

East European Literary Magazines 1945 – 2004 in Slovenia and Italy

ONLINE LECTURE 1

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Moderator: dr. Jože Dežman, Director of National Museum of Contemporary History

1. Looking for Opposition and Different Kinds of Thinking: *Nova revija*

Author: dr. Marko Štepec, Museum Councillor at the National Museum of Contemporary History

The text will present a brief overview of the creation and the writing process of *Nova revija* (New Magazine), first published in 1982. In June 1980, a group of 60 Slovenian intellectuals suggested the establishment of a new cultural magazine. This was the time following the death of President Josip Broz Tito, the time of a growing economic and social crisis when demands for democracy started to unfold. Despite intense political and media pressure, *Nova revija* survived and became the core of the formation of the civil movement, the opposition's drive to democracy, and later to independence. The most notorious was the 57th issue with articles on the Slovenian national program. It was published on 20 February 1987. Its importance grew due to the alertness of the Communist Party to any critical judgment of the society, especially numerous taboo subjects on history, the Second World War, the revolution and the role of the Communist Party. Words and different ways of thinking were extremely powerful in an ideologically monistic but religiously and nationally differentiated society. Since the 1980s, signs of disintegration of the Yugoslav federation had emerged and the government fear of political competition had increased.

The reason why literary magazines were so important in Slovenia can be given to the fact that language was the most essential element of Slovenian national identity. *Nova revija* thus continued its tradition of publishing literary magazines in a completely different context than that of the Yugoslav socialist and one-party system. Before the second world war the two leading magazines—*Ljubljanski zvon* (Ljubljana's Bell) and *Dom in svet* (Home and the World)—reflected the liberal and conservative views of Slovenian culture and politics. After the war and the revolution, which cut deeply into the structure of the political and cultural area, the magazines, financed, controlled and later removed by the state, tried to fill in the gap. Despite strict political control and self-censorship, individual literary articles were more or less successful in preserving the original purpose and significance of literary magazines. The magazines *Beseda* (Word) and *Revija 57* (Magazine 57) to *Perspektive* (Perspectives) and *Nova revija* (New Magazine) as well as other less known and successful attempts of realization of the right of freedom of opinion provide us with evidence of censorship, forbidden articles and stories about searching for Slovenian dissidents. Unfortunately, not only concepts but also people and their relatives, who were wiretapped, monitored, punished and censored will be discussed. The paper will present some selected parts of the preserved documents.

In the aforementioned magazines, excellent texts and poems were found, placing their authors at the pinnacle of Slovenian literature and thought.

2. A Case of *Mladina*—How the Magazine Won Freedom of Speech through Its Writing even under the Communist Regime

Author: doc. dr. Bernard Nežmah, sociologist, columnist and professor at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

The magazine *Mladina* was founded in 1943 as a replica of the Soviet model, the Communist Party's *Komsomol* magazine. In the 1980s, it played a central role in the process of democratization and expansion in the field of free speech; not as a dissident newspaper, but through a process of small steps, affirming the principle of detabooing the society. Through its attitude of youthful rebellion and unconventionality, it introduced a specific language of criticism, in which it ironized and subverted the discourse of the ruling party. Formally it was a weekly newspaper, but its journalists and editors were not graduates of universities of political sciences, which generated the *forma mentis* of journalists in the dominant media; they graduated from faculties of humanities in the fields of philosophy, sociology, comparative literature and art. They were not only looking for new genres and principles of writing but were also using cartoons and photographs. Since they were not a part of the journalistic establishment, they were creating an alternative form of journalism that did not conform to the directives from the communist regime to the media. Instead of following the inventory of reality from the point of view of the ideology of the Communist Party, they problematized the ruling rituals and *ex nihilo* created journalism that took as its starting point the free reporting of events. On one hand, this attitude attracted a wide readership and increased circulation, but on the other, it was subjected to constant forms of censorship, trials and confiscation. After a decade-long slow march, they achieved the abolition of confiscating newspapers through court battles.

3. Bridge over Troubled Water

Author: Alenka Puhar, Slovenian translator, journalist, human rights activist, and expert in psychohistory

“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent,” runs Churchill's famous statement (March 1946). “East of that line, Communist parties are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control.” Quite the right place then—Trieste, on the other side of the Trieste Gulf, at the end of the iron curtain and the East-West division—to look for magazines and journals that paved the way towards democracy. Trieste and Gorizia (plus the surrounding countryside) were incorporated into Italy (after the Second World War) with a significant Slovenian minority cut off from the rest of Slovenia, i.e. Yugoslavia. The dividing line was not just a state border, it was fortified into an iron curtain. There were differences in a vast number of regulations—regarding press freedom, freedom of speech, organization and participation in various political activities. In Slovenia, it was almost impossible to start a journal, whereas this was quite simple to do in Italy. Many were established in Trieste; most of them didn't last, as there was never adequate financial support. They were difficult to obtain in Yugoslavia, because the import of books and publications was under strict control. This was the authority of UDBA (the state security service). The most influential and long-lived among these journals were *Most* (the Bridge) and *Zaliv* (the Gulf). *Most* came out in 1964, *Zaliv* in 1966, but they both gave up somewhere between 1990 and 1992, on the same optimistic note: There is now enough freedom and democracy in the “majority-land” for the minority in Trieste to take a break... Both magazines followed the traditional concept: a dose of poetry, a dose of prose, reviews of literary works, art criticism and articles on current events with a strong interest in the most controversial issues, including recent history. These were studied, remembered, described, cross-examined, analyzed and discussed. Of course, most of the attention of authorities in Yugoslavia was

directed towards the latter, non-literary subjects. The court had to intervene in three cases—against the citizens of Yugoslavia, of course, as it was impossible to punish the publishers and authors with Italian citizenship; they were usually chastised with a prohibition of entering Yugoslavia, but the most common practice was various forms of threat. To sum up, the publications from Trieste, created by two small groups of Slovenians living abroad—members of a traditional national minority, as well as emigrants—kept alive the idea that different opinions should be allowed and expressed.

4. Cross-cultural Interventions: *La battana*, (*Zaliv* and *Most*)

Author: dr. Sergia Adamo, Professor at University of Trieste

In the North Adriatic area, after World War Two, the role of literary magazines as arenas of broad political discussions became particularly evident thanks to some intellectual experiences that developed from one side and the other of the iron curtain. It is interesting to observe how different cultural projects shared similar stances in terms of critical attitudes, linguistic politics and attention to cultural communities of the minorities. *La battana* started its publications in Italian in 1964 in Rijeka with the aim of overcoming marginalization and enhance cultural dialogue through the Italian and Yugoslavian borders.

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