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**SLOVENIAN 1989: ELITE CONSTRUCTION OF A
NATIONAL DEMOCRACY**

Carlos González VILLA¹

Complutense University of Madrid /
Autonomous University of Barcelona
Spain

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Summary

Slovene 1989 started in May 1988, after the arrest of Janez Janša and the Foundation of Odbor, and finished in September 1989, when the ideological configuration of the sovereigntist process was institutionalised through a substantial constitutional reform carried out by the Assembly of the Republic, still solely ruled by the communists. Odbor and the developments after the “Slovenian spring” of 1988 – which triggered nationalist mobilisation – accelerated the pluralisation of the system and advanced the creation of new political parties in the country.

Through the analysis of the Slovene transition it is possible to observe 1989 as a time in which social mobilisation merely played a subsidiary role in political change in relation to political elites, characterized by the consolidation of a new paradigm of legitimacy and, above all, for its insertion in the sovereigntist process that was taking place in that Yugoslav republic. During that period, Slovene ideological elites delimited a common political space characterized by confrontational attitudes towards the Yugoslav federal institutions from a nationalist perspective.

¹ PhD Researcher of the Complutense Institute of International Relations (Complutense University of Madrid) and the Research Group on Current History (Autonomous University of Barcelona). Contact: cgonzalezvilla@ucm.es.

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Introduction

The rhetoric on the existence of a revolutionary cycle in Eastern Europe in 1989 has been increasingly present in the hegemonic narrative of post-communist transitions in recent years. The revival of the revolutionary character of the regime changes that took place in that part of the world is closely linked to the need to oversize the importance of mass demonstrations that led to phenomena like the “Arab Spring”² or the Ukrainian Euromaidan.³ In the case of influential Timothy Garton Ash, the magnification of the significance of 1989 has led to statements like that “there is no longer any doubt that 1989 has become the early 21st century’s default model and metaphor for revolution. Forget 1917, 1848 or 1789”.⁴

Other authors – not necessarily heavily critical with those changes – have proved to be more rigorous in analysing the significance of 1989. In the case of Tony Judt, it is observed that his conclusions on the aftermath of the events of 1989 did not have to do with its own projections in other phenomena that occurred during the post-Cold War – such as the “colour revolutions” that took place in the former Soviet space between 2003 and 2005 – but to the proper features of post-communist political regimes. Thus, considering that 1989 represented primarily a change in the paradigm of legitimacy upon which communist parties rested in Eastern Europe,⁵ he notes the importance of the idea of the “return to Europe” in opposition groups thinking. In this sense, Judt highlighted the image that the European Community (EC) had on the notion of Europe developed during the eighties by them. In it, the EC embodied specific values with which Eastern Europeans could be easily identified, such as individual rights, freedom of speech or freedom of movement.⁶ The victory of the opposition, therefore, did not have much to do with the defeat of communists within the existing political chessboard – determined by the contradiction between *communists* and *capitalists* political identification of the actors – but with changing the rules of the whole game, in which Europe became the true enemy of socialism.

If Judt’s considerations downgrade the importance of the social movements

2 Bernard-Henri LÉVY, “SPIEGEL Interview with Bernard-Henri LÉVY: ‘We Lost a Great Deal of Time in Libya Because of the Germans’”, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-bernard-henri-levy-we-lost-a-great-deal-of-time-in-libya-because-of-the-germans-a-753797-2.html> (05/01/2015).

3 Timothy GARTON ASH, “5 ways Ukraine may be a game changer”, <http://laregledujeu.org/le-maidan-lettres-de-kiev/2014/02/24/5-ways-ukraine-may-be-a-game-changer/> (05/01/2015).

4 Ibidem.

5 Tony JUDT, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, London: Vintage, 627.

6 Ibid., 630.

that took place in that year in Eastern Europe,⁷ an analysis of the case of Slovenia potentially contributes to observe 1989 as a year in which social movements merely played a subsidiary role, in relation to political elites, characterized by the consolidation of a new paradigm of legitimacy and, above all, for its insertion in the sovereigntist process that was taking place in that Yugoslav republic. In fact, the popular uprisings that had taken place in 1988 ended up in heading towards the alleged linguistic repression of Belgrade over Slovenia, while claims related to the legitimacy and the nature of the political regime were only assumed in 1989 by political parties that aimed to represent the Slovenian people.

Indeed, the regime change in Slovenia was characterized by the expansion and widespread acceptance of the idea of introducing political pluralism in the republican framework.⁸ Slovene democratisation process was closely related to the sovereignty process, especially since 1988, when Slovene ideological elites delimited a common political space characterized by confrontational attitudes towards the Yugoslav federal institutions from a nationalist perspective. This process had taken place from the early eighties, but the collaboration between ideological elites (including the League of Communists and growingly influential alternative groups, as the anti-communist opposition, on the one hand, and the new social movements, on the other) intensified after the arrest of “the four of Ljubljana” in May and June 1988 and especially after they were prosecuted in Serbo-Croatian language in the military jurisdiction. This triggered a wave of demonstrations in which national claims gradually gained prominence over claims relating to the legality of the procedure. In this vein, 1989 was the year of the institutionalisation of a liberal democracy based on the rejection of Yugoslav institutions from a nationalist perspective. Liberal democracy and integration of Europe were the projection of a national movement. New political parties took a leading role in this process replacing social movements and burying their initial antisystemic demands along the way.

When approaching the case of Slovenia, it is always tempting to diminish its importance in the general process of dissolution of Yugoslavia, due to its supposedly limited importance in it, especially in front of the quarrel between Serbs and Croats and its potential impact in Bosnia. Indeed, in part of the literature on the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia it is common to observe the Slovenian sovereigntist process under the light of events that took place years later, such as the secession wars.⁹ Thus, in contrast to the trajectory of its southern neighbours, Slovenia emerges as the success case of the country that escaped the horrors of

7 He also points out that the only grassroots mobilisation took place in Germany that year: Ibid., 616.

8 Igor LUKŠIČ, “Corporatism packaged in pluralist ideology: the case of Slovenia”, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36, n° 4 (2003), 511.

9 Richard H. ULLMAN, “The Wars in Yugoslavia and the International System after the Cold War”, in *The World and Yugoslavia’s Wars*, ed. Richard H. ULLMAN, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996, 9-41.

war,¹⁰ while initiating an exemplary post communist transition that inevitably would end up in its accession to Euro-Atlantic organizations.¹¹ At the same time, the Slovenian experience is showed as a natural consequence of the conservative and recentralising offensive in Yugoslavia, which began with the appointment of Slobodan Milošević as president of the League of Communists of Serbia in 1986.¹²

Most of the studies on the case of Slovenia in the last two decades departed from an quantitative epistemological approach – starting off from the magnitude of the phenomena – and not questioning its role in the process, but, at most, the implications of such process for a transition usually featured as smooth and swift.¹³ However, time of crisis are an incentive for the academy for the understanding of the origin of the world that gives way to a new one, yet to meet pursued. The great change that is experiencing the world in which the Republic of Slovenia was born is forcing a new approach in the study of its recent history,¹⁴ but this time from the perspective of power and, rather than from the “end of history” seemed to have come after the collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.¹⁵

New political organisations

The first sovereigntist political organisations

The transformation of Slovene politics at the end of the 1980s had deep structural roots, although its evolution was basically a question of elites. The first political organisation established in Slovenia during this process was the Slovenian Peasant Union (Slovenska kmečka zveza – SKZ). Its development started in the first half of 1988, when Franc Zagožen, a professor of Biotechniques

10 The work of former president Janez Drnovšek is paradigmatic. In the account of his experience as a Slovenian representative in the Yugoslav federal presidency between 1989 and 1991, he explains how Slovenia escaped war due to its homogeneous ethnic composition and its “great determination”: *Escape from Hell: The Truth of a President* (Ljubljana: Delo, 1996), 279-282, acceso el 13 de agosto, 2012, <http://www2.gov.si/up-rs/2002-2007/jd.nsf/dokumentiweb/B5C36AA78A51806FC1256F94000691E7?OpenDocument>.

11 A sample in: Anton BEBLER, “Slovenia’s Smooth Transition”, *Journal of Democracy* 13, n° 1 (2002): 127.

12 A significative example of this approach is the work of Sabrina Petra RAMET: *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006. Another example is the work of Josip Glaurdić, who starts off from that thesis for his explanation of the great powers’ approach to the Yugoslav crisis: *The Hour of Europe; Sell, Slobodan Milosevic and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

13 Two examples of the centrality of Slovene transition that addressed the dissolution of Yugoslavia only from its side face: Sabrina P. RAMET and Danica FINK-HAFNER, *Democratic Transition in Slovenia: Value Transformation, Education, and Media*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006, and Danica FINK-HAFNER and John R. ROBBINS, *Making a New Nation: The Formation of Slovenia*, Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1997).

14 A state of the art in this regard in Srećko HORVAT and Igor ŠIKS, *Welcome to the Desert of Post-Socialism: Radical Politics after Yugoslavia*, London: Verso, 2015.

15 Francis FUKUYAMA, “The End of History?”, *The National Interest* 16 (1989).

at the University of Ljubljana, wrote about the need for young people to create an organisation to represent the Slovene peasants.¹⁶ On May 12 1988, under the sponsorship of the official Socialist Youth, the League of Young Slovene Farmers was created in an event that gathered around 1,500 people. At the same time, the founding committee of the SKZ was conformed. Its chair was Ivan Oman, a farmer who had developed his political career in the assembly of Škofja Loka representing the corporate interests of the peasantry.¹⁷

Subsequently, the emergence of the figure of Marjan Podobnik turned to the right wing the party through a purge of the elements that, initially, had contributed to the creation of the youth agricultural organisation within the Socialist Youth and, in general, of cadres not supporting his anti-communists points of view.¹⁸ At the same time, the evolution of the SKZ can be linked with its continuing approach to the Slovenian Catholic Church, which would end up being one of the main beneficiaries of the process of denationalisation of land in the country.¹⁹

At the same time, different actors were moving on in order to find their place in a process of change that seemed unavoidable. At the end of 1988, after the execution of the sentence against the “four of Ljubljana” was indefinitely postponed, some of the most influential players of the collegium of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (Odbor), which coordinated the activities in solidarity with the detainees – tried to launch their own agenda for the transformation the movement into a political party. Thus, in December 1988, Igor Bavčar – its chairman – and Spomenka Hribar proposed Odbor to take that step forward, with the opposition of an important part of the members of the Committee.²⁰ A second proposal was that Odbor would exclusively support the new Slovenian Democratic Union (Slovenska demokratična zveza – SDZ), which was also rejected. Finally, it was agreed that Odbor would greet the creation of new political parties but, as organisation, it would not join them. There was a reason for this, since, at least formally, the Committee’s claims had not been met yet.²¹ On the one hand, “the four of Ljubljana” were still in a sort of legal limbo – although they had been released, the trial had not been dismissed – whereas, on the other, democratic demands claimed by Odbor had not yet been met.

However, Odbor had transformed the Slovenian political scene and its claims were to be addressed sooner or later. Indeed, the SDZ was a consequence

16 “12.05.1988 / SKZ”, *Slovenska pomlad*, <http://www.slovenskapomlad.si/1?id=169>, (05/01/2015).

17 Leopoldina PLUT-PREGELJ and Carole ROGEL, *The A to Z of Slovenia*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007, 334.

18 Nada KIRN, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013.

Quoted audio interviews were carried out during research visits to Slovenia between 2009 and 2013 following the methodology of oral history and set as a open conversations.

Nada Kirn was an activist of the feminist movement, member of the ZSMS and one of the founders of the ZKS.

19 Aleš ČRMIČ, Mirt KOMEL, Marjan SMRKE, et. al., “Religious Pluralisation in Slovenia”, *Teorija in praksa* 50, n° 1 (2013), 216.

20 Ali ŽERDIN, *Generali brez kape: Čas Odbor za varstvo človekovih pravic*, Ljubljana: Krtina, 1991, 319-325.

21 Ibid., 326.

of this change and ended up being the most influential party of the Slovenian right wing. Its founding committee was constituted in mid-December 1988. Few weeks later, on January 11, a group of intellectuals and activists organized the first Congress of the organisation in a packed Cankarjev dom. The SDZ soon became the political reference of intellectuals and writers who had contributed with *Nova revija* and gathered around the Association of Writers.²² In fact, the president of the new organisation was Dimitrij Rupel, who had prompted the creation of the mentioned publication. According to the journalist Rosvita Pesek, the appointment of Rupel as president of the SDZ had to do with his international experience; in particular, he had spent several years in the United States.²³ An important figure of the leadership of the SDZ was Janez Janša, who had acquired a great media attention following his arrest in 1988. Other important figures were Spomenka Hribar, Tine Hribar and France Bučar, all related to *Nova revija*. Although not formally part of the new organisation, the charismatic and chameleon-like Igor Bavčar ended up being proposed by the SDZ to serve on the secessionist government after April 1990 elections.

In terms of political program, the priority of the SDZ was the definition of the statehood of Slovenia and the change of its relations with the federation.²⁴ In this sense, the program presented for 1990 elections was clear in stating that the only possible model for Yugoslavia was one in which national relations were governed by consensus among nations.²⁵ In economics, the SDZ, besides pointing out the problems identified in the socialist system, proposed that all powers on the regulation, as well as on the monetary system (including the printing of currency), would pass on the authorities of the Republic.²⁶

A few months after the constitution of the SDZ, in March 1989, the Slovenian Christian Social Movement was founded. The organisation – which later that year became was renamed as Slovene Christian Democrats (Slovenski krščanski demokrati – SKD) – was be the most popular party of the Slovenian right wing after elections in 1990. The movement was created by members of associations like Društvo 2000 (editor *Revija 2000*) or Slovenska matica, in which some conservative groups found a working space during socialism. As party chairman was elected Alojz (Lojze) Peterle, an economist and historian who

22 Matej TONIN, *Prva vlada Republike Slovenije: Zakaj so se razšli junaki osamosvojitve*, Ljubljana: Inštitut dr. Janeza Evangelista Kreka, 2010, 43.

23 “11.01.1989/Ustanovitev SDZ”, *Slovenskapomlad*, <http://www.slovenskapomlad.si/1?id=117>, (05/01/2015). Rupel recognizes that there is common opinion among Slovene experts and journalists that his stay in the United States had an influence also in his subsequent appointment as minister of Foreign Affairs in May 1990: Dimitrij RUPEL, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2011.

24 Rosvita PESEK, *Osamosvojitve Slovenije*, Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2007, 87.

25 Slavi KRUŠIČ, Josip ESTERAJHER and Slobodan VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?! Programi političnih strank in list na spomladanskih volitvah v Sloveniji* (Ljubljana: Jugoslovanski center za teorijo in prakso samoupravljanja Edvard Kardelj, 1990), 22.

26 Ibid., 25.

worked for various advisory bodies of the republican administration during the eighties.²⁷

The transformation of the Christian Social Movement in a sovereigntist party was a consequence of the refusal of part of the leadership, including its first leader, Peter Kovačič, to assume the contents of the May Declaration. Leading members SDZ and its related organisations, such as the Writers' Association, drove the Declaration, which became a landmark in the account of the Slovene process of independence.²⁸ Its short text was read by the poet Tone Pavček at a rally and it claimed that the signatories wanted to live “in a sovereign state of the Slovenian nation” and that “the decision on the links with the Yugoslav nations, and others, will be taken by Slovenia as a sovereign state in the context of a new Europe”. The statement also made explicit the thesis that respect for human rights, democracy, political pluralism and the “material and spiritual welfare” of Slovenes could only be achieved through the realisation of the sovereignty of Slovenia.

Subsequently, the part of the Christian Democrats who took part on the Declaration completed the creation of a new political party. In the 1990 elections campaign, they presented a program that did not differ significantly from the SDZ, insisting on democratic reforms, the protection of the Slovenian identity in the world and the “full sovereignty of the Slovenian state”.²⁹

National social democracy

The May Declaration was also signed by the Social Democratic Alliance (Socialdemokratska sveza Slovenije – SDZS), founded in February 16 1989 under the leadership of France Tomšič. The social origins of Slovene social democracy help to understand the position of the trade union movement in the Slovenian transition and its lack of actual political influence during the process.

Slovene trade union movement was framed, according to Kirn, in a structure in which “the unions were closely connected to the Republican centres of power; their role was not well defined, but mostly they worked to harmonize the collective bargaining process between the state, enterprises (industrial branches) and lower municipalities”.³⁰ This feature subsequently involved certain depoliticisation of union demands. In terms of Miroslav Stanojević, “being comparatively strongly market oriented, the former Yugoslav system involved stronger horizontal

27 PLUT-PREGELJ and ROGEL, *The A to Z of Slovenia*, 343.

28 “08.05.1989/Majniška Deklaracija”, *Slovenska pomlad*, <http://www.slovenskapomlad.si/1?id=134> (05/01/2015).

29 KRUŠIČ, ESTERAJHER and VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?!...*, 42.

30 The author adds that federal bureaucracies were subject to the fact that union elections were held at the republican level: Gal KIRN, “Conceptualization of politics and reproduction in the work of Louis Althusser: Case of Socialist Yugoslavia”, PhD dissertation, University of Nova Gorica, 2012, 250.

cleavages between and within companies that in other 'communist' countries, but less intensive vertical cleavages. As was shown earlier, workers in the fragmented Yugoslav society persistently went on strike, and in the second half of the 1980s did so *en masse*. This *movement* could not be similar to Solidarność because of the absence of a strong vertical cleavage within former Yugoslav society. Because of this, striking workers did not constitute a society opposed to the ('communist') state, but rather a social group defending its particular social interests³¹.

This situation was a part of the background in Republican elites' struggle with the federal power. Despite the resistance of successive federal governments after the onset of the Yugoslav systemic crisis in the early eighties, economic reforms were conducted towards the deregulation of economic relations. As in other issues, Slovenia and Serbia provided apparently antagonistic examples on how to manage this state of affairs. In the case of Serbia, the situation was resolved by rejecting economic reforms and the market economy and by integrating the union movement through the instrumentalisation of nationalism in order to pacify labour relations.³² In Slovenia, the wave of strikes in 1987 and 1988³³ also had a elite response that included the labour movement; on the one hand, through the continuity of some aspects of the system of contractual socialism and, on the other, with the foundation of the Association of Trade Unions of Slovenia in 1988, which would become the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, majoritarian since 1990.³⁴ One way or another, trade union movements were conveniently housebroken by elites in both of the republics.

However, there was still a minority branch of the Slovenian unionism that opted for political activism and a closer relationship with the actors on the political right wing since 1987. This was only possible through actions that emerged from a particular political will, which was visible in December that year when workers at Litostroj, in Ljubljana, held a strike claiming the resignation of company managers, an increase of their salaries in accordance inflation and the chance of starting an independent trade union movement.³⁵ The strike paralyzed the activities of the factory and was accompanied by demonstrations outside the Slovenian Assembly and assemblies of workers in Cankarjev dom³⁶ (was equivalent to a certain tolerance by the regime).

31 Miroslav STANOJEVIĆ, "Workers' Power in Transition Economies", *European Journal of Social Relations* 9, n° 3 (2003), 297.

32 Ibid., 298.

33 From 1983 on, strikes were increasingly regular in Slovenia. In 1988 up to 228 strikes took place: A. LUKAN, *Problemi institucionalizacije in regulacije stavk*, Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede, 1992, quoted in Miroslav Stanojević, "Workers' Power in Transition Economies", 293.

34 According to Stanojević, the decisions on the way in which the situation was to be faced in these republics (both of them with important union movements) depended on the will and the orientation of the elites that took over the transition processes: Ibid., 289-291.

35 Rosvita PESEK, *Osamosvojitve Slovenije*, 91.

36 RTVSLO, "Stavka v Litostroju/A strike at the Litostroy Company", 09/12/1987, *EU Screen*, http://euscreen.eu/play.jsp?id=EUS_8983BBBA991C47B7AA8A9203277D9EB5 (05/01/2015).

The political implications of Litostroj triggered the foundation of a committee for the Social Democratic Alliance by the leader of the strikers, France Tomšič, an engineer, head of the Institute of Research, Development and Planning of the company.³⁷ He quickly got the support of his fellow strikers, mostly working class people, in order to advance its project. Although he had studied in Ljubljana, Tomšič lived for ten years in West Berlin, where he met his political mentor, sociologist Jože Pučnik. After spending a significant portion of his life in West Germany, where he developed contacts with the Social Democratic Party, Pučnik returned to Slovenia in 1989 after being invited the new Slovene social democrats led by Tomšič. The new party would begin to work on an electoral program which's priority was the "sovereignty of the Slovenian state", accompanied by aspects such as the constitution of a multiparty system, the establishment of an "effective economic system" and the respect for human rights.³⁸

Since his arrival in Slovenia, Pučnik was the only major figure of the sovereignty process that could be considered a dissident of the regime, which made him a symbol that could well gather together the new political parties that end up conforming the Democratic Opposition coalition (Demokratična opozicija Slovenije – DEMOS), which managed to form government after April 1990 elections. The goal of the coalition, as stated Pučnik in December 1989, was to launch the two fundamental claims of the Slovene nation: on the one hand, the integration of civil society in the rule of law through a democratic system and, on the other, the sovereignty of Slovenia.³⁹ DEMOS' program included these claims and those of the member parties of the coalition (including the SKZ, the SDZ and the SKD), as well as other questions that would gain momentum throughout 1990 – mainly, the call for a referendum to decide the future status of Slovenia.⁴⁰

The Greens' decision

A separate case is the one of the Greens (Zeleni Slovenije – ZS), a party that became the second largest partner in DEMOS. The organisation represented the only social movement that became a political party, so the first decisions made within the organisation involve an important learning: Despite the uniqueness that involved the creation of a party like the Greens, the experience of the green movement reflects a general trend of the collapse of the new Slovenian social movements in the late eighties.

The Greens were formed as an organisation on June 11 1989 and was the

37 "Tomšič Frane (02.08.1937 - 25.03.2010)", *Slovenska pomlad*, <http://www.slovenskapomlad.si/2?id=2957> (05/01/2015).

38 KRUŠIČ, ESTERAJHER and VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?!...*, 47.

39 Rosvita PESEK, *Osamosvojitve Slovenije*, 117.

40 KRUŠIČ, ESTERAJHER and VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?!...*, 14.

heir to the environmental movement, which in the eighties had some successes, including the interruption of the construction of the hydroelectric plants on the Soča river and the assumption of the proposal for a moratorium on the construction of a nuclear plant by Slovenian Assembly.⁴¹ The promoter of the organisation was Dušan Plut, a prominent member of the movement who raised the need for the establishment the new party as an “evolution” of the movement.⁴² At the beginning, the concerns of the new party were far from the national question, although in its founding act the right of all nations of Yugoslavia to self-determination and eventual independence was stressed. Their program, however, was focused on issues such as policies promoting environmental and natural resources protection and the sustainability of the economic system, assuming the slogan ‘think globally, act locally’.⁴³ Its ideology can be summed up in a passage of the electoral program: “Our vision is the one of an eco-humanistic society [...] that optimally leverage the positive elements of socialism and capitalism, enriched with the principles of humanism”.⁴⁴

The decision to create a political party had an impact in the Slovene environmental movement, as it was definitively abandoning its anti-systemic character. Nevertheless, it was the Slovenian projection of a trend that had already become global. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the case of the Greens is especially illuminating in this vein: “By the 1980s, all these new movements⁴⁵ had become divided internally between what the German Greens called the *fundis* and the *realos*. This turned out to be a replay of the ‘revolutionary versus reformist’ debates of the beginning of the twentieth century. The outcome was that the *fundis* lost out in every case, and more or less disappeared. The victorious *realos* increasingly took on the appearance of a species of social-democratic party, not too different from the classic variety, although with more rhetoric about ecology, sexism, racism, or all three”.⁴⁶

In this regard, it should be mentioned that the Greens of Slovenia were born as *realos*, since the European Greens had already established itself as such before and the organisation established close contacts with the German and Austrian Greens since its foundation, assuming the philosophy of those parties.⁴⁷ On the one

41 Leo ŠEŠERKO, “Ecology in Slovenia”, in *Environmental Action in Eastern Europe: Responses to Crisis*, ed. By Barbara JANCAR-WEBSTER, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993, 158-159.

42 Rosvita PESEK, *Osamosvojitve Slovenije*, 95.

43 KRUIČ, ESTERAJHER and VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?!...*, 68-69.

44 Ibidem.

45 At this point, Wallerstein refers to the antisystemic social movements that emerged from 1968 on, featured by environmentalist, feminist and minority rights claims, different from the proliferation of maoist movements: Immanuel WALLERSTEIN, “New Revolts Against the System”, *New Left Review* 18 (2002), 35.

46 Ibidem.

47 Barbara JANCAR-WEBSTER, “The East European Environmental Movement and the Transformation of East European Society”, in *Environmental Action in Eastern Europe: Responses to Crisis*, ed. by Barbara JANCAR-WEBSTER, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993, 212.

hand, this was reflected in the political and financial support as well as in contacts maintained by ZS with the European greens from the time of its foundation; contacts that also reflected a certain sympathy of the latter towards the Slovene sovereigntist process.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the position of the Greens of Slovenia as *realos* had a projection related to the political changes that have occurred in the country at the end of the decade.

In this sense, the decision of the ZS to join DEMOS in January 1990 becomes relevant, as it involved the displacement of the claims that were a priority hitherto for the liabilities of the sovereigntist movement. The decision was taken with the votes of members of the left wing of the party. On the one hand, as recalled one of the members of the leadership, Srečo Kirn, the decision was justified at that time in the situation of the federation and the idea that the party program could be better fulfilled within the Slovenian political framework.⁴⁹ On the other, Leo Šešerko, another prominent member of the party, adds that the leaders of the organisations gathered in DEMOS accepted the incorporation of the Greens’ proposals into the program of the coalition, while the former communists, with whom there also were talks, were not willing to assume them.⁵⁰ Since the coalition took office in May 1990, the leadership of DEMOS used the part of the program presented by the Greens as a rhetorical device and none of their proposals were implemented.

Despite the uniqueness of a party like ZS, the experience of the green movement shows a general trend in the process of collapse of the new social movements in Slovenia. Gal Kirn notes that, paradoxically, this process occurred at a time when its momentum and claims became more visible; first, in the context of the intervention of the JLA in the detention and trial of “the four of Ljubljana”, and subsequently in front the Serbian policies towards Kosovo between 1988 and 1989, when the Slovenes showed their solidarity with the situation of the Albanians.⁵¹ Therefore, he continues by asking himself how it was possible that these movements, which represented a radical rupture with the State as an institution, resulted “in nothing more than nationalism and war”.⁵²

48 Leo ŠEŠERKO, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013.

Leo Šešerko was a founding member of the Greens and vicepresident for Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the government of Slovenia (1990-1992).

49 Srečo KIRN, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013.

Srečo Kirn was an activist from the ecologist movement, member of the ZSMS and founding member of the Greens.

50 Leo ŠEŠERKO, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013.

51 Gal KIRN, “Slovene independence never happened, or how to reconstruct the historical mode of politics?”, *Monitor ISH*, IX/2 (2007), 100-101.

52 Ibidem.

The Liberals: A prospect for the Slovene post-political administration

Another symptom of the collapse of new social movements can also be found in the fact that, at the end of the eighties, when changes in Slovenia turned into a nation-building process, “alternative artistic production [consubstantial to the rise of new social movements since the late seventies] oriented itself towards more ambitious ‘artism’, perfectionism and even elitism”,⁵³ as underlined Maja Breznik. The phenomenon was a consequence of the update of the strategies of social movements at a time in which class antagonism was replaced by nationalism.⁵⁴ In Slovenia, the result was the transposition of the rejection of the position of the Yugoslav armed forces in the political system – a struggle that featured the activity of social movements in the early eighties – towards the rejection of the Yugoslav People’s Army as an institution. This characteristic was assumed by virtually all Slovene political actors between 1988 and 1989.

The trend towards the politicisation (in institutional terms) of Slovene social movements had a bureaucratic correspondence that can be seen in the evolution of the Socialist Youth (*Zveza socialistične mladine Slovenije* – ZSMS). The organisation had provided logistical and legal cover to the social movements and to Odbor, but also gave political coverage inside the socialist system.⁵⁵

The ZSMS held in advance its XIII Congress in late 1989, in which it the delegates decided to transform the organisation into a liberal party. Founded in October 1943 in the context of the anti-fascist resistance, ZSMS introduced itself before 1990 elections as an organisation that “in the last ten years has sought its way out of the autocratic socialism”, claiming “freedom of choice in daily life, in economic and political life”.⁵⁶ In late 1990, the ZSMS adopted the name Liberal Democratic Party (LDS)⁵⁷ and gave up its Yugoslavists and socialists signs. Throughout this process, the former Socialist Youth became the Slovenian example of what, in terms of Slavoj Žižek, is “the technocratic-liberal multiculturalist-tolerant party of the post-political administration”.⁵⁸ According to this author, the predominant liberal ideology is the result of the “post-political repression of the

53 Maja BREZNIK, “Solidarity or What We Were Fighting For”, in *Management Tools. A Workbook for Arts Professionals in East and Central Europe*, ed. by Betsy HEER, New York: Arts International, 1995, 79. A synthesis on artistic and cultural production in Slovenia since the beginning of the 1990s, in Marina GRŽINIČ, “Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK): The Art Groups Laibach, Irwin, and Noordung Cosmokinetic Theater Cabinet – New Strategies in the Nineties”, *Slovene Studies* 15, n° 1-2 (1993), 5.

54 Gal KIRN, “Slovene independence never happened...”, 101.

55 Blaž VURNIK, *Med Marxom in punkom: Vloga Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije pri demokratizaciji Slovenije (1980-1990)*, Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2005, 132-133.

56 KRUŠIČ, ESTERAJHER and VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?!...*, 148.

57 The new party adopted its final name in March 1994: Liberal Democracy of Slovenia.

58 Slavoj Žižek, *Viviendo en el final de los tiempos*, Madrid: Akal, 2010, 7.

Apart from his analysis of liberal ideology, the reference is important as Slavoj Žižek saw the transformation of the ZSMS from his position of candidate for the membership of the Republican presidency in April 1990.

socioeconomic dimension” displaced by concern about ethical and cultural issues.⁵⁹

The case of the ZSMS is paradigmatic in this regard. As recalled Pavel Gantar, one of the founding members of the LDS, the liberals “did not want to be substantially confined to very strong ideas about how society should be and should work [...] What we really assumed as a precondition was a liberal conception of human rights and a democratic constitution of power. For the rest, were open and did not want to be sectarian. We were very pragmatic”.⁶⁰

In terms of the national question, the president of the organisation since June 1988, Jožef Školč, recalls that “at first nobody was talking about independence. At first we were fighting for market freedom and for having a more open country [...] At that time, we all had more or less the same ideas”.⁶¹ On the role the ZSMS would play in the new party system, Gantar said that one of the objectives of the organization in the new system was to play a shock-absorbing role, anticipating the polarization between left and right.⁶² In this regard, in 1990 he stated that “we think that if we can manage to have some 15-20 per cent of the elected bodies, we would have a fairly good chance of providing stability. We wouldn’t say that publically: we say that we want more publically. But 15-20 percent, we think we can get that. Lawyers and professionals like that support us. Managers too. So we are not so restricted to only so-called intelligentsia”.⁶³

The displacement of the socioeconomic concerns, which already was one of the main features of the new social movements, was ultimately reflected in the electoral program with which the organization attended the elections in 1990. In the document, the liberals defended the transformation towards the market economy, with limits placed on respect for the environment and social protection with the guarantee of the State,⁶⁴ specifying that that intervention was “a corrective to the social market system, not the purpose of economic management”.⁶⁵ They also proposed a change in the productive structure of the country, which should replace the “irrational and environmentally harmful industrial activities” by others adapted to “the tradition and the size” of the country, such as transportation, tourism, trade, banking, services and small businesses.

Furthermore, considering that an important part of the work of the new social movements was developed under the umbrella of the ZSMS, it is not surprising that the program of the organisation was also the most elaborated and

59 Ibid., 149.

60 Pavel GANTAR, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013.

Pavel Gantar was an activist of the punk movement and MP for the LDS between 1990 and 2007.

61 Jožef ŠKOLČ, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013.

Jožef Školč was the president of the ZSMS-LDS from 1988 to 1992.

62 Pavel GANTAR, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013

63 Interview of Pavel Gantar with John Feffer, “Punks and Professors”, *John Feffer* (blog). <http://www.johnfeffer.com/punks-and-professors/> (05’01’2015).

64 KRUŠIČ, ESTERAJHER and VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?!...*, 148-149.

65 Ibid., 152.

rich in proposals among all of the parties. Thus, claims of the feminist movement, proposals for the protection of children's rights, ideas about the integration of minorities and a framework for adaptation of immigrants – whose eventual arrival was anticipated due to the prosperity brought by the perspectives of the process of European integration – were included.⁶⁶

In the late eighties, therefore, the ZSMS broke-up with important aspects of its own past in substantial terms. However, in other aspects, like its position in the Slovene balance of power, the new-born liberals held a relevant position. In this regard, it can be noted that its programmatic change was not due to a change in the attitude of the membership, but taking advantage of the window of opportunity that marked the beginning of the transitions in Eastern Europe and, especially, the impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall.⁶⁷ As Školč recalls, prior to the relaunching of the ZSMS in 1989, there were a significant number of members who did not consider themselves as socialists.⁶⁸

The break with the past was not an extemporaneous decision and should be put in the context of the steps that were taking other players in the sovereigntist process. The ZSMS assumed the sovereigntist postulates that became widespread after the intervention of JLA in June 1988 and the beginning of JBTZ process. Thus, in its manifesto of 1989, the “primacy of the federated sovereign units in their jurisdictions” and the inalienable rights of the “republics or States”, including unilaterally assuming federal powers (such as defence or foreign policy), were emphasized.⁶⁹ In that vein, the ZSMS proposed a reform of the federation, transforming it into a new entity in which decisions would be made under unanimity of the republics.

The reforming communists: Nation-builders

Between 1988 and 1989, the discussion on the shape of the state within the League of Communist of Yugoslavia (*Zveza komunistov Jugoslavije – ZKJ*) – exposed in different ways throughout the decade – reached higher levels of tension. Differing visions were represented by the Slovene and the Serbian branches of the organisation. According to Milan Kučan, “Yugoslavia was a multinational state in which a balance between functionality and national equality was necessary. At the moment when national equality was jeopardized, functionality happened to be in danger. As a result, there was a need to consider how to retain functionality [...] Basically there were two concepts crashing in Yugoslavia: On the one hand, the

66 Ibid., 206.

67 Pavel GANTAR, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013.

68 Jožef ŠKOLČ, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2013.

69 KRUŠIČ, ESTERAJHER and VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?!...*, 170-171.

notion of the nation state, based on the idea of one person - one vote; on the other, the notion of one nation - one vote, based on a totally different premise. The first option was a form advocated by the Serbs because they were the greatest nation of Yugoslavia”.⁷⁰

Whereas the recentralisation of Serbia was not opposed (*Zveza socialistične mladine Slovenije – ZSMS*), as such in Ljubljana, the fact that the leadership of the League of Communists of Serbia would have control over several votes in the federal presidency provoked greater disconformity in the League of Communist of Slovenia (*Zveza komunistov Slovenije – ZKS*). The projection of the Slovenian discontent over Serbia was not only the result of rejection of the policies of the latter in Kosovo; in fact, the situation had two major advantages that Slovenians were able to exploit. On the one hand, it opened the door to the establishment of partnerships with other republics within the confederal scheme that the Slovene communists were handling. On the other, the situation allowed them to wave the flag of human rights in the context of emerging political changes in Europe. In terms of an observer, “the Slovenes saw Kosovo as their main card for arguing and they used it very efficiently. The Slovene leadership understood that it was the best way to portray the situation in black and white terms [...] In the West, given the experiences of the Cold War and its ideological arguments; there was always the issue of human rights used in front of the USSR and its satellites. The Slovenes understood this context. If you want to get Western support, if you want to get sympathy, you need to use the human rights card. You cannot use it with Slovenia. How do you argue that the Slovenes are being discriminated, harassed or persecuted? You can find a group over which you can make a case for, and that group was the Albanians. The Slovenes, in a very calculated way, began to support the Albanians for their own interests”.⁷¹

At this point it is useful to remind that the Slovene representatives in federal institutions not only did not raise their voices against the repression of Albanians early in the 1980s, but even some of them, like Stane Dolanc, conducted it. Furthermore, as Woodward notes, requests made by the Slovenes in the federal constitutional reform process of 1988 were accepted as the result of an agreement that included the Serbian request of the reduction of Kosovo's autonomy.⁷² In the new context, however, Kučan began to accuse Serb communists of deliberately stirring nationalism, while the press started to compare Slobodan Milošević with the Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.⁷³

70 Milan KUČAN, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2011.

Milan Kučan was president of the League of Communists of Slovenia (1986-1989) and president of the Republic of Slovenia (1990-2002).

71 Obrad KESIČ, interview with the author, Washington D.C., 2011.

Obrad Kesić is senior partner with TSM Global Consultants and former advisor of Milan Panič.

72 Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995, 98.

73 David AIKMAN, “Communism O Nationalism!”, *Time* 132, n°. 17 (1988): 46-9.

Amidst the crisis of the ZKJ, Slovene communists decided to close ranks with the new republican actors in an act that can be described as the staging of the configuration of the new Slovene ideological bureaucracies. The new political class, as government and opposition,⁷⁴ appeared on the 27 of February 1989 in Cankarjev dom in solidarity with the Albanian miners who were in an underground hunger strike – an act of protest against the imposition from Belgrade of the new leadership in Kosovo.⁷⁵ As Gow and Carmichael note, the event marked the culmination of the new homogenisation of Slovene politics through the discourse of human rights and the development of political pluralism.⁷⁶ In the vein of liberal democracies, the event anticipated a system in which a left and right wings would coexist around certain common values and approaches.

The projection of the external enemy in the act is an aspect that should be treated subtly, since, although the federal flag chaired the event, and although miners were claimed as defenders of Yugoslavia – Lev Kreft, then member of the Central Committee of the ZKS says that at that time the Slovenian communists behaved as “romantic Yugoslavs”⁷⁷ – the event was nothing more than a reaffirmation of the sovereignty of Slovenia. In fact, the act projected the idea that the new Slovenia was to be built without breaking the whole Yugoslav symbolic legacy; Yugoslavia was not pretended to be considered as an historical error, but even as the political realisation in which Slovenia could develop its national institutions. Somehow, in a time of crisis, the Slovene Communists toasted to their inheritance and paid tribute to their symbols, whereas rejecting the efforts of federal institutions to solve the Yugoslav crisis.

In the short and medium terms, complaints about the situation of Albanians became less and less interesting for Slovene actors, especially after the republican government withdrew the Slovene police officers serving in Kosovo later that year.

74 The resulting document of the day was supported by the official organisations, the new political parties, Odbor and different organisations from civil society: “Dokument št. 22. Proti uvedbi izrednega stanja, za mir in sožitje na Kosovu”, 27/02/1989, in *Viri o demokratizaciji in osamosvojitvi Slovenije (I. Del: Opozicija in oblast)*, ed. by Božo REPE, Ljubljana: Arhivsko društvo Slovenije, 2002, 168.

75 Laura SILBER and Allan LITTLE. *The death of Yugoslavia*, London: Penguin, 1996, 64.

76 James GOW y Cathie CARMICHAEL, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe*, London: Hurst & Company, 2000, 150-156.

77 Lev KREFT, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2009.

Lev Kreft is a former member of the Central Committee of the ZKS.

Ideology

Justifying the ‘return’ to Europe

The reconfiguration of Slovenian ideological elites happened as a process of addition of new groups to a previously existing bureaucratic structure. Between 1988 and 1989 the actors that in the previous decades had a certain proximity to the ideological socialist bureaucracies, accelerated their access into the system, while the system itself was re-defining its legitimacy paradigm and, thus, its patterns for allowing the access to the institutions. The new legitimacy paradigm appeared as a set of ideological elements that justified the new scenario, in which new actors began to appear at an equal level as the communists. In this case, according to Močnik, the ideology that gathered together the horizontal axis of elites in the process of addition and, in turn, maintained the political domination of Slovenian ideological bureaucracies over the population in a vertical axis, was nationalism.⁷⁸

A feature of the case of Slovenia was related to the argument on the existence of a “defensive” nationalism used by a part of the Slovenian elites, which was, in turn, an expression of the common victimhood present in all nationalist discourses in the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia.⁷⁹ An evidence of this can be found in the discourse of France Bučar, who became the president of the Assembly in 1990, as he states that “we were pushed towards independence by circumstances and by Milošević”.⁸⁰ According to Bučar, Slovenia’s history is the history of an oppressed nation, which does not exclude the period of federal Yugoslavia: “After our final victory [in World War II] we were more oppressed than ever [...] No one could dream of independence because we were under the dominion of Yugoslav army”. In this case, Slovenian nationalism, illustrates a scenario in which the Slovene people was holding “a struggle against the Yugoslav homogenisation”, which was “good and necessary against an oppressive and imperialist will”.⁸¹ In similar terms, Dimitrij Rupel would repeatedly state that Yugoslavia represented a “socialist empire” that based its existence in “myths and falsifications”, from which free nations of Central and Eastern Europe would scape in order to develop “their talents and speak their original languages”.⁸²

Rupel’s exercise is an example of the representation of Slovenia as the

78 Rastko MOČNIK, “Nationalism, National Question and the Left /// Samary, Čurković, Močnik, Baier ||| 9th May 2013”, 6th Subversive Festival, Zagreb, “Skriptatv”, *Youtube* (1:55:19), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRpTBG3Nj40>, (05/01/2015).

79 Francisco VEJGA, *La fábrica de las fronteras: Guerras de secesión yugoslavas, 1991-2001*, Madrid: Alianza, 2011, 51.

80 France BUČAR, interview with the author, Bled, 2011.

France Bučar was the president of the Assambley of the Republic from 1990 to 1992.

81 Matteo ALBERTINI, “Una semiotica del nazionalismo: la Primavera Slovena (1987-1992)”, *PECOB’s Paper Series 20*, Università di Bologna, 2012, 27.

82 Mark THOMPSON, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia*, London: Hutchinson Radius, 1992, 45. Thompson was Mladina’s correspondent in London when he wrote his work.

“natural state”, using Lene Hansen’s terms.⁸³ In this case, the aim was to naturalize the Slovenian statehood through the caricature of the *repressor* entity. These cases could only be successful with the cooperation of relevant political actors. Thus, in mid-1989, in the context of the May Declaration, Rupel stated that “in times like these [...] institutions require a large consensus”. In fact, although the incarnation of the values he was supposed to be fighting for, he thought that Milan Kučan – then president of the League of Communists of Slovenia – was an indispensable man because he “believes in the institutions and pluralism”.⁸⁴

At that time, the Slovene communists had joined the opinion generated from Odbor and had assumed the case against “the four of Ljubljana” as an attack on the Slovene sovereignty because of the fact that the trial took place in Serbo-Croatian language.⁸⁵ In that context, Kučan stated at a session of the Central Committee of the ZKS that “the Slovene nation was formed through their culture and their language and has been threatened by Italians, Germans and Hungarians through history. So far, we have not had a proper state to protect our language [...] The Slovenes cannot be considered as theirs a state that cannot guarantee the free use of the Slovenian language and its equality and that they cannot consider it as a state that guarantees freedom, sovereignty and equality of the Slovenian people”.⁸⁶

In late 1989, the main actors of the regime had assumed those views. The Socialist Alliance had been subjected to intense internal change over the decade, which eased its own transition towards the assumption of an ethno-nationalist point of view.⁸⁷ After the approval of republican constitutional amendments in September 1989 – that accounted the acceptance of ethno-nationalist discourse by the institutions – the Slovene premier, Dušan Šinigoj, went further and asked himself what was wrong with stating that Slovenia was part of Central Europe if “it is historically obviously that it is there”, adding that “Slovenia is vitally inserted into the European space, while Yugoslav politics can hardly face it”.⁸⁸ In this regard, one of the ideological elements that legitimised the Slovenian sovereignty process was the European vocation, shared by the Slovenian elites at a time when the European integration process was entering in a new phase.

An important landmark took place in December 1989, when the communists held their XI Congress, in which the positions in front of the federation were justified by relying on its European vocation. But the new political organisations

83 Lene HANSEN, “Slovenian Identity. State-Building on the Balkan Border”. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 21, n° 4 (1996), 437.

84 Paolo RUMIZ, *Danubio: Storie di una Nuova Europa*, Pordenone: Edizioni Studio Tesi, 1990, 175-176.

85 Beáta HUSZKA, “The Discursive Construction of the Slovenian and Croatian Independence Movement”, Working Paper, Európai Összehasonlító Kisebbségkutatások Közalapítvány, Budapest, 2009, 33.

86 Other speeches during that session went in that direction: Beáta HUSZKA, “The Discursive Construction of the Slovenian and Croatian Independence Movement”, 33.

87 Paolo RUMIZ, *Danubio...*, 175.

88 Beáta HUSZKA, “The Discursive Construction of the Slovenian and Croatian Independence Movement”, 167.

had already assumed that orientation from the very beginning. Thus, liberals included in their electoral program a “European Declaration” that had been drafted in September 1988. The text defined its members as “European citizens” entitled to “economic development, prosperity and democracy”.⁸⁹ The Liberals considered themselves “tired of the economic crisis, ideological wars and struggles between nations” and condemned the Yugoslav foreign policy “that isolates us from our historical-cultural, economic and political context”. The Declaration was in line with the message that was beginning to arrive from European centers of power, considering statements like the following: “We do not care anymore about the old Europe, Yalta, the hot and cold wars and the Iron Curtain. Our Europe is the one of economic success and political and cultural pluralism, which’s values are freedom, human rights, pluralism and democracy”. The electoral program of the liberals, updated in 1990, included the long-term goal of joining the European Community.⁹⁰

In the same context, the anti-communist right wing made references to the process of European integration. In this case, again, it is especially interesting the story-tale of Dimitrij Rupel, influential figure in *Nova Revija* and example of the formation of a *respectful* opposition (from the socialist system perspective) along the eighties. In a special issue of the magazine published in the summer of 1991 for an international audience, Dimitrij Rupel, then Minister of Foreign Affairs and figure well connected with the German and Austrian elites, said: “The foreign policy of Slovenia will be directed towards Europe above all; that means pursuing the inclusion of Slovenia in the political and economic integration of Europe with the aim of becoming a member with full rights in the European Community”.⁹¹

Burying systemic claims in the name of the nation

Slovenian nationalism was performed through different expressions throughout the sovereigntist process. In the case of political elites, the arguments did not involve a complete rupture; in fact, arguments of the sovereigntist process were an evolution of existing arguments in the discourse of the position of Slovenia in Federal Yugoslavia. Thus, the Slovenian framework was projected as the only one in which a democratic and inclusive society, economic development and national emancipation could take place.

89 KRUŠIČ, ESTERAJHER and VUGRINEC, *Koga voliti?!...*, 168.

90 Ibid., 168-169.

91 Dimitrij RUPEL, “Slovenia – A New Member of the International Community”, *The Case of Slovenia*, Ljubljana: Nova Revija, 1991, 90.

As Huszka explains, the prevalence of different arguments, far from being arbitrary, attended to the circumstances of each moment.⁹² Thus, the arguments related to the development of civil society took greater importance in the context of the confrontation between the Republican elites and federal institutions along the eighties. In this case, criticism levelled by new social movements was not tied to a defined state ideology and ended up by falling in anti-political attitudes and, hence, reinforcing the power of the official ideological bureaucracies, increasingly oriented towards nationalism.⁹³

Although it was developed by a part of the intellectuality in the early eighties, the ethno-nationalist discourse gained full force in the spring of 1988, after Odbor proposed the language issue as the main claim of the popular movement; in terms of one of the detainees in the spring 1988, it was “the struggle against the abolition of the Slovene in the Slovenian capital”.⁹⁴ In this vein, Gantar speaks about the mobilisation of a “silence majority” through the linguistic question.⁹⁵

The extension of ethno-nationalist mobilisation brought a number of implications, the most important of which was the deactivation of the discourse and the demands of the new social movements. An exceptional spectator explains the situation by stating that the instrumentalisation of the language issue was a “conclusive proof that the trial was directed against Slovenia, so feminists, punks and veterans closed ranks behind the accused”.⁹⁶ Another indicator was the finding that, after the trial, *Mladina* circulation began to decline gradually, to the extent that, in April 1990, only half the copies were sold in relation to 1988. In 1991, the “anticlerical and anti-nationalist points of view of *Mladina* were increasingly unpopular”.⁹⁷ The weekly and the social movements facilitated the mobilization until 1988 and ended up by giving momentum to nationalist mobilisation.

At the same time, it is important to mention that arguments deployed throughout those years were the same that justified the subsequent political regime. The introduction of the ethno-nationalist discourse also provided ideological coverage for the aspirations of Slovene elites in order to join the European integration process. In this vein, the goal was seemingly achievable, given the historical connections between Slovenia with Austria and Italy, the standard of living of its inhabitants and the existing ethnic homogeneity in the Republic.⁹⁸

92 Beáta HUSZKA, “The Discursive Construction of the Slovenian and Croatian Independence Movement”, 49.

93 Paul STUBBS, “Nationalisms, Globalization and Civil Society in Croatia and Slovenia”, *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 19 (1996), 4-9

94 “The trial ends, Zavrl comments”, *Ljubljana Domestic Service*, 26/07/1988, FBIS-EEU, quoted in Beáta Huszka, “The Discursive Construction of the Slovenian and Croatian Independence Movement”, 31.

95 Interview of Pavel Gantar with Beáta Huszka: Beáta HUSZKA, “The Discursive Construction of the Slovenian and Croatian Independence Movement”, 31.

96 Mark THOMPSON, *A Paper House...*, 45.

97 Ibid., 46.

98 A sample in Rudi RIZMAN, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, College Station: Texas A&M, 2006, 27.

The existence of a “progressive nationalism”, featured through the projection of positive attitudes towards “the world community and universal standards”,⁹⁹ justified the search for a unique way to Europe without the other Yugoslav peoples. A sample can be found in the work of Tine Hribar, by ruling out the possibility of democratizing Yugoslavia through the process of European integration because: “[although] the idea is good, it sounds too good to be true. The Slovenes cannot simply move the subnational level to transnational. They cannot skip the national level without putting their ethnic identity in danger [...] Only a sovereign nation can deliver some sovereignty and transfer it to a transnational community”.¹⁰⁰

That point is derived from a notion of Europe as a protector of the freedoms and rights of nations. Hribar¹⁰¹ and other authors, such as Rupel, make are samples of this. For the later, “The EU is a very attractive option for, in particular, the Central and Eastern European countries. Most of these do not see the EU as an exclusively economic opportunity, but also as an effective guarantor and or protection against various authoritarian threats from countries farther east or southeast of them. The Central and East European countries want, *tout court*, to join Europe”.¹⁰² Contrary views were silenced. Before the proclamation of independence, the economist Aleksander Bejt, warned that “independence depends on the size”, referring to the qualities of the European institutions to defend the interests of small countries. After making that statement, he was beaten in a park in Ljubljana.¹⁰³

But the search for a direct path to integration into the European Community also had a substantive justification. The mechanism of detachment between rich and poor regions was working in Yugoslavia, at least since the start of the systemic crisis of the federation in the eighties. Political independence from Yugoslavia allowed Slovenia to break with the obligation to finance a portion of the needs of the less developed regions of the federation. Thus, the discourse of defensive nationalism can also be found in the economic aspect, in which there is also an underlying victimhood. An example can be seen in the work of Janko Prunk, a member of the Social Democrats of Jože Pučnik since 1989:¹⁰⁴ “[Until the end of the seventies] the whole economic system and legislation were essentially arranged to benefit the most numerous nation, the Serbs. However, Slovenia achieved a level of productivity and national income 2.5 times greater

99 Ibidem.

100 Valentin HRIBAR, “The Slovenes and European Transnationality”, in *The Case of Slovenia*, Ljubljana: Nova Revija, 1991, 33.

101 Ibid., 36.

102 Dimitrij RUPEL, “Slovenia and Central Europe’s March towards the EU: The Restrictive Role of the European Great Powers”, *Slovene Studies* 17, n° 1-2 (1995), 84.

103 Igor MEKINA, “Slovenia and the European Union”, *AIM*, 31/03/2001, <http://www.aimpress.ch/dyn/trae/archive/data/200103/10331-002-trae-lju.htm> (05/01/2015).

104 Between 1992 and 1993, Prunk served as a minister without portfolio for the Slovenes in the World and Nationalities in Slovenia.

than the Yugoslav average. This figure demonstrates the creative capacity of the Slovenes and the complete Western European life-style".¹⁰⁵

Economic nationalism emerged strongly in late 1989, at the same time than the Serbian trade blockade, and became the prevalent discursive framework throughout 1990, to the extent that it played an important role in the referendum campaign of December 1990.¹⁰⁶ This is closely related to the change of direct adversary of Slovenia according to the nationalist discourse, which, after the break up of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, was represented in the figure of Ante Marković and its reformist government and the Yugoslav People's Army.

Concluding remarks

Slovene 1989 started in May 1988, after the arrest of Janez Janša and the Foundation of Odbor, and finished in September 1989, when the ideological configuration of the sovereigntist process was institutionalised through a substantial constitutional reform carried out by the Assembly of the Republic, still solely ruled by the communists. Odbor and the developments after the "Slovenian spring" of 1988 – which triggered nationalist mobilisation – accelerated the pluralisation of the system and advanced the creation of new political parties in the country. The result of this process was the introduction of political pluralism on the basis of a consensus on the primacy of the political life of the Republic over Yugoslavia. In this regard, Miran Potrč reminds that, for him, as president of the Assembly, the introduction of the "multiparty system was important because it was the basis for Slovenia to adopt a democratic legal system without a revolution".¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile a new ideological system was being conformed, institutional elites took the opportunity to assume the claims of the ideological bureaucracies, which had been synthesized by a Constitutional Convention that had brought together different actors in 1988, from elements of the Socialist Youth and the new social movements to intellectuals of the nationalist right. At the end of this period, 16 months later, the League of Communists of Slovenia assumed proposals for constitutional reform initially sponsored by the opposition, causing a major institutional crisis that would affect the entire Yugoslav state – *de facto* turning it into a confederation – and, ultimately, eased the path to its dissolution. As stated by Potrč, "amendments, on the one hand, represented a reaction to the situation

in Yugoslavia, but on the other were a response to the situation in Slovenia, at a time where new civil parties and movements demanded changes in the Slovenian political system".¹⁰⁸ On the other side of the coin, in the process of preparing amendments, all the relevant Slovene political actors imposed their confederal view to the whole country, definitely denying Yugoslavia and its institutions.¹⁰⁹

Looking ahead to later events, amendments September 1989 involved the creation of a flexible structure that could be adapted both to the principles of all of the actors involved in its preparation. But mostly the changes opened the door to the independence of the Republic. In terms of Kučan, "the guiding principles of amendments were the principles of legality and legitimacy. All decisions that followed relied on the amendments of 1989".¹¹⁰ In December, the Slovene communists took on their agenda the new ideas and profiled themselves as the left wing of a new political regime. In the following month they left the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, after the majority of delegates attending its XIV Congress did not assume the organisational reform proposed by them, through which they pretended to transport their confederal idea to the party organisation. Henceforth, the only institutions that continued to have a federal vision were the Yugoslav government and the Army.

¹⁰⁵ Janko PRUNK, "The Origins of an Independent Slovenia", in *Making a New Nation: The Formation of Slovenia*, ed. by Danica FINK-HAFTER and John R. ROBBINS, Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1997, 27.

¹⁰⁶ Beáta HUSZKA, "The Discursive Construction of the Slovenian and Croatian Independence Movement", 39-40.

¹⁰⁷ Miran POTRČ, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2011.

Miran Potrč was president of the Assambley of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia when the constitutional amendments were passed.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁹ Robert M. HAYDEN, *Blueprints for a House Divided: The Constitutional Logic of the Yugoslav Conflicts*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 35.

¹¹⁰ Milan KUČAN, interview with the author, Ljubljana, 2011.

SAŽETAK

SLOVENSKA 1989.: ELITISTIČKA KONSTRUKCIJA NACIONALNE DEMOKRACIJE

Carlos González VILLA

Slovenska 1989. započela je u svibnju 1988., nakon uhićenja Janeza Janše i stvaranja Odbora, a završena je u rujnu 1989., kada je ideološka konfiguracija procesa nezavisnosti institucionalizirana kroz značajnu ustavnu reformu vođenu od strane Republičke skupštine, koju su u potpunosti vodili komunisti. Odbor i događanja nakon "Slovenskog proljeća" 1988., koji je pokrenuo nacionalnu mobilizaciju, ubrzali su pluralizaciju sistema i potaknuli stvaranje novih političkih stranaka u zemlji.

Kroz analizu slovenske tranzicije moguće je promatrati 1989. kao vrijeme u kojem je društvena mobilizacija uglavnom imala pomoćnu ulogu u političkim promjenama u odnosu na političke elite, karakterizirane konsolidacijom nove paradigme zakonitosti i, štoviše, uključivanjem u proces nezavisnosti koji se vodio u toj jugoslavenskoj republici. Tijekom tog razdoblja slovenske ideološke elite su sa svoje nacionalističke perspektive razgraničile zajednički politički prostor označen konfrontacijskim stavovima prema jugoslavenskim federalnim institucijama.

Taj proces je započeo u osamdesetima međutim suradnja između ideoloških elita (uključujući i Savez komunista te rastuće, utjecajne alternativne grupe, kao primjerice anti-komunističke opozicije s jedne strane, te novi društveni pokreti s druge) zahuktali su se nakon uhićenja "ljubljske četvorke" u svibnju i lipnju 1988., te posebice nakon što su bili optuženi na srpsko-hrvatskom jeziku u vojnoj jurisdikciji. To je potaknulo val prosvjeda u kojima su nacionalni zahtjevi postepeno dobivali na važnosti naspram zahtjeva za provođenjem zakonitih procesa. U takvoj atmosferi 1989. je bila godina institucionalizacije liberalne demokracije temeljene na odbacivanju jugoslavenskih institucija s nacionalističke perspektive. Liberalna demokracija i integracija Europe bili su projekcija nacionalnih pokreta. Nove političke stranke preuzele su vodeće uloge u tom procesu mijenjajući društvene pokrete te pokapajući njihove inicijalne antisistemske zahtjeve putem.