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# TESTIMONIES: INTERVIEW WITH DR MANCA KOŠIR, MEMBER OF NOVA REVIJA'S EDITORIAL BOARD



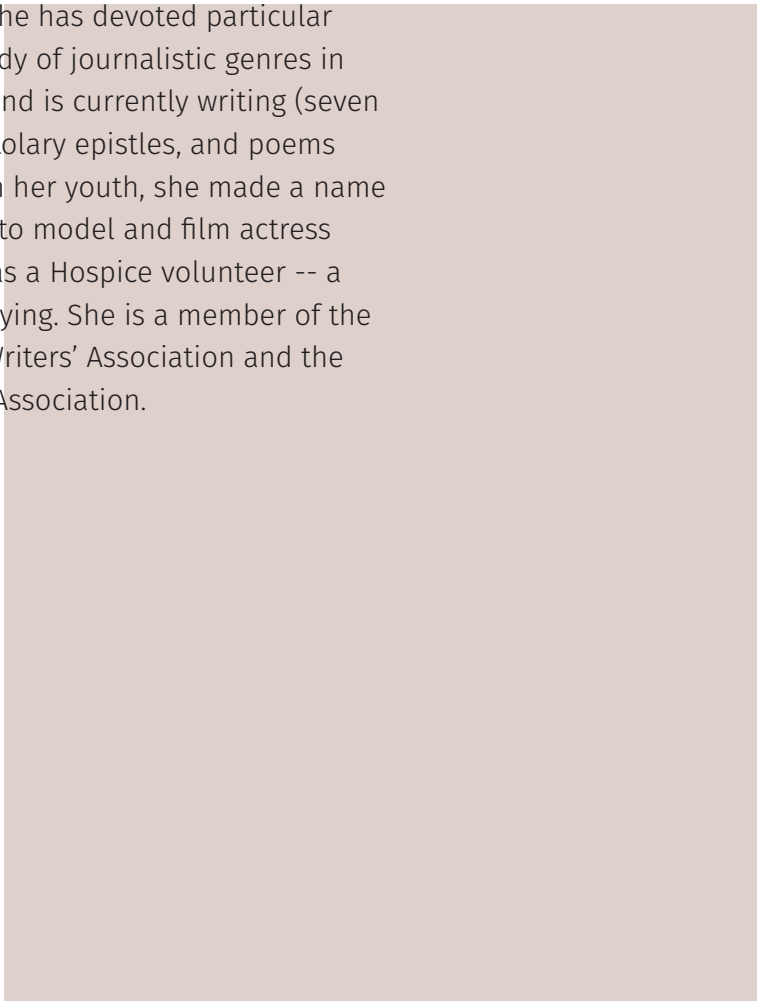
Photo: Maja Slavec.

Written by **Dr Marko Štepec**, historian

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**Dr Manca Košir** is a university professor, journalist, publicist, and writer. She was one of the signatories of the initiative for the creation of *Nova revija* and has been a member of its editorial board since its foundation in 1982. Her extensive bibliography of scientific, professional, and popular science articles, journalistic contributions, and books makes her one of the most respected and publicly recognizable educated women. She has devoted particular attention to the study of journalistic genres in her research work and is currently writing (seven books) essays, epistolary epistles, and poems (four collections). In her youth, she made a name for herself as a photo model and film actress and is well-known as a Hospice volunteer -- a companion to the dying. She is a member of the PEN International Writers' Association and the Slovenian Reading Association.



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**You were one of the three women to sign the petition for the magazine *Nova revija* on June 10th, 1980 and you were the only woman on the magazine's editorial board at the start of its runtime. What do you think was most important in this support, it must have taken quite a bit of thought. How do you look back on those times?**

This was a time when I was intellectually growing up, I was open to different attitudes and worlds. It was a time of enthusiastic activism for democracy. We came round the poet Niko Grafenauer's office at the publisher Mladinska knjiga almost every day and talked. I worked at the magazine *Teleks* at the time and we had a feature called *To bi morali videti, brati, slišati* (eng. You should see, read, hear this) written by Rupel, Debeljak and Novak. One day, Rožanc and I approached Grafči (these were our nicknames for each other: Marči, Grafči, Tarči ...) and said we should make a whole supplement out of it. Tine Hribar then said: "We need a new magazine to free our spirits!" That's when inspiration struck, the title was there: *Nova revija* (eng.: New magazine) and it all started rolling ... Hribar wrote an excellent programme – the *Nova revija* initiative, which is still alive today. I was one of the most fervent ones when collecting signatures. I even approached the priest Anton Stres and enthusiastically commanded. "Comrade Stres, you need to sign this as well!" Everybody laughed because nobody called Stres comrade, but he did sign the initiative.

**Did the reactions and the stalling from the very beginning, like with the printing of the cover, take you by surprise and make you more cautious or did you see all this as expected obstacles?**

Our parents were more cautious than we were, at least mine and Boris A. Novak's. His father and my mother were partisans and were well aware of the various perils and how to avoid them. Ante Novak gave Boris excellent instructions and my mother taught me wariness, how to meet in threes etc. It was a "partisan connection" where different generations joined forces for freedom, that's how I saw it. Touching!

**The timeline of how *Nova revija* came to be and the reactions to it were already published in its first two issues as a sort of future reference. Was this a reflection of the editorial board's awareness that you were doing something different and important? Were you aware of your potential vulnerability and failure?**

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When the time is right and people with the same fire in their hearts come together (Jesus said “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them”), change starts to happen. The debates we started in our office and finished later in bars were like a university of intellectual open-mindedness for me, a belief in our connection and in a breakthrough. This atmosphere was necessary for an independent Slovenia, this COMMON faith, decisiveness and trust. I don’t recall anyone mentioning failure. I do remember talks of wiretapping and the perils of the regime whose downfall we sensed and actively worked towards it though.

***Nova revija’s editors had quite diverse views amongst each other. How much influence did you have on the editorial policy and choosing articles? How often did you hold meetings and what did they look like?***

Our tasks were divided among departments, Marko Uršič and I were editors of *Nove paradigme*. More and more texts came in, we had piles upon piles on our desks and chairs and Grafči begged us to read. That’s how I stumbled upon Mitja Peruš’ very interesting text *Vse v enem, eno v vsem vse* (eng.: All in one and one in all). I called the young physics student right away and that’s how the Cognitive Science Forum came to be (we have a whole university programme in cognitive science these days, hooray!). I moderated its first two iterations, Mitja wrote a fantastic book with the same title as his initial text, I brought a collection of poems by a poet that’s very dear to me, Erich Fried, over from Germany and Grafči made an excellent translation of a cycle of his poems that weren’t yet known in Slovenian. These are the first memories that come to mind: I’ll never forget how many problems we had with Taras Kermauner because he wrote terribly long texts. I offered to shorten them so he wouldn’t even notice and I did, thoroughly and radically. Tarči didn’t notice a thing until I told him, haha. I wrote a series of lengthy interviews, the kind you don’t see today anymore (they were published in the collection *Kronologija duha*), which personally enriched me and opened valuable and diverse viewpoints. Our meetings were tumultuous, interesting, unforgettable!

***Content-wise and in part personally, Nova revija was the direct successor of the magazines *Beseda*, *Revija 57* and *Perspektive* and despite attempts of state financing and exerting control over it, it was founded via a grassroots initiative. Today it seems it is more known for its political impact, culminating in issue #57, as opposed to its superb literature, which served as the foundation for Slovenian modern and postmodern literature***

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**and poetry. Alongside the fact that worldviews and reflections on them are inscribed in the very core of literature, *Nova revija* and its predecessors seem to be somewhere between politics and literature. Was this a consequence of the lack of alternative political actions in the monistic society of the time and that there simply was no other space for it or was artistic reflection simply too free for the narrow borders of politics?**

This question would require a separate academic analysis. The editorial board's work was meant to expand horizons, which also included politics as we understood it: fighting for democracy and the public good. Jože Pučnik was a valuable mentor in this regard, I dedicated my book *Surovi čas medijev* to him as a thank you. And art – literature, music and painting, on which Dr Milček Komelj wrote very sensibly – is the foundation of the house of free spirits we built at *Nova revija*.

**If you look at all the literature published these days and all the changes virtual environments bring with them and that were not present back then, do you think we need something similar and intellectually as strong as *Nova revija*?**

*Nova revija* is no longer possible. We live in a different world and they don't make people like Hribar, Grafenauer, Pučnik or Kermauner anymore. The digital, virtual, superficial world has flooded our depths ... But! New children of light are coming up! Western materialist civilisation with its peak in a madly consumerist feudal neoliberalism, ruled by a handful of rich people is definitely decaying, as the world of poverty, hunger and slavery is growing and growing. Different worlds are arising in front of our eyes and a spirit that goes where it wants to is already bubbling in the depths. Those who see it, know what I'm talking about.