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## Contested Anniversary – Celebrating November 29, Republic Day (of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) in Present-Day Slovenia<sup>1</sup>

*Kwestionowana rocznica: obchody 29 listopada, Dnia Republiki  
(b. Socjalistycznej Federacyjnej Republiki Jugosławii)  
we współczesnej Słowenii*

**Summary:** The article is based on the study of informal features of celebrating the former national holiday, the Republic Day (of the SFRY), in post-socialist Slovenia: Yugonostalgic parties, concerts, political graffiti and street art, songs, various public events, news in the media and internet events (holiday greetings, Facebook groups, blogs, virtual Yugoslavias etc.). In the research I applied a combination of the usual cultural-studies methods (urban ethnography, sociology of time and critical visual semiology), which deals with these phenomena from the point of its production (top-down) and from the point of its reception (bottom-up). These celebrations are, on the one hand, increasingly commodified (in the sense of pop-resistance, painless provocation, pure entertainment or profitable market niche), while on the other hand, they present a critique, challenge, opposition and symbolic alternative to contemporary Slovenian dominant ideological currents and politics (ethno-nationalism and neo-liberalism).

**Key words:** socialist Yugoslavia, Slovenia, post-socialist transition, political holidays, Yugonostalgia, ideology, anti-fascism

Translated by Author

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł prezentuje analizę nieformalnych elementów obchodów dawnego święta państwowego, Dnia Republiki (b. Socjalistycznej Federacyjnej Republiki Jugosławii), w postkomunistycznej Słowenii, m.in. jugonostalgiczne imprezy, koncerty, graffiti i sztukę ulicy o zabarwieniu politycznym, piosenki, różnego rodzaju wydarzenia publiczne, wiadomości w mediach oraz wydarzenia internetowe (życzenia świąteczne, grupy na facebooku, blogi, wirtualne Jugosławie

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written within a broader national research project entitled “Holidays and Nation-Building Process in Slovenia” that included research teams from University of Ljubljana and Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts, and resulted in the edited volume *Politika praznovanja. Prazniki in oblikovanje skupnosti na Slovenskem (The Politics of Celebration. Holidays and Community Building in Slovenia)*, edited by Božidar Jezernik, Ingrid Slavec Gradišnik and Mitja Velikonja, Znanstvena založba Filozofska fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2013.

itd.). W badaniach zastosowana została kombinacja metod typowych dla studiów kulturowych (etnografia miasta, socjologia czasu oraz krytyczna semiologia wizualna), które rozpatrują wspomniane zjawiska z punktu widzenia ich produkcji (ruch odgórny) oraz ich recepcji (ruch oddolny). Obchody te są z jednej strony w coraz większym stopniu postrzegane jako towar (element popularnego opór, bezbolesna prowokacja, czysta rozrywka lub intratna nisza rynkowa), a z drugiej strony wyrażają krytykę lub sprzeciw wobec nurtów ideologicznych oraz polityki dominującej we współczesnej Słowenii (etnonacjonalizmu i neoliberalizmu), a także stanowią wyzwanie lub symboliczną alternatywę wobec nich.

**Słowa kluczowe:** socjalistyczna Jugosławia, Słowenia, transformacja systemowa, święta polityczne, jugonostalgia, ideologia, antyfaszizm

Tłumaczenie: Klaudyna Michałowicz

### Politics of holidays

The periodization of time, especially the system of celebrations, lies in the heart of every ideological imaginary and political practice. The post-socialist transition brought an abundance of hegemonic struggles for time between different antagonistic groups and with different outcomes. Some previous holidays were simply forgotten or were deliberately suppressed, other continue to be officially celebrated, and many are still existing today in different enclosed circles. The ambition of this text is to research cultural practices and ideological meanings of one particular former Yugoslav holiday in present day Slovenia, its preservation, revival and new meaning: Republic Day, November 29. Together with other two dates of great importance in the ideological imaginary of the former Yugoslavia – May 25 (Day of Youth) and May 4 (the anniversary of Josip Broz Tito's death) – Republic Day is still celebrated in Slovenia, or at least marked, albeit unofficially, in very specific circumstances and in very different ways, attracting greater or smaller audiences. In the former country, November 29 (and 30) was an official holiday and work-free day. Once mandatory, this holiday is today celebrated spontaneously and informally; once part of the ruling, centralized and “top-down” ideology, it has been turned into a “bottom-up” phenomenon.

It is important to point out that in contrast to Republic Day, some of the former holidays were kept, but under different names: April 27, Liberation Front Day of the socialist era was renamed the Day of Uprising Against Occupation in independent Slovenia; International Workers' Day, May 1, and Culture Day, February 8, also survived. Some others have completely disappeared: May 9 – Victory Day, June 22 – Insurrection Day, July 4 – Veterans' Day and December 22 – Day of the Army.

This text has two intertwined ambitions. The first set of questions asks how is this ex-Yugoslav holiday celebrated today. Who celebrates it and why? The second set of questions is concerned with its ideological meanings and political consequences today.

In other words, I will try to establish to what extent contemporary Slovenia is still Yugoslav in its holiday calendar or – based on how that date is celebrated – to what extent it is still “YugoSlovenia”. In answering these questions I use a cultural studies approach, which includes and combines both the horizontal analysis of cultural production (its “extent”) and the vertical analysis of its ideological meanings (its “depth”).

Before I proceed to analyze the examples and empirical data, I would like to explain the theoretical and methodological background of this study. The determination of a time system – the division of time into holiday and nonholiday days of the year – is one of the constitutional acts of every new social order. It involves two related conceptions of time: linear (historical) and cyclical (structural). In the linear conception, time is a continuous line starting with year 0 (followed by year 1, 2, 3 etc.) – it is historical, vertical. In the cyclical conception, important days, i.e. holidays, are distributed through the year and repeated in one-year cycles – this is a structural or horizontal conception. On the one hand, time is progressive, and on the other, it is cyclical. The two cannot exist without each other: viewed from the perspective of historical sequence, the structure must be repeated so that the order can be sustained, and the structure must necessarily refer to distant historical events.

A holiday is therefore a point at which history and structure overlap, the continuity of the past meets the legitimation of the present. Holidays bring time “to a standstill” so that members of society can become aware of the events that are important for them – naturally, viewed through the prism of the ruling ideology. Serbian sociologist Todor Kuljić (2012: 135) calls them “institutionalized dates of remembrance”; the Rutgers University sociologist of time Eviatar Zerubavel (2003b: 317) says that “holidays remind us that our social environment affects not only what we remember but also when we remember it.” For Slovenian ethologist Božidar Jezernik (2013: 9–12) they are both: “support of collective memory” and “a mean of mobilization of masses”. In contrast to constructivist theories of remembering, which swear by the collective and selective aspect of holidays, I myself would like to emphasize also their ideological background. In my definition, an official holiday is a date with political power and the result of the operation of the dominant ideology of time: on such a day, time “stops” and the structure meets and is legitimized by history. It is always in the service of ruling groups and it always supports their *status quo*.<sup>2</sup> I refer to the holiday system as the highly organized and structured “rhythm of the sacred” since it sets important days (*holidays*) apart from the unimportant

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<sup>2</sup> However, once established, official holidays acquire different meanings for different groups in a society, including alternative or contested ones. They are, as any other feature of the mythic mind, “shaped by its specific fragmentation, fluidity and ambivalence”, to use words of Serbian political anthropologist Ivan Čolović (2000: 13).

(*everyday*) ones. For an efficient control of society – through the rationing of the sacred in everyday life in order to justify the existing order – the holiday calendar must always be balanced so that the sacred can preserve its character of extraordinariness, unusualness. Holidays are never distributed too close to each other or too far from each other.

The map of political holidays is inherently connected with the phenomenon of collective memory (the official, normative, national, decreed and sanctioned memory, as well as the unofficial, marginal, spontaneous or subversive one), social rituals, symbolism and with the power structures of society. It involves a hegemonic struggle much like the one fought on any other political stage, a struggle to institute certain holidays, push others into oblivion and abolish still others. The struggle of each group is also a struggle for its own time calculation and the holiday calendar setting. The historical turns that a certain group considers fateful are always taken as the beginning of time: new year counting starts with year 0. This “zero point”, the point of Creation, “frozen date”, divides time into the time before and the time after.

Holidays are therefore invariably a first-class political topic. There is no “empty” calendar: social power relations are always inscribed in the sequence of time. French social scientist Jacques Attali (1992: 16) has established that “the system of such dates is the first code of the ruling power, least known but most fundamental, i.e. the code of *calendar* – the repeated sequence of ritual dates when violence is legalized or imitated”. As any other social ritual, cyclical celebration of a fixed date “creates images of social order in people’s mental models of the world”, to quote Polish political anthropologist Zdzisław Mach (1993: 73). The Calendars – says Zerubavel (2004: 191) – “often include an annual cycle of holidays and other *memorial days* specifically designed to commemorate ‘sacred’ historical events”. Undoubtedly, this is not a neutral practice: the struggle for time and for a holiday system within it is one of the main hegemonic struggles in every society. Kuljić (2012: 135) justifiably says that “the ruling groups decide about the endurance of memory, introduction of new holidays into a calendar and the erasure of old ones.” Every authority – religious, political or cultural – first subordinates and “arranges” time according to its own needs. It creates its own sequence in time on which it bases and then repeats the basic social binarism as defined by Emile Durkheim (1976: 37–40): the profane and the sacred.<sup>3</sup> Within the realm of time, this is a division into holy days and ordinary days, holidays and workdays.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> His explanation of this division is as follows: “the sacred and the profane have always and everywhere been conceived by the human mind as two distinct classes, as two worlds between which there is nothing in common” (Durheim 1976: 38–39).

<sup>4</sup> The English term, *holiday*, clearly points to the holiness of these days.

Every change in the ruling ideology and political order exacts a new system of holidays. And while in political discourses everything appears self-evident – the new simply replaces the old – in the social world these matters are much more complicated. New holidays do not necessarily override the old ones or do so everywhere: for various groups, ordinary time comes to a holiday-standstill at various points in time. To borrow a term from computer vocabulary, the “formatting” of the holiday calendar is taken over and promoted by the ruling groups (or rather, their institutions of organized remembrance). However, in doing so they hit upon the opposition of groups that reject their formatting, make fun of it and preserve/develop their own holiday calendars. The former determine and supervise who or what needs to be remembered officially, who and what must be forgotten, what will be celebrated and what will not, and even what is forbidden to celebrate. The opposite groups resist this scheme in an organized or spontaneous manner, promote alternatives, measure time according to their own preferences and insist on their own holiday systems.

Before I proceed to the empirical analysis and reflections, I would like to explain several other things. It is necessary to distinguish between a celebration and the marking of a day. Both terms denote a regular (non)institutionalized and (non)organized form of collective remembrance. Both official and unofficial holidays are either celebrated or marked. The marking of a day is more neutral; it is less ideologically charged and is, in its essence, a simple remembering of an important historical date, which only turns into something larger occasionally and with certain groups. However, the very fact that we remember a specific event rather than some other one is a result of ideological selection; it “means something.” A celebration, on the other hand, is much more serious: it is coded, standardized, ritualized, emotionally charged, and it creates horizontal solidarity among the audience and their vertical connection from – in Eliade’s terms – the “powerful time” of the beginning.

Holidays should be studied in relation to other forms of symbolic marking of the past. These may be of material nature, for example in our case monuments and memorial signs dating from the period of Yugoslavia, old street names that are still in use, museum collections, memorabilia kept by people who lived *in those times*. Secondly, in relation to various activities or events that refer to those times, Yugonostalgic meetings, retrospective art and design exhibitions, and last but not least, the persistence of Yugoslav, socialist and Partisan motifs in modern Slovenian design, marketing and popular music.<sup>5</sup> The third form of marking a day is exclusively symbolic, non-material: it involves collective and individual memories of time, in our case of the former Yugoslav holiday.

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<sup>5</sup> For the analysis of the latter, see Velikonja (2013).

Republic Day should be understood within the context of the radical change in the political system and the ruling ideology, and the revision of the holiday calendar after 1991 that came with it. For this reason, I define Republic Day not only as a parallel holiday but also as an ideologically opposed holiday, “counter-holiday” or “anti-holiday”, since it brings back the memories of the *former state* birth date and through it of the *former political system* values. It has been disparaged in the now dominant neo-liberal and nationalist discourses – as the *relic of the old regime* it is ignored or even attacked. Precisely because of this, it is celebrated by alternative and opposition groups, and increasingly by the mainstream groups as well. As part of the now tabooed past, it holds attraction for the groups that genuinely distance themselves from the existing state of affairs, while others have reduced it to a slightly controversial or provocative difference which in the end also fits ideologically and commercially into the current order. Therefore, the celebration of the former holiday can on the one hand be interpreted as being a spontaneous, opposing reaction (involving a critical rejection of the present social order and a preference for the socialist/multiethnic historical alternative), and on the other as an instrumentalized and profit-making practice. In my view, the introduction and use of the term “anti-holiday” is fully justified since – regardless of the purposes, realization or reach of their celebrations – it symbolically opposes the present official system of politically determined holidays. In the theoretical sense, anti-holiday introduces new, antagonistic dynamics into the dialectic holiday-everyday dyad: while holidays and everyday complement each other, holiday and anti-holiday symbolically clash. Viewed from the perspective of the ruling system of holidays, the former holiday, i.e. anti-holiday, is a dangerous everyday that should be neutralized. Similarly, in the perspective of the opposing, anti-holiday calendar, new official holidays are dangerous everyday that should be ignored. However, the most efficient strategy for defeating dangerous and threatening holidays is their adoption.<sup>6</sup>

I will research the cultural extent (the culture of holidays), the ideological background and the reach (the ideology of holidays) of Republic Day within the following areas: political life, consumer culture, media world, popular culture, the web and everyday life. For this purpose, I have collected various media texts, articles, web congratulations and circulars over the past few years; I read blogs and commentaries posted on the news pages; I listened to the music and took pictures of the products of street culture; I went to several celebrations in Slovenia and to other parts of the former Yugoslavia. In studying the collected materials, I used the established set of cultural studies methods:

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<sup>6</sup> Classical examples of such “hijacking” of the past systems of celebration are Christian holidays, many of which were triumphantly set on the days of pre-Christian holidays.

narrative analysis (of written, visual, web texts), observation with participation and comparative analysis. I was more interested in the symbolic construction or production of these holidays than their public reception.

### November 29 today

The second AVNOJ session was a turn in the national liberation war, whose goal from the very beginning was not only the struggle against the occupying forces but also the struggle for a new, happier Yugoslavia, with a more advanced, socialist social order (Tudjman 1960: 172).

I will approach the phenomenon of today's celebrations of Republic Day in few steps. After a panegyric to Yugoslavia written by its fervent supporter of the time, I will shortly delineate its historical background, then provide a short description of various forms of celebration and marking of this day, mostly in Slovenia but for comparative reasons also in other post-Yugoslav countries, to reach the final overall analysis of the cultural content and ideological meanings of it.

At the 2nd AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) session on November 29, 1943 in Jajce, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the second, socialist federative Yugoslavia was established, and accordingly, November 29 (and 30) were national holidays called the Republic Day.<sup>7</sup> On Republic Day, first-grade pupils officially became Tito's Pioneers in a solemn ritual. In the imaginary of the former federal state, this date was so important that it found its place even in the national emblem, under the six flames (representing its six republics). Republic Day itself was at the time a kind of anti-holiday with regard to the date commemorating the establishment of the previous Yugoslav state, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, on December 1, 1918.

November 29 is now marked or celebrated in various ways. Since there are no historical "places of remembrance"<sup>8</sup> in Slovenia like Jajce in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where *Yugoslavia was born*, the devotees of Republic Day are meeting in a variety of different places. Yugonostalgic parties on that day were first organized in the Metelkova alternative center in Ljubljana, and later on in another alternative place, Kranj's Izbruh, as well as in Kava bar in Maribor (with participants dressed in Pioneer uniforms, places were decorated with Yugoslav flags and those of socialist Slovenia, poems and songs from that times are read/sung together with audience etc.). Recently, thematic *Yugo evenings* or *Yurock parties* have been held in other clubs as well, advertised with posters including Yugoslav, socialist and partisan iconography. On November 30, 2011 the celebration

<sup>7</sup> On the same day in 1945, the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia was established.

<sup>8</sup> Here I refer to Pierre Nora's concept (1996).

of Republic Day was organized in the packed Primskovo Hall in Kranj, with eight groups playing music dating from the Yugoslav times. The slogan promoting the event was *Pioneers, Let's Unite*. Republic Day is particularly known to be celebrated with concerts and parties featuring a well-selling Yugonostalgic Slovenian pop-rock band Rock Partyzani, which are usually organized on November 29 (and sometimes 30). For example, in 2012, a *Great Yu Spectacle* was advertised at the Roxly bar and concert venue in Ljubljana, with a suggestive title *Better Yuga for One Day Than This Misery* (*Bolš en dan Juga kot pa tale tuga*), and a sexy pioneer girl on the poster. Very similar events happened in 2014 in Groš Caffè Lounge Club in Grosuplje, entitled *Do You Still Remember, Comrades?* (*Še pomnite, tovariši?*),<sup>9</sup> and in 2015 in Zlati zob Ethno Club in Ljubljana promoted as the *Great Yu-Party*. Event entitled *YugoSlavia: Republic Day* was organized in the club Luft 360 in Maribor, promising *party until early morning with iconic Yugo pop rock hits, while hot Pioneer girls will take care for the right atmosphere!* The audience and the participants, as well as the entire *mise-en-scène* at such events alludes of Yugoslav “golden era”,<sup>10</sup> from flags and five pointed stars to pioneer uniforms, from (excessive) drinking to partying and dancing *in the old Yugoslav way*. All these parties are attended by hundreds of young people – so not by *old comrades* who once actually celebrated this holiday.

The memory of the former holiday is marked in other ways too. I came across a graffiti on a Ljubljana façade reading *Long Live November 29*, and a stenciled graffiti *Long Live November 29, the Republic Day*. The Yugonostalgic group Zaklonišče prepeva mentions the holiday in the refrain of their song *In memoriam* “when I am alone on Republic Day, the stench of beer and cigarettes in the air”, while Mi2 in the song *Ode to Gudek* sings “four drinks later we knew the date, the end of November, in memory of old times”. The Knjižnica Polje, Ljubljana library organized a literary event entitled *Public Day* on that day in 2011: fairy tales for adults were read, all of them unambiguously carrying a contemporary political undertone.<sup>11</sup>

As a few other Yugoslav national holidays, Republic Day, too, is mentioned in the mainstream national or regional media, printed or electronic (immediately triggering a war of words in on-line chat rooms and readers’ letters). One of Slovenian radio stations

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<sup>9</sup> With clear reference to the radio show from the socialist times with the same title, where Partisan veterans were talking about their war-time experiences.

<sup>10</sup> For the critical analysis of ideological symbolism of the lost “golden era” and its practical political implications, see the 4th chapter of Girardet’s book (1986).

<sup>11</sup> The authors think that “this was a political reading with the mobilization effect achieved through the creation of the sense of collectivity, i.e. it was mobilizing in the sense of socialist values, the social, through the familiar and comfortable whispering of fairy tales”. For them, it is precisely the socialist values that lie “at the basis of all fairy tales”.

– Radio 1 – called November 29, 2013 *The Day of Nostalgia*, and its hosts appeared dressed in Pioneer uniforms in their web site. In others, passages from the laudatory articles from those times are quoted, newspaper columns or comments often refer to it (with typical titles like “Do you still remember/celebrate November 29, Republic Day?” or “Recalling the day when Yugoslavia was born”), and it is frequently mentioned in *On This Day* or *Historical Annales* newspaper sections, in a neutral manner and telegraph style. Naturally, the day is most extensively marked in retro and nostalgic sections, for example in *Yugokronika* (*Yugochronicle*).

Around that date, on-line greetings circulate the web (“Happy November 29, Republic Day” with the silhouette of Yugoslavia and its coat-of-arms, or „Let us protect brotherhood and unity like the pupil of our eye”, again with Yugoslav iconography), sometimes containing links to some of the past musical hits (e.g. a classic *Republic Day* by Zabranjeno pušenje).<sup>12</sup> There are Facebook groups like the one called *Do you still remember, comrades: today is Republic Day – November 29*, where users congratulate each other, praise the old state, talk about memories, compare opinions on the past and present times and send invitations to various events in commemoration of the holiday. Blogs become lively with discussions: for example, someone’s wish on Republic Day is that the “Slovenes stop being intolerant towards the nations of the former Yugoslavia. And I also wish that everybody in the former Yugoslavia forgot about nationalism”. The same is with YouTube clips: congratulations include footage from *those times*, photos of once heroes, monuments and achievements, Dinar coins, Yugoslav stamps, popular comic books, Tito’s silhouette, and are accompanied by old slogans, quotes and phrases. Many of these discussions, posts and congratulations are in Serbo-Croatian, which in itself is ideologically coded when appearing in Slovenia that is known for its explicit linguistic nationalism. Still others are written in all of the official Yugoslav languages and in both scripts, Latin and Cyrillic.

It is similar in other parts of the once physical and today virtual state of Yugoslavia: in most cases, the day is marked and celebrated in different events, featuring socialist and Yugoslav décor, and in cyberspace (by Facebook groups like *Republic Day* and *Today when I’m Becoming a Pioneer...*<sup>13</sup> and *Ex-Yu Party – SFRY Republic Day*). There are culinary events like *Days of Tito’s Cuisine*. Interviews in different media start with questions like *How November 29 Was Celebrated Back Then* or *Do You Still Remember*

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<sup>12</sup> “Delo’s” daily newspaper “Glasba za dobro jutro” (“Goodmorning Music”) of Nov. 29, 2011 begins as follows: “Once upon a time in Yugoslavia, on November 29, there was Republic Day. The Zabranjeno pušenje group is still around” (<http://www.delo.si/kultura/glasba/glasba-za-dobro-jutro-torek-29.html>).

<sup>13</sup> That was a starting sentence of the Pioneer’s oath.

*November 29, Republic Day?* etc. The “real” and most massive celebration is the *AVNOJ Days* in Jajce, regularly attended by many visitors from Slovenia.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to Day of Youth, Republic Day is not so extensively exploited for consumer or entertainment purposes: it did not become a significant market niche. It is taken much more seriously, by both its devotees and its opponents.

### **Republic Day between resistance and commodity**

During the Yugoslav socialist era, this holiday functioned as typical Hobsbawm’s “invented tradition” legitimizing the order of the time. The same holiday, i.e. anti-holiday in present-day Slovenia, has now become a “traditionalized invention,” since it took root among some groups of people, became folklorized and popular without any power structure standing behind it. Therefore, answers to the “how, why and who” questions should not be sought in the past but in the present time; and not in the illusion of continuity but in present-day ideological and pop-cultural circumstances. What is relevant is neither its content (ontology, “the real meaning” of these holidays) nor its empty, repetitive form but symbolic otherness to the existing situation and emancipation from it. In other words: celebrating Yugoslav Republic Day after 1991 symbolizes complete ideological, political and social difference, since it is re-establishing values of (Yugoslav) multiculturalism against (Slovenian) nationalism and (previous) socialist social and economic system against (contemporary) neoliberal one.

However, such a difference is not necessarily an opposition: it would be wrong to conclude that this anti-holiday antagonizes what has been happening in Slovenia since it gained independence. Although the devotees of the old holiday symbolically send a message to Slovenia saying *this is not our country*, the implication is not necessarily *Yugoslavia is our country*. The opposition to the existing order may well be something serious, radically different, truly threatening, but on the other hand it can be simply a joyful disturbance or a pleasant difference that remains firmly incorporated into the existing order. In other words, the motifs, goals and the reach of the celebrations of November 29 vary from one group (of initiators, organizers, participants, the audience) to the other: some undoubtedly express criticism and opposition to present-day society, while others merely commodify the difference through pop-resistance, painless provocation, pure entertainment and the exploitation of a profitable market niche. As with any other symbols, meanings of holidays “are not constant but they change, not as the result

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<sup>14</sup> For example, Slovenians accounted for one tenth of approximately 5000 attendants at the 65th anniversary in 2008. The introductory speech was delivered by Tito’s impersonator Ivan Godnič, while the speech on behalf of the Slovenian Partisan Veterans’ Association was given by Janez Stanovnik.

of arbitrary decision but only as part of the cultural process which forms the whole cultural complex which involves a particular symbol (Mach 1993: 32). “Signs could be interpreted differently in different contexts and by different groups” (Saukko 2003: 101), so the analysis of (anti)holiday is in fact the textbook example of a cultural-studies’ analysis that takes into account and explores the concepts of “signifiers’ fluidity,” “contextual” (rather than simply “textual”) analysis, “cultural hybridization,” “(counter)hegemony” as well as the “hierarchization of discourses and social groups” (i.e. the influence of power structures on discourses). My conclusions below are structured around these concepts.

On the horizontal level, which is the level of cultural production analysis, my findings are as follows: much like all other holidays, Republic Day, too, achieves “integration by way of dates” (Kuljić 2012: 134), but in a manner that is different from the one used when celebrating the usual or official holidays. Accordingly, it should be interpreted in a different way. First, it should be noted that the celebration of Republic Day is an inter-generational phenomenon: it is obvious that it is remembered not only by *old comrades* who resist the breakup of the narrative caused by the transition, but also by younger, post-Yugoslav generations. This is evident from the organization and the program of the events ranging from the expressions of resistance to pure entertainment/sale/self-promotion. Second, devotees of Republic Day are well aware of the new circumstances in which they live. Some among them who are socially engaged draw attention to present injustices rather than just uncritically reminiscing about *the good old times*; the old symbolism is used as a critique of the new one. Still others, opportunists, exploit the aura of an old holiday to further their commercial, entertaining or political-party agendas and make money from it. And last but not least, the manner in which this holiday is celebrated and marked has changed: many celebrations have been transferred to the web, taking place on Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, in chat rooms, or taking the form of on-line circulars. The old holiday is therefore also celebrated through the new social media, introducing new definitions of the community and new parallel forms of socializing and integration.

On the vertical level, i.e. the level of ideology criticism, it is possible to observe the confrontation of the homespun and neo-liberal Slovenianness, on the one hand, and the entire spectrum of ideological currents on the other, with the latter either opposing or adapting to the former. Let me first explain the strategies used to neutralize the ideological meanings and the political reach of this (and similar) Yugoslav anti-holiday(s). The first strategy is direct confrontation or organization of anti-anti-holidays. The protagonists are historical revisionists or anti-Yugoslav nationalists who sometimes operate

through state institutions and sometimes under the pretense of being civil-society initiatives. As one example of the “clash of events”, let me mention the *cultural-musical celebration* organized by the right-wing assembly *Zbor za republiko (Rally for the Republic)*, entitled *Revival*. It took place just before the penultimate parliamentary elections, on November 29, 2011. The proof of it being an example of an anti-holiday of an anti-holiday, so an anti-anti-holiday, a symbolic opposition to the Yugoslav November 29, was the invitation text saying that the event “will again draw attention to the values of free and democratic society, Slovenia’s independence, constitutional democracy and the European Parliament’s Resolution on the European awareness and totalitarianism.” Although there were no explicit references to the former holiday, the diction was the same as the ones used when condemning *Yugoslavia, socialism, Tito, the Partisans* and holidays in their memory, found in the vocabulary of the contemporary Slovenian right-wing parties and groups.

The second strategy is more refined, involving nostalgic sentimentalism that pervades such days and evokes bitter-sweet and passive memories of *those times* gone by, never to return. The meaning of this anti-holiday is reduced to pure escapism from the harsh reality and does not serve as a proof of the existence of some historical alternative to capitalism and nationalism.

The third strategy of neutralization of anti-holidays is in my opinion the most efficient: they are “tamed” into consumerism and pop culture. Although it seems that the celebration of an obsolete Yugoslav holiday is an opposition to the ruling ideology, to a certain extent it approves of it. This strategy of pacification has three variants. The first is commodification, or “sale”: Republic Day is turned into a new market opportunity (concerts, parties etc.). The second variant involves trivialization: the holiday and the former state are described with wonder, as something exotic, slightly provocatively; or they are “post-created” in the manner of harmless post-modern excess and travesty. In some aspects, this holiday has been downgraded to a mere curiosity. Around this date, the media feature intriguing texts in the sections such as *Curiosities* or *It can’t be true, but it is*, reports on the eccentricity of the collectors of socialist memorabilia or Yugonostalgics in general, or even on the culinary items of *those times*.<sup>15</sup> The third variant is the media’s “balanced presentation” or “objectivity”: by equalizing the perspectives, the media promote the position and ideology of their own “neutrality.” They compensate the lack of their own opinion with the liberalist maxim “the plurality of views,” simply confronting heated opinions without a bit of reflection – e.g. one anti-Yugoslav/one pro-Yugoslav, one

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<sup>15</sup> The reviews of the book of YPA recipes and Tito’s most cherished dishes were published on Republic Day, both bearing symptomatic titles: *As Simple As A Bean Soup* (“Delo”, Dec. 2, 2011, 37) and *The Secrets of Tito’s Cuisine* (“Žurnal”, Nov. 30, 2005, 43).

Titophobic/one Titophilic, one supporting the Partisans' truth/another one supporting the Quislings' truth, one victim of the war-time aggressor/the other of the post-war violence – on the basis of which the public “should form an opinion on their own.” In this way, the media automatically reduce the complex debate to the two extremes, *pro* and *contra*, while omitting all other aspects, including the most important one, which is the critical confrontation with the current state of affairs.

On the other hand, the revival of the outdated Republic Day should be seen as a symbolic counter-cultural and sub-political resistance. Even though it is ideologically and commercially contaminated, and even though a direct reference to the origin of the holiday is sometimes omitted, it is “well-known” what kind of “day” is in question, regardless of whether or not it is explicitly mentioned.<sup>16</sup> If, when interpreting these celebrations, one has a feeling that they are completely devoid of content, one should not overlook the essence: we are talking about the old holiday of the former multi-national and socialist state in the present-day national state that pursues neoliberal ideology. I find it almost impossible to imagine any greater symbolic antagonism.

Whether or not one likes it, and whether or not the organizers and attendants at these events admit it, celebrating Republic Day has oppositional ideological connotations. In contrast to the official, decreed, national or religious holidays, this Yugoslav anti-holiday does not lean on institutional subjects of power in the contemporary Slovenian society. Celebrations on November 29 are neither orchestrated nor harmonized (except in paranoid conspiracy theories concocted by stand-by anti-Communists and anti-Yugoslavs); there is no complot behind them. This is also the main reason why they were never officially banned. They are mainly “bottom-up” enterprises. The proof is the above-mentioned diversity of narratives, programs, age of attendants, the media through which it is constructed/presented, and the purposes pursued by its devotees or promoters. For some, that's just another excuse for a good party; for others, a chance for an extra profit; for nostalgics a time for lamentation of the lost world and critics of the present one; for young alternatives, a way how to provoke dominant discourses and institutions etc. The institutionalized “leftist”<sup>17</sup> policy occasionally cautiously flirts, for populist reasons, with references to the Yugoslav and socialist past which is held – according to public

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<sup>16</sup> Maybe its rootedness among the Slovene conditioned the fact that two most important contemporary national holidays in Slovenia – June 25 and December 26 – are not called Republic Day, but Statehood Day and Independence and Unity Day.

<sup>17</sup> It is only conditionally “leftist.” I strongly believe that in the post-cold-war era and particularly in the context of post-socialist transition, it is preposterous to operate with the old, formerly justified categories of “left” and “right” wings when it comes to political parties. Today both acquiesce to the fundamental premises of the neoliberal ideology, ethno-nationalism and the *new world order*, using right-wing or left-wing decor only for tactical and populist purposes.

opinion surveys – in slightly positive memory by many Slovenes, but they are neither the initiators nor the organizers of such celebrations. Despite potential implicit sympathies on their side, they do not engage as institutions. Officially, they do not want to have anything to do with them. They tactically use the Yugoslav/socialist/Partisan “contra” to the existing state of affairs primarily in daily-political confrontations with the right-wing parties and institutions.

To conclude: in my opinion, the honoring of the former state is to a large extent based on the anti-principle. It should be interpreted not only as grounded in pop-cultural and consumerist pragmatic and instrumental motives, but also as a counter-cultural and sub-political gesture – as an *ad hoc*, dispersive, chaotic, bottom-up reaction – opposing nationalist and neoliberal discourses, institutions and opinion-makers. Rather than through “ontological” identity (generational, ideological or ethnic ties), its devotees are interconnected through “negative identity” or opposition, which, however, remains on the symbolic level. As a rule, celebrating and marking Republic Day is exploited to express sharp criticism of the current situation, including through the pointing out of the positive sides of the Yugoslav times (e.g. social and health protection, anti-fascism, tolerance and solidarity, modernization, multiculturalism). Similarly, the new holiday calendar is also a target of criticism. However, pure opposition does not suffice for any kind of political emancipation or even mobilization. It can be even said that it hinders more than it encourages emancipation, since it reduces criticism to the historical antagonism “socialist/multiethnic Yugoslavia” vs. “neoliberal/Slovenian national state” without opening ways for new, more actual and progressive considerations of alternatives and resistance. Whatever the case, the very existence and the extent of celebrating the old Yugoslav holiday, Republic Day, in contemporary Slovenia means that in the last almost thirty years anti-Yugoslav and anti-socialist ideological discourses have somehow failed to achieve the complete hegemonic victory on the battlegrounds that is the Slovenian holiday calendar.

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