

EDITORIAL NOTE:
QUO VADIS SLOVENIA? “THE (RE)BIRTH OF A NATION”
(RE)IMAGINED

As Post-Tito Yugoslavia’s central authority waned, republican autonomy unleashed what proved to be fatal centrifugal forces—initially, most prominently in Slovenia. Throughout the decade of the 1980’s, the cumbersome rotating Presidential Council of Yugoslavia proved increasingly inept as a substitute for Tito’s powerful, one-man executive dictatorship, which, since World War II, had imposed on Yugoslavia’s multi-ethnic and potentially conflict-ridden population a grudging equilibrium. By decade’s end, Slovenia’s long-muted but mounting resentments of its involuntary membership in a Serb-dominated federation rapidly evolved into well-articulated calls for *bona fide* independence.

During 1990 and 1991 more and more nationalist personalities (from con-Communist artists to high-ranking, disgruntled Communist functionaries) voiced a case for an independent Slovenia. Some did so eloquently, many resorted to raw polemics, but all possessed a deep familiarity with Slovenia’s past and concern for her cultural future. All were aware of an on-going century-old contemporary struggle for the ethnic survival of their small nation, a people (*Kulturvolk*) surrounded by larger or more aggressive cultural entities (Austrian-German, Hungarian, Italian, and Serbo-Croatian) that threatened the demographic and cultural existence of all Slovenes.

With this issue of *Nationalities Papers*, readers are offered an opportunity to savor a cross-segment of these voices which have helped articulate Slovene national aspirations. Each essay is a part of a complex process which re-ignited Slovene national consciousness and quickened the Slovene nation to break out of the debilitating confines of the Yugoslav Federation to establish the first Slovene state within the borders of the Slovene republic. In each case, one encounters a very personal, oftentimes a rather impressionistic, even idiosyncratic, elaboration and perception of Slovenia’s past, present and future. Yet, despite their differences, all have one common goal, the justification of Slovenia as an independent country whose legitimate (natural) place is in the heart of Europe, as against on its periphery in Yugoslavia (whether monarchic or Titoist). In their totality, the essays amount to a skeptical collective vision of a new old-Slovenia. Together, they encompass a re-imagined Slovenia.

In essence, Benedict Anderson is correct in claiming national identity to

be a product of the mind, a creative but artificial construct, to which a critical number of people subscribe, with sufficient tenacity to actualize their dream. Each author participated actively in the realization of the Slovene secession independence movement. Each makes clear that together they constitute but the most recent generation of Slovenes in search of a consensus of national identity and a normal role in the international arena, *i.e.*, within Europe.

Via Europaea

From various vantage points, from the geographical to the historical and cultural, Slovenia is represented here as an integral part of European civilization, of Central Europe in particular. The break from Yugoslavia is portrayed as an escape from an artificial and/or alien context. All agree that Slovenia's primary post-independence task is to reassert itself as a legitimate member of a European Community of Nations. The Titoist (Communist) past is depicted as a half-century of unnatural severance from mainstream Europe. With independence, post-Communist Slovene national consciousness must forge a *Via Europaea*—a way back into the fold of European civilization. The return, all claim, should be relatively simple historic Slovene traditions have all been preserved more or less intact. (This editor, though, is less optimistic: there are many contrary European traditions, often each conflicting with another. Time will tell “Whiter Slovenia?”)

Nationalities Papers has deliberately assembled a sampling of Slovene national thinking from the immediate pre- and post-independence years as a resource whose value and significance, it is hoped, will evolve as the post-Yugoslav era matures. This issue was designed to serve as a case study, a research resource of one of a dozen ethnonationalisms that have sprung up in the post-Communist world, from the Adriatic to the furthest regions of former Soviet Central Asia.

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