Slobodan Milošević to power: he had gradually ascended up the Party ladder, assisted by Ivan Stambolić. Nevertheless, on this ambitious path, Milošević recognised the importance of controlling the mass media, which was decisive for his domination over his former mentor. Once at the helm of the Serbian Communists, he attempted to maintain and justify his monopoly with a new political mission: the solution to the Serbian national question. The media sphere became a key tool in consolidating Milošević's power and developing it into a regime.

Danas

The *Danas* weekly was founded in 1982 as a project of the newspaper company *Vjesnik*. It was planned as Zagreb's rival to the Belgrade weekly *NIN*.³³ The magazine *Vjesnik u srijedu* (*VUS*), launched in 1952, is deemed as its predecessor. In the early 1970s, *VUS* was going through a crisis, as several journalists were removed for supporting the "Croatian Spring". After the purges during this period, the magazine never recovered, despite the attempts at modernisation, and it ceased to exist in 1977.³⁴ Already during the first year of its publication, *Danas* gained significant influence thanks to its analytical and critical writing, reaching a circulation of 120,000 copies. However, due to the political pressure, its first editor-in-chief Joža Vlahović was forced to resign in May 1983, which led to the weekly changing its concept and losing its readership (the circulation dropped to 30,000 copies). After 1986, when Mirko Galić (1986–88) and Dražen Vukov-Colić (1988–90) were the editors-in-chief, it grew into a very influential weekly with a circulation of between 100 and 180 thousand copies. In the second half of the 1980s, the weekly critically addressed the most crucial social issues, encouraged liberal and democratic solutions to the Yugoslav crisis, and cautioned against the rise of Slobodan Milošević.³⁵ Marinko Čulić, a journalist of the *Danas* weekly during this period, told the *Lupiga* website in 2017 that *Danas* had been a Yugoslav magazine sold all over the former country. More than a fifth of the magazine's copies were sold outside of the Socialist Republic of Croatia. The focus of

33 Alemka Lisinski, "Novinarstvo i mediji: izazovi osvojenih sloboda," in: *Jugoslavija: Poglavlje 1980–1991*, ed. Sonja Biserko (Beograd: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2022), 528.

34 "Vjesnik u srijedu," *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021), <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=64990>, accessed on 6 March 2022.

35 "Danas," *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje* (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2021), <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=69427>, accessed on 7 March 2022.

the magazine was to cover the relevant events throughout Yugoslavia. *Danas* reacted harshly to Milošević's rise, with the journalist Jelena Lovrić being particularly critical of him. According to Čulić, Milošević allegedly threw an issue of *Danas* to the floor in a moment of anger and literally stomped on it. The former *Danas* reporter Jasna Babić especially highlighted the atmosphere of political freedom and the *Danas* editorship's tolerance of original and provocative topics.³⁶

Mladina

According to the American historian Patrick Hyder Patterson, it is somewhat surprising that in the 1980s, the official newsletter of the youth organisation in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia transformed into an alternative political newspaper. In the complex system of the late socialist self-management, the Socialist Youth League of Slovenia (ZSMS) was one of the socio-political organisations that operated relatively independently. Although media liberalisation was a phenomenon characteristic of the entire Yugoslavia at the time, the trend was most obvious in Slovenia. The communist authorities in Slovenia tolerated the critical youth press, and only in specific cases would it resort to various means of interfering with the editorial policy.³⁷ The actual freedom to write and publish was not limitless: certain topics were still considered taboo. For decades, *Mladina* served as the internal magazine of the ZSMS, informing its members about the past and future activities and providing them with ideological guidance. It was disseminated through the extensive network of the ZSMS organisation. Despite its broad reach and institutional funding, *Mladina* had few readers. It was allegedly so boring that even some of the municipal committees of the ZSMS refused to pay the compulsory subscription. The poor handling of the economic crisis after Tito's death on the part of the authorities resulted in political instability. New trends in popular culture emerged (punk), and new social movements were born, including the pacifist, antimilitarist, environmentalist, feminist, and gay/lesbian movements. At its 12th Congress in 1982, the ZSMS substantially changed its fundamental principles. It dedicated itself to a broad range of topics that concerned the youth, but above all, it adopted a stance that legitimised the criticism of the system. Moreover, it – even if shyly at the beginning – defined itself as the protector of the new social movements that were institutionalised into the system of socialist self-management through the ZSMS. All of this was reflected in the editorial changes of the *Mladina* magazine. In addition to a critical attitude towards the social reality, the magazine also started exploring light-hearted or entertaining topics – including graphic depictions of sexuality. As early as in the first half of the 1980s, *Mladina* exposed the influence of the League of Communists and other political forums on the media editorships. The

36 Jerko Bakotin, "FELJTON-HRVATSKA ŠTAMPA 80-IH I DANAS: Zlatno doba novinarstva i njegova propast," *Lupiga.Com*, <https://lupiga.com/vijesti/feljton-hrvatska-stampa-80-ih-i-danas-zlatno-doba-novinarstva-i-njegova-propast>, accessed on 6 March 2022.

37 Patrick Hyder Patterson, "The East is Read: the End of Communism, Slovenian Exceptionalism and the Independent Journalism of *Mladina*," *East European Politics and Societies* 14 (2000), 411.

editorship of *Mladina* redefined the boundaries of media freedom, using innovative strategies to attract readers. By transforming itself into an alternative medium, the weekly helped educate a critical readership that was becoming increasingly sensitive for critical issues and taboos. The provocative style of writing became a trademark of *Mladina*, which increasingly functioned as a free platform where all social critics could present their views and ideas.³⁸

Teleks

The *Teleks* magazine was founded as a modern political weekly based on the tradition of two editions of the ČGP *Delo* newspaper company, *Tovariš* as a family weekly and *Tedenska tribuna*, which were merged into the joint ITD edition between 1974 and 1977. The altered media consumption that followed the rise of television called for a new concept for the magazine, which was envisioned by Ante Mahkota. Due to the death of the director of the ČGP *Delo* newspaper company Mitja Gorjup and the change in management positions, Jure Apih, primarily a marketing expert, became the magazine's first editor. The editorship's report shows a design that was much more commercially oriented: "In *Teleks* – the *Delo* company's informative weekly – the consistency with the contents of the *Delo* daily newspaper is reflected especially in the influences of the everyday Slovenian, Yugoslav, economic, domestic, cultural, and foreign politics on the published materials. The journalistic approach is adapted to the fact that as a weekly, the publication cannot normally be the first to publish the relevant information. However, it can produce more complete, synthesised, commented, precise, and selective information. *Teleks* should thus mainly cover the events whose importance, exceptionality, and appeal would otherwise not be sufficiently prominent in the flood of other daily information or which would lose the attention of the readers too quickly. An equally important area of interest for *Teleks* is the discovery of those facts and images that are present among us, but at the same time hidden, concealed, and invisible, and which only journalistic research can reveal and draw attention to. The magazine's aim is therefore not only the transmission but also the creation of information. Last but not least, *Teleks* should provide its readers with a package of relaxed, interesting, and entertaining reading. Thus, we have outlined the structure of the newspaper in our basic content document. It was clear to us (and the Co-Council also assessed this issue) that *Teleks* is a publication that cannot be aimed at the broadest readership, which is already covered quite successfully by other newspapers (*ND*, *Jana*, *Stop*, *7D*, etc.), but rather at those who are also interested in more demanding information."³⁹ The magazine boasted an impressive circulation for the time,⁴⁰ but it

38 Blaž Vurnik, *Med Marxom in punkom* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2005), 345–49. Bernard Nežmah, *Časopisna zgodovina novinarstva na slovenskem med letoma 1797 in 1989* (Ljubljana: Koda, 2012), 313–36.

39 "Poročilo uredništva *Teleks*, december 1979," *apih.si*, <http://www.apih.si/1329-2/>, accessed on 1 March 2022.

40 70,000 copies in its first year of publication, which is about half the circulation of the similar Croatian weekly *Danas* when it started coming out in 1982. - "Naklada revije *Teleks*," *apih.si*, <http://www.apih.si/naklada-revije-teleks/>, accessed on 1 March 2022, and Tagirov, "Ne pucaj na novinara: Joža Vlahovič," 12.

started to decline sharply in the 1980s – partly due to a change in the editorial policy as a result of the critical assessment on the part of the Slovenian regime.⁴¹ In 1980, in the time leading up to the democratisation process, the different outlooks on the political reality – which were, however, not the result of political dissent but rather of the desire to increase visibility and sales – were the reason for the dismissal of the editorship.⁴² Despite the high profile of the weekly, the decline in its circulation continued throughout the 1980s. *Teleks's* role as a release valve was assumed by the *Mladina* magazine as a “political project”, and in 1990, *Teleks* stopped coming out for business reasons.

NIN

In Yugoslavia, the Serbian political weekly *NIN* (*Nedeljne informativne novine*) had both a long tradition⁴³ and a high circulation, half of which – according to Najdan Pašić, a former journalist and later a prominent politician and social theorist – ended up in the other republics. It started coming out in 1951 and became a part of the central publishing house *Politika* in 1958. At the paper's peak in 1981, its circulation amounted to 180,000 copies.⁴⁴ After a staff purge in the 1970s, resulting from a showdown with the liberal Serbian political leadership, it was taken over by a new generation of journalists in the late 1970s, who elevated it to a high and professional standard. In the spirit of democratisation, they were often a thorn in the side of the power structures.⁴⁵ During the changes in the leadership of *NIN's* parent company *Politika*, which became a tool for the promotion of the new Serbian leadership and for discrediting the Party's opposition, the weekly remained independent and professional long after the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia.⁴⁶ However, it faced severe pressures following the Serbian leadership's interference with the media landscape and was accused of both nationalism and excessive criticism of nationalism at a time of unfathomable changes in the course of the Serbian politics, as Mirko Đekić, *NIN's* editor at the time, complained in an editorial.⁴⁷ He was dismissed a week after the editorial, and a loyal replacement from the parent company, Predrag Vuković, was appointed as acting editor.⁴⁸ By installing a new, proven editorial board, the political leadership helped him pave the way for a change in *NIN's* editorial policy.⁴⁹ However, the disciplining of the staff did not go according to the plan: despite the change at the

41 The magazine was discussed by the Commission for Agitation and Propaganda of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia.

42 Nežmah, *Časopisna zgodovina novinarstva*, 300.

43 A weekly with the same name, published by the circle of the then illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia, existed for a short time in 1935. – Nikola Šegota, “Zagrebačke čestitke,” *NIN* 1775, 6 January 1985, 52.

44 “НИН — Википедија,” <https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr/%D0%9D%D0%98%D0%9D>, accessed on 2 March 2022.

45 Milan Milošević, “Ministar i NIN,” *NIN* 1914, 6 September 1987, 5.

46 At the time of controversies and staff struggles for the leadership of the *Politika* newspaper company, it kept reporting objectively and did not adopt the discourse that had become dominant in the Serbian media landscape, from daily newspapers to television. – Slobodanka Ast, “Smenjivanje direktora Politike,” *NIN* 1920, 18 October 1987, 16–19.

47 Mirko Đekić, “Značajne reči,” *NIN* 1921, 1 November 1987, 9, 10.

48 “Mirko Đekić razrešen dužnosti glavnog i odgovornog urednika Nin-a in Predrag Vuković imenovan za v. d. glavnog i odgovornog urednika Nin-a,” *NIN* 1923, 8 November 1987, 8.

49 “Izdavački svet Nin-a,” *NIN* 1925, 22 November 1987, 13.

top, the policy of the weekly was very slow to change and also required staff purges.⁵⁰ Thus, the consolidation of the new course and the identification with the new political orientation continued well into 1988 and is symbolically marked by the first interview with the Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević, conducted almost sycophantically by the new editorship under the leadership of Đoko Stojičić and published on 3 July 1988.⁵¹

The Analysis of the Response of the Magazines *Danas*, *NIN*, *Mladina*, and *Teleks* to the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia (23 – 24 September 1987)

A common feature of the *Danas*, *Teleks*, and *Mladina* magazines – regardless of their different profiles – is the almost complete absence of references to the politician Slobodan Milošević before the famous Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, although he had been the leader of the Serbian League of Communists since 28 April 1986 and had faced Serbian demonstrators in Kosovo on 24 April 1987. Naturally, the Serbian *NIN* did follow the political rise of the Serbian leader and the events in Kosovo. This lack of references is partly due to the journalistic discourse, especially in *Danas* and *Teleks*, which, although critical, were closer to the mainstream at the time. During that period (1986–87), *Mladina* already cultivated an image of an alternative and provocative medium. In the analyses of the socio-political organisations' politics and particularly of the League of Communists politics at the Yugoslav level, the actors or protagonists of certain factions are rarely mentioned. The journalists usually describe the clashes between different factions or ideological struggles in an impersonal way. The nuances in the use of the established terms from the self-management communist vocabulary are also important, e.g. bureaucracy, differentiation, democratic centralism, antagonism, etc. This means that commentators could criticise Slobodan Milošević's politics without mentioning the protagonist. *Mladina* would more often mention political actors in a negative context. For example, it mentioned Milošević in an article of 20 March 1987 about the failed organisation of a symposium on new forms of genocide in Belgrade. The symposium was organised by Vladimir Dedijer and hosted by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. *Mladina* claimed that when the President of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia Milošević had read the programme of the symposium, he had immediately prevented it.⁵² When *Mladina* reported on the Serbian demonstrations in Kosovo on 24 April in its weekly review of events titled *Zlopamtilo*, it did not name Milošević. Furthermore, for the subsequent media and political history,

50 "Violinista na krovu," *NIN* 1930, 27 December 1987, 27.

51 Đoko Stojičić, Teodor Anđelić, Dragan Jovanović and Tomislav Peternek, "47 pitanja Slobodanu Miloševiću: Jugoslavija i socijalizam – istorijske tekovine," *NIN* 1957, 3 July 1988, 8–15.

52 D. T., "Politika je presodila, znanosti ne potrebujeemo," *Mladina*, 20 March 1987, 6.

it is certainly not irrelevant that Milošević's famous motto "*niko ne sme da vas bije*" ("no one is allowed to beat you"), promoted by TV Belgrade at the time, was not mentioned either. The Ljubljana weekly *Teleks* did not even register Milošević's visit and the events in Kosovo, while *Teleks* mentioned him only briefly on 14 May 1987 in a commentary on the "ideological plenum" of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which took place in Belgrade after the Kosovo events. In its commentary, *Teleks* also referred to the articles published in *NIN* and *Danas*, but it paid more attention to the standpoints of Slovenian Party leader Milan Kučan. At the Party summit, Kučan warned of the danger of "constant purges" and "differentiation" in the League of Communists, which were preventing the social crisis from being resolved.⁵³ Compared to the two Slovenian magazines, *Danas* devoted much more attention to the events in Kosovo on 24 April and to the ideological plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Regarding the Kosovo events, *Danas* wondered what had actually happened. It cited different sources and listed various interpretations of events. *Danas* did not quote Milošević's famous sentence either, but it did provide a more detailed description of the events. The crowd of people that gathered apparently shouted that they were being beaten by the police and demanded the resignation of Azem Vlasi, the leader of the Kosovo Communists, with whom Milošević had a meeting. Milošević supposedly reacted by demanding that order be maintained without the police. The *Danas* journalists clearly demonstrated the difference between the official statement of the Priština police, which strived to justify the moderate use of force, and Milošević's statement that the police had no reason to intervene. The *Danas* commentators did not accuse Milošević of siding with the Serbian nationalist protesters, but they did write the piece in such a manner that this interpretation was also possible. The article concluded by quoting the assessments of various Party officials, who stressed the need to distinguish between the legitimate demands of the Serbs that their problems in Kosovo be solved and their nationalist aspirations.⁵⁴

Danas paid the most attention to the marathon Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia (23 – 24 September 1987). The magazine's cover featured a picture of the deposed Pavlović, the commentator Jelena Lovrić analysed the session on five pages, and Pavlović's biography was published as well. In a dedicated section, the Zagreb weekly also published a transcript of Pavlović's controversial speech, which, according to the journalist, the members of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia who were deciding his fate had not received before the meeting.⁵⁵ The journalist openly asked what Pavlović had done to deserve such a harsh punishment. Would sacrificing Pavlović and his comrades be

53 Igo Tratnik, "Opomin časa za poglobljanje idejnih razlik," *Teleks*, 14 May 1987, 23.

54 Gojko Marinković, Miloš Antić, "Što se zapravo dogodilo," *Danas*, 3 May 1987, 20.

55 Parts of the speech were also published by the then still undisciplined *NIN*, but not until three days after the end of the Session. At the time when the issue was being prepared for print, the Session had still been ongoing, and therefore only an official explanation concluding the report from the previous session of the Belgrade City Committee was published in a separate section. – "Šta je Pavlović rekao," *NIN* 1917, 27 September 1987, 18–20.

enough, or was this the beginning of a process that some called differentiation and others ruthless reckoning? The question remained unanswered, although the journalist quoted one of the participants in the debate, who remarked that they had been hunting a rabbit but caught a wolf. The metaphor suggested the links between Pavlović and the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia Ivan Stambolić, who had written a letter of support for Pavlović after a meeting with newspaper editors on 11 September. According to the commentator, the most plausible theory was that it was all a clash between two leading figures in the Serbian leadership: Ivan Stambolić and Slobodan Milošević. The insiders argued that no major differences existed between these two politicians in terms of what they wanted, but rather merely in how to achieve it. Nevertheless, they were associated with two different orientations in the Serbian League of Communists as well as with two different concepts. These two lines exhibited different attitudes towards Kosovo and the Serbian nationalism as well as towards democracy and the methods of the Party work. One line was convinced that the counter-revolution was to be found in all Yugoslav nationalisms, including Serbian, and that using the *Politika* newspaper to encourage emotional reactions in the Serbian public could be dangerous.⁵⁶ Moreover, this faction was also convinced that in the case of Pavlović, the principles of intra-Party democracy had been violated. The other line did not declare its opinions so clearly. Although it adopted the position that all nationalisms were bad in principle, it primarily emphasised the fight against the Albanian nationalism. This faction was openly prone to emotional reactions and spoke out publicly against “cool heads” in politics.⁵⁷

Danas published a harsh critique of the factional struggles in Serbia as a biography of Dragiša Pavlović. The article titled *Čovek drugog vremena* (A Man from Another Era) was signed by Ratko Rodić. This was an editorial pseudonym, as no journalists with this name existed, and allegedly, the article was (according to subsequent testimony) written by Aleksandar Tijanić, then a journalist at the Belgrade weekly *NIN*.⁵⁸ The commentator claimed that Pavlović's biggest problem was that he repelled people with his perfection. Just like Milošević, Pavlović belonged to the group called “*mladoturci*” (Young Turks), which Ivan Stambolić promoted in order to carry out a generational change in the Serbian leadership. Only once he had attained the position of the leader of the Belgrade Communists, Pavlović supposedly realised that lately, the Party positions had been divided according to the principle of “one Stambolić supporter – one Milošević supporter”. Allegedly, each of these two “mini-Parties” controlled its own medium. Stambolić was said to control the *NIN* weekly, while Milošević controlled *Politika* and *Politika Express*. Pavlović was allegedly the victim of poor timing: he spoke out openly at the moment when the distribution of the political power between several

56 The same argumentation can be found in *NIN*, where Milan Milošević already emphasised this in the heading of the report from the Belgrade City Committee meeting. – Milan Milošević, “Trenutak istine,” *NIN* 1917, 27 September 1987, 18–23.

57 Jelena Lovrić, “Anatomija slučaja Pavlović,” *Danas*, 29 September 1987, 9.

58 “Aleksandar Tijanić – Istinomer,” *Istinomerrs*, <https://www.istinomer.rs/akter/aleksandar-tijanic/>, accessed on 1 March 2022.

centres in Serbia collapsed and a single power centre emerged. Nations are like people – they prefer to put up with their own diseases rather than a doctor. The principle of “one Serbia – one nation” was being joined by the principle of “one opinion – one leader”, and there was a danger, the journalist argued, that dissenting views might be labelled as anti-Serbian. In such a climate, any attempts at a dialogue turned into an ideological dispute, making any discussion impossible.⁵⁹ Tanja Torbarina, known for her ironic and critical style of writing, also mentioned the session under consideration in her column about television: “Apparently, things are becoming democratic: the ten-hour debate of the Belgrade Central Committee is being broadcast on TV. Dragiša Pavlović is the subject of a dispute. He was also condemned because he showed no remorse or self-criticism regarding his opinion, which he had arrived at through reflection and observation.”⁶⁰

In the Slovenian press, *Mladina* was the magazine that devoted the most attention to the Eighth Session. On 2 October 1987, it published an editorial on the developments in the Serbian politics, written by the editor of the internal politics section David Tasić. The journalist in question was the most “Yugoslav” member of *Mladina*’s editorship at the time. In 1981, he had moved to Ljubljana from Serbia to study, and apart from *Mladina*, he also wrote for various Yugoslav newspapers and was well acquainted with both the Yugoslav and Serbian media landscape. In his editorial, Tasić clearly defined the developments in the Serbian leadership. He mentioned Dragiša Pavlović’s warnings about the rise of the Serbian nationalism in *Politika*, which marked the beginning of a ruthless political struggle. Also this time, Slobodan Milošević, who had already proved to be a fan of repression in his confrontations with political opponents, resorted to any means at his disposal. He bypassed all of the Party’s statutory rules and got Pavlović dismissed on the pretext of undermining the unity. In Tasić’s view, the unity platform was clearly a platform for open Serbian nationalism. He was clear in his opinion that if this prevailed, it would mean that Serbia would return to the romantic nationalism of the 19th century while Yugoslavia would enter the most serious political crisis of the post-war period.⁶¹ In the same issue, *Mladina* published an article by the Belgrade-based independent journalist Milovan Brkić on the clashes in the Serbian Party regarding the media and Pavlović, which had apparently been written before the Eighth Session. Brkić informed *Mladina*’s readership about the importance of the media landscape for the factional disputes in the Serbian Party. He described Pavlović as a reasonable politician and Milošević as a hardliner who gathered people without authority around him and put relatives and friends in prominent positions. He was particularly critical of Milošević’s wife Mira Marković, whom he renamed Elena (alluding to Elena Ceaușescu, the wife of the Romanian dictator). Brkić claimed that Slobodan Milošević, until recently an anonymous economist, wanted to assert himself at all costs, while Ivan Stambolić kept avoiding controversy with Milošević.⁶²

59 Ratko Rodić, “Čovek drugog vremena,” *Danas*, 29 September 1987, 12, 13.

60 Tanja Torbarina, “Katastrofičari,” *Danas*, 29 September 1987, 34.

61 David Tasić, “Nacionalistična platforma,” *Mladina*, 2 October 1987, 1.

62 Milovan Brkić, “Komunisti proti komunistom,” *Mladina*, 2 October 1987, 32, 33.

In the following issue of *Mladina*, a comprehensive report on the purges in the Serbian Party was published. The article was signed by a certain Nešo Dragošević – most probably a pseudonym, as the author of this article has not been able to find a journalist by that name anywhere else. “Pavlović was ousted in a typical rigged political process aimed at discrediting him by any means necessary”, the journalist was clear. “Now that the authoritarian spirit backed by a firm hand has prevailed, the question rightly arises as to who in Serbia will now even dare, without fearing for their own head, to speak out about Serbian nationalism or to criticise the undemocratic methods of the senior leadership.”⁶³ Miha Kovač commented on the Belgrade purges in the *Čejeni in Šošoni* section. In his commentary, Kovač repeatedly referred to the Zagreb-based *Danas*, where he had acquired the most crucial information. Kovač described the reprisal against Pavlović as disgusting: almost all the speakers only accused Pavlović of thinking independently, while they (if the claims made by *Danas* were true) had not even read the speech he was accused of making. The fight against one’s own nationalism in the home environment was no longer a fundamental moral virtue of the Yugoslav communists, the commentator established. The old ideology was collapsing and a new one was emerging, with Serbian revanchism aimed at the abolition of Kosovo as an autonomous province. The amendments to the Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, discussed in all of the Yugoslav political forums, went in the direction of restricting the republics and provinces. The Yugoslav unitarism met the fundamental demand of the Serbian nationalism: the abolition of Kosovo as an autonomous province. It appeared that the Serbian nationalism would be articulated as the Yugoslav unitarism. Kovač did not stop at the Serbian nationalism: instead, he also commented on the “democratic” nationalism of the Slovenian intellectual opposition from the circle of the *Nova revija* magazine. During the same period, the Slovenian literary historian and philosopher Taras Kermavner was publishing his texts titled *Pisma srbskemu prijatelju* (Letters to a Serbian Friend) in the Slovenian and Serbian press, which attracted considerable media attention.⁶⁴ In Kermavner’s opinion, the cornerstone of democratisation was that society recognised itself as divided. Allegedly, the Slovenian society succeeded in doing this, especially by publicly discussing the killings committed by the communists after World War II. According to Kermavner, this discussion undermined the ruling ideology, which allowed for democratisation. According to Kovač, Kermavner formulated an ideology in which universal and anational democratic elements appeared as a part of the national ideology. For several years, democratic freedoms had been promoted by *Mladina* as the newsletter of the ZSMS, which had adopted democracy as its political programme – and all this without any national, Slovenian connotations. Kovač was clear: what the Yugoslav unitarism and Slovenian “democratic nationalism” had in common was that they both functioned as national ideologies. This meant that within Yugoslavia, political definitions

63 Nešo Dragošević, “Montiran proces, Kako je odstopil Dragiša Pavlović,” *Mladina*, 9 October 1987, 8, 9.

64 Balázs Trencsenyi, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič, Maria Falina and Mónika Baár, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 114.

were transforming into the characteristic features of the Yugoslav nations (Slovenians were democratic and Serbs unitarist). In Kovač's opinion, the solution lay in radical democratic reforms throughout Yugoslavia, ensuring that the national identification became merely one in a series of possible democratic identifications.⁶⁵

The same issue of *Mladina* reported on the arrest of the Serbian journalist Milovan Brkić, who had published an article on Milošević and Pavlović in this magazine's previous issue. Apparently, Milošević's war against the media reached Slovenia as early as in 1987. When the Belgrade magazine *Student* was being disciplined and accused of anti-Titoism⁶⁶ by the Serbian Party leadership, the editorship of the Maribor student magazine *Katedra* handed over the central part of its publication to its Belgrade colleagues for editing. "The *Katedra* magazine, which would be sent by train from Maribor to the south of the country and also sold on the streets of Belgrade, was probably the only voice of the public protest against the purges initiated by the pivotal Eighth Session of the Serbian League of Communists at the time," Igor Mekina, a member of *Katedra*'s editorship, later recalled.⁶⁷ On 30 June 1987, *Katedra* published an article in which Brkić criticised the purges in the Serbian political leadership. Brkić was accused of "disturbing the public", even though the issue of *Katedra* in question had not even been released. The magazine was also confiscated for other critical articles. The prosecutor's office in Maribor justified the accusations against Brkić with the explanation that around a hundred copies of the banned magazine had disappeared from the printing house and been illegally distributed around Maribor. According to *Mladina*, without any announcement, the Serbian police violently arrested Milovan Brkić on 29 September 1987. On the same day, he was tried and sentenced to fifty days in prison. *Mladina* was positive that his arrest was not a coincidence. The relentless critic of the political activities of the Milošević – Marković couple was brutally arrested for publishing an article in *Katedra* on 30 June 1987 as late as at the end of September, a few days after the "Eighth Session", where Milošević had consolidated his power.⁶⁸ The Slovenian critical public was primarily concerned with the role of the Maribor law enforcement and judiciary in suppressing the freedom of the press. The petition signed by the majority of the Slovenian alternative movements expressed fear that the same logic could be used to imprison Slovenian intellectuals on the proposal of some Serbian police station.⁶⁹

The first issue of the *Teleks* weekly after the Eighth Session was published on 1 October, giving the journalists ample time for their first reflections on the recent developments. In the *Teleksova tribuna* section, the journalist Srečo Zajc commented on the purges in the Serbian Party and underlined the Party's insistence on maintaining its monolithic nature. Zajc was much more cautious in his criticism than *Mladina* and mainly considered the role of the League of Communists. The main reason why

65 Miha Kovač, "Požig Reichstaga II, Čejeni in Šošoni," *Mladina*, 9 October 1987, 11, 12.

66 Marović, *Politika i Politika*, 228.

67 Igor Mekina, "Natiskane izvode bodo uničili," *Katedra*, June/July 2011, 25, 26.

68 Adriano Kiršič, "Stalinizem na pohodu," *Mladina*, 9 October 1987, 13.

69 Mariborsko pismo ob ovadbi Milovana Brkića, *Mladina*, 9 October 1987, 14.

Stojanović and Pavlović came into conflict with the decisions of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia was the fact that they had drawn attention to the Serbian nationalism: was it nationalism or a struggle between two factions, the peaceful and the monolithic? The author wondered whether the same fate would befall Ivan Stambolić. The method chosen by the leadership of the Serbian League of Communists consolidated monolithicity. The League of Communists would lose its character of a voluntary alliance of supporters as well as its historical opportunity to reunite a divided Yugoslavia. In his view, this was only possible with a modern, humane, and pluralist programme, through the separation from the state apparatus and rehabilitation of self-management. Srečo Zajc claimed that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had been buried by the Serbian nationalism, while the new Yugoslavia was born out of patriotism and the programme of the Yugoslav communists. Meanwhile, a third Yugoslavia was not possible “because we will scatter like a flock of geese”. The League of Communists should put a stop to the “divide and conquer” policy pursued by the national and local leaders in order to cover up their past sins related to the economic policy.⁷⁰

The *Teleks* journalist Jasna Venturini strove to understand the “Eighth Session” purges from the viewpoint of historical comparisons. She compared the events to the showdown with the Serbian “liberalism and technocratism” in 1972. In October 1972, the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia had held a multi-day session where – at Tito’s initiative – the leaders of the Serbian communists at the time (Marko Nikezić, Latinka Perović) had been dismissed.⁷¹ The similarities between the two sessions supposedly included the problems being solved in a series of long meetings and through newspaper companies, as well as “heads rolling at the end”. In both cases, the management of the newspaper *Politika* had been involved in the disputes. Although the journalist was clear that a major purge had taken place in the Serbian communist leadership and that such activities would likely continue, she was cautious in her conclusions. She pointed out that the “Eighth Session” had been characterised by honest observations during the discussions, and honesty could help make the League of Communists healthier.⁷² In addition to the article, *Teleks* published individual statements by the participants of the discussion and the chronology of Dragiša Pavlović’s expulsion. In the same issue, readers could read a report from a roundtable in Celje, organised by *Teleks* in cooperation with the ZSMS. The topic of the roundtable was the freedom of information, and the invited participants included “direct actors of the freedom of public information”: journalists, sociologists, politicians, prosecutors, judges, and lawyers. *Teleks* summed up the journalists and editors who had defended the freedom of expression in particular.

On 22 October 1987, *Teleks* published a more critical commentary on the situation in Serbia. Janko Lorenci described the death of the dialogue and the new monolithicity

70 Srečo Zajc, “Monoliti,” *Teleks*, 1 October 1987, 5.

71 Dušan Bilandžić, *Zgodovina Socialistične federativne republike Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1980), 429.

72 Jasna Venturini, “Ena izključitev in množica neznank,” *Teleks*, 1 October 1987, 9–11.

in the largest of the Yugoslav republics. What was the reason for the rapid rise of Milošević's faction? Lorenci claimed that the essence lay in a combination of several factors: a mix of socio-political demagoguery and populism, the indulgence of nationalism and anti-Albanian sentiments, the control of most press, and Yugoslavia's indifference towards Kosovo and the crisis in Serbia. The journalist argued that a "quick and decisive" solution to the Kosovo issue was not possible, and if Milošević's hardliners were not aware of this, then they were out of touch with reality. Lorenci agreed with the *Danas* commentator Jelena Lovrić, who was worried about the silence of the federal authorities. If Serbia was drifting towards the authoritarian option, then this was very bad for Serbia as well as for Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia could only be strong with a strong Serbia, but only a democratic Serbia could be strong, the author concluded.⁷³

Teleks would often write about Serbia, but usually about things that concerned the Slovenian reality as well – for example about the relations between the Serbian and Slovenian leadership or the relations between the Slovenian and Serbian cultural workers – while it paid less attention to Serbia as a topic in itself (Kosovo was the only exception). It seems that after the "Eighth Session", the editorship of what was then the central Slovenian weekly focused on detailed research of the political and media situation in Serbia. In November 1987, *Teleks* published an extensive three-part analysis of "the methods, goals, and consequences of the showdowns in Serbian journalism" by the journalist Jasna Venturini. At the beginning of this series of articles, the author established that many journalists in Serbia had been dismissed in the autumn. According to her, it was clear that the main sin of the media that were under attack was the lack of support for the decisions reached at the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia. When she looked for someone to discuss this topic with in the Belgrade newspaper companies, the journalist detected a great deal of mistrust. No one at *Politika* wanted to talk. The situation was different at the *NIN* magazine, where they pointed to the political pressures from the Serbian communist leadership.⁷⁴ A week later, Jasna Venturini noted that the events of the "great purge" in the Serbian journalism outpaced *Teleks's* writing. Before the second part of her article was even published, Mirko Djekić, the editor-in-chief of the *NIN* weekly, had been dismissed. Sava Kržavac, the president of the Information Section of the Serbian SZDL, tried to convince the journalist that the recent developments in Serbian journalism were nothing unusual. He assured her that there was no cause for concern among journalists, nor was it true that a list of unwanted journalists existed. The journalist received a completely different testimony from the *Politika* journalist Radmilo Kljajić, who had been dismissed as the secretary of the City Committee of the League of Communists of Belgrade at the "Eighth Session" as well as expelled from the League of Communists. Kljajić was appalled at the accusations at the "Eighth Session" and by the draconian punishment imposed by the Party leadership. He found no rational reason for this but suspected it was the revenge of the Milošević – Marković family. As it was, Kljajić had recently published a contribution on

73 Janko Lorenci, "Umiranje dijaloga v Srbiji," *Teleks*, 22 October 1987, 12, 13.

74 Jasna Venturini, "Na konici oblasti I," *Teleks*, 5 November 1987, 13.

the revolutionary movement in Belgrade, in which he had mentioned Mira Marković's mother in a negative context.⁷⁵ In the last part of her article on the Serbian media affairs, Jasna Venturini described the purges at the TV Belgrade news programme. In the run-up to the "Eighth Session", the editor of *TV Dnevnik*, the daily news programme, allowed a comment by the *Danas* journalist Jelena Lovrić, who characterised the leadership of the Serbian League of Communists as dogmatic and Stalinist. The editor was punished with a pay cut, while the news programme editor was dismissed, even though the journalists' collective was against this. Meanwhile, the editor of the *Svet* magazine Jelisaveta Jevremović was also under attack for reprinting Radmilo Kljajić's defence from the federal youth magazine *Mladost*. Just like *Borba*, the main newspaper of the Yugoslav communists, the *Mladost* magazine was beyond the reach of the Serbian authorities. Therefore, it could still afford to be critical of Milošević's "line". Jasna Venturini concluded that the "cleaners" of the Serbian journalistic scene had no problems when the founder of the media was the Serbian SZDL, but things got complicated in the case of other founders. "However, with a bit of goodwill, even such minor difficulties can be overcome," the author concluded cynically.⁷⁶

Epilogue

How does the brief analysis of the writing of *Danas*, *NIN*, *Teleks*, and *Mladina* about this pivotal event reveal the character of the Yugoslav media space during the crisis of the Yugoslav political system? The "Eighth Session" has a special place in the historiography of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Researchers rightly refer to it as one of the milestones on the path towards the establishment of the authoritarian Milošević's regime in Serbia and as one of the turning points in the process of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. For example, the German historian Holm Sundhaussen defined the "Eighth Session" as Milošević's "putsch".⁷⁷ From the viewpoint of the political history focusing on the public, however, it is legitimate to ask whether the media commentators of the time perceived the decisive character of the "Eighth Session". All commentators of the analysed media defined the "Eighth Session" as special and groundbreaking, and in the above-mentioned magazines, all of them evaluated the session as a possibility that the Serbian politics might develop in a dangerous direction, even though no one predicted the disintegration of Yugoslavia at that time.

The common feature of the magazines under consideration was the profound scepticism towards the nationalistic phenomena in Yugoslavia. We can argue that all three magazines were critical of the "Eighth Session" in the sense of rejecting Slobodan Milošević's policies, his authoritarianism, and the newfound Serbian nationalism, while *NIN* was outwardly less critical of the new policy and sometimes described

⁷⁵ Jasna Venturini, "Na konici oblasti II," *Teleks*, 12 November 1987, 6–8.

⁷⁶ Jasna Venturini, "Na konici oblasti III," *Teleks*, 26 November 1987, 12, 13.

⁷⁷ Holm Sundhaussen, *Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten* (Dunaj: Böhlau Verlag, 2012), 251.

it with different emphases, but in terms of the balance of forces and this magazine's position in the Serbian media space, it can nevertheless be seen – until the purges of its editorship – as a voice of the opposition. In terms of terminology, all the magazines were critical of the term “differentiation”, which they interpreted as a euphemism for Party purges, authoritarianism, and suppression of intra-Party democracy. However, the critical attitude was expressed in different ways. All the magazines celebrated the freedom of speech and democracy in the broadest sense. *Danas* was the most careful in its texts: criticism was concealed in selected quotations and rhetorical questions but still clearly evident to the educated reader. This Zagreb-based weekly evaluated the events by paying much attention to the “Eighth Session”, especially with the image of Dragiša Pavlović on its front page. *Teleks* initially reacted in a principled and cautious manner but later became much more critical. The writing of *Mladina* was the most honest and without any convoluted comparisons and rhetorical questions: it tried to be straightforward and used the most critical discourse.

We cannot fully accept the thesis that the Slovenian media space was relatively closed due to the specificity of the Slovenian language. The Yugoslav public was not merely an extension of the Slovenian media space but rather also an important part of the narrower Slovenian public. This supports the thesis of the complex, even liminal nature of the Yugoslav public, which was thus both the sum of the publics of the individual republics and provinces as well as the single, all-Yugoslav public. The coverage of the “Eighth Session” beautifully illustrates this interplay of levels and the unusual richness of the journalistic (and general communication) networks. The Zagreb-based *Danas* collaborated with the Serbian journalists who would publish critical texts regarding the Serbian leadership under pseudonyms (Aleksandar Tijanić). The member of *Mladina*'s editorship David Tasić came from Serbia, was a respected youth journalist at the Yugoslav level, and understood the political situation in Serbia very well. *Mladina* also collaborated with the critical freelance journalist Milovan Brkić. He, together with other Belgrade journalists, regularly published his articles in the Maribor-based *Katedra*, which at one time became an alternative newsletter of the Belgrade students. The collaboration between *Katedra* and the journalists of the *Student* magazine indicates that critical journalists were able to use the differences between the media regimes in the different republics to their advantage. The editorship of *Teleks* made up for its poor initial knowledge of the Serbian media scene with investigative journalism in Belgrade.

The Croatian music critic and journalist Ante Perković titled his book on the Yugoslav pop-rock music scene *Sedma republika* (The Seventh Republic). In it, he mainly analysed the part of the Yugoslav rock that defined itself nationally and politically and supported exclusive nationalist projects with its activities. However, he also described the fate of the part of popular music that “remained faithful to the supranational and pacifist idea of rock and roll in spite of everything”.⁷⁸ He called this long-term

78 Samo Rugelj, “Sedma republika: Pop kultura in razpad Jugoslavije – recenzija,” *Bukla.si*, <https://www.bukla.si/knjigarna/umetnost/glasba/sedma-republika.html>, accessed on 8 March 2021.

phenomenon the Seventh Yugoslav Republic.⁷⁹ A similar framework could be applied to the Yugoslav public as well. A Yugoslav-wide network of critical but non-nationalist journalists existed who supported the democratisation of the society (mostly in the context of the existing system), pointed out economic failures (e.g. the Agrokomerc affair) and the dangers of both unitarism and particular nationalisms. Could this network be defined as the “Eighth Republic”? The media network branched in all directions, not only between the same categories of the Yugoslav media. The media saw Yugoslavia as their own country, recognising its complexity and calling for tolerance and dialogue. Women journalists played an important role in the all-Yugoslav journalistic network, especially at the *Danas* weekly, to a lesser extent at *Teleks*, and even less at *Mladina*. There were significant differences between them, also conditioned by the environments of the particular republics, but we can nevertheless identify a common field of values that held this pan-Yugoslav media grouping together.

The Party purges after the “Eighth Session” were closely linked to the purges in the ranks of the press. With the emergence of media populism associated with authoritarian nationalism, these purges had a devastating effect not only on the Yugoslav Party and the political structure but also on the Yugoslav media network. The transnational Yugoslav Republic of Journalists started to crumble. Media cooperation was overshadowed by the media wars. If, in his work on Yugo-rock, Ante Perković suggested that the “Seventh Republic” survived Yugoslavia, then we can conclude that the “Eighth Republic” of Yugoslav journalism was not so fortunate.

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**»PRIMER TOVARIŠA DRAGIŠE PAVLOVIČA«
JUGOSLOVANSKI MEDIJSKI PROSTOR IN NJEGOVO
DOJEMANJE NA PRIMERU POROČANJA OSREDNJIH
POLITIČNIH TEDNIKOV O OSMEM PLENUMU
CENTRALNEGA KOMITEJA ZVEZE KOMUNISTOV SRBIJE**

POVZETEK

Jugoslovanska medijska krajina je že v času svojega obstoja bila ocenjena kot fragmentirana, informacijski sistemi naj bi delovali predvsem v okviru republik in naj bi odsevali interese republiške oziroma pokrajinske oblasti. Dolgoživa teza, ki je z leti dobivala skorajda dogmatski značaj, je zato v prispevku analizirana in potrjena z množico navedb sodobnikov. Pod drobnogled je nato vzet tudi jugoslovanski medijski sistem in načini njegovega nadzora, predvsem pa je bila v procesu analize medijev prisotna jasna segmentacija tiska, ki jasno opredeli, kateri mediji so bili za razumevanje političnih procesov v Jugoslaviji najpomembnejši in so imeli tudi relativno močno prisotno zavest o potrebi po podrobnejši analizi in kritičnem poročanju o dogajanjih v svojem matičnem okolju in izven njega. To so bili politični tedniki. Vloga političnih tednikov v medijski krajini je bila pomembna, saj so se po svoji obliki poročanja bistveno razlikovali od dnevnega časopisa. Njihova zlata doba je bila ravno v obravnavanem obdobju, kljub padcem naklad v časih discipliniranja uredništev, ki so vodila k manjši javni pozornosti. Bolj ko so jih dojemali kot »partijski časopis«, manjši vpliv so imeli. A analiza tekstov, objavljenih v jugoslovanskih tednikih, je to tezo, ki je bila ob načrtovanju raziskave postavljena kot ena od osrednjih raziskovalnih vprašanj, postavila pod vprašaj.

Drugi namen prispevka je analiza medijske vidnosti vzpona in konsolidacije Miloševićeve prevlade v Srbiji s poudarkom na znameniti osmi seji CK ZK Srbije (24.–26. september 1987). Avtorja predvsem zanima, kako se je na Miloševićevo utrjevanje oblasti v Srbiji odzval jugoslovanski revialni tisk (predvsem srbski *NIN* in hrvaški *Danas*) in kako slovenske revije (*Teleks*, *Mladina*). Tednika *NIN* in *Danas* sta bila usmerjena v jugoslovansko javnost, čeprav sta bila tudi pod vplivom političnih in medijskih razmer v Srbiji oziroma Jugoslaviji. Slovenski družbenopolitični magazini so računali na slovensko občinstvo – bili so slovenski tudi po vsebini, ne samo po jeziku – čeprav so bili po drugi strani del širšega jugoslovanskega medijskega prostora. Sredi osemdesetih let

je v jugoslovanskem medijskem prostoru, še zlasti v večjih centrih (Beograd, Zagreb, Ljubljana), potekal proces demokratizacije medijskega prostora, uredništva so se izvijala iz oklepa političnih forumov.

Teze o slovenskem medijskem prostoru, ki naj bi bil zaradi specifičnega slovenskega jezika relativno zaprt, ne moremo povsem sprejeti. Jugoslovanska javnost ni bila samo podaljšek slovenskega medijskega prostora, bila je tudi pomemben del ožje, slovenske javnosti. To govori v prid tezi o kompleksni, celo liminalni naravi jugoslovanske javnosti, ki je bila seštevek posameznih javnosti republik in pokrajin pa tudi ena, vsejugoslovanska javnost. Poročanje o »osmi seji« lepo kaže na ta preplet ravni in nenavadno bogastvo novinarskih (in splošno komunikacijskih) mrež. Zagrebški *Danas* je sodeloval s srbskimi novinarji, ki so pod psevdonimom objavljali kritična besedila o srbskem vodstvu (Aleksandar Tijanić). Član uredništva *Mladine* David Tasić je prihajal iz Srbije, bil je spoštovan mladinski novinar na jugoslovanski ravni in je dobro razumel politične razmere v Srbiji. *Mladina* je sodelovala s kritičnim samostojnim novinarjem Milovanom Brkićem. Brkić je skupaj z ostalimi beograjskimi novinarji redno objavljali v mariborski *Katedri*, ki je v nekem obdobju postala alternativno glasilo beograjskih študentov. Sodelovanje *Katedre* in novinarjev *Studenta* kaže na to, da so kritični novinarji znali uporabljati razlike med medijskimi režimi v različnih republikah v svojo korist. Uredništvo *Teleksa* je začetno slabo poznavanje srbske medijske scene nadoknadilo z raziskovalnim novinarskim delom v Beogradu.

Hrvaški glasbeni kritik in novinar Ante Perković je svojo knjigo o jugoslovanski pop-rock glasbeni sceni naslovil *Sedma republika*. Čeprav je v tej knjigi analiziral predvsem tisti del jugoslovanskega rocka, ki se je nacionalno in politično opredelil in je s svojim delovanjem podpiral ekskluzivne nacionalistične projekte, je prikazal tudi usodo tistega dela popularne glasbe, »ki je vsemu navkljub ostal zvest nadnacionalni ter pacifistični ideji rokenrola«. Ta fenomen dolgega trajanja je poimenoval sedma jugoslovanska republika. Podoben okvir razmišljanja bi lahko uporabili tudi za jugoslovansko javnost. Obstajala je vsejugoslovanska mreža kritičnih, a ne nacionalistično usmerjenih novinarjev, ki so podpirali demokratizacijo družbe (večinoma znotraj sistema), opozarjali na gospodarske napake (na primer afera Agrokomerc) ter na nevarnost unitarizma in partikularnih nacionalizmov. Medijska mreža se je spletala v vse smeri, ne samo med istimi kategorijami jugoslovanskih medijev. Na Jugoslavijo so gledali kot na svojo državo, priznavali so njeno kompleksnost in pozivali k strpnosti in dialogu. Med njimi so bile velike razlike, pogojene tudi s posameznim republiškim okoljem, kljub temu pa lahko identificiramo skupno polje vrednot, ki so to vsejugoslovansko medijsko združbo držale skupaj.

Partijske čistke po »osmi seji« so bile tesno povezane s čistkami v novinarskih vrstah. Te pa so s pojavom medijskega populizma, navezanega na avtoritarni nacionalizem, delovale uničujoče ne samo na jugoslovansko partijo in politično strukturo, ampak tudi na jugoslovansko medijsko mrežo. Transnacionalna jugoslovanska novinarska republika je začela razpadati. Medijsko sodelovanje so zasenčile medijske vojne.