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Titouage – Nostalgia for Tito in Post-Socialist Slovenia¹

“I feel so sorry when I see young people wear Tito or Che Guevara on their T-shirts. Those are people who according to many criteria do not belong among the great men of our or of world’s history. What is more, we Slovenians have plenty of people whom our youth can be proud of, like general Maister.”²

“Your Time is Running Out!”³ – Mapping nostalgia for Josip Broz Tito

One of the most unexpected phenomena in East European post-socialist societies is a curious veneration of the past socialist times. Nostalgia for socialism – bearing names like *Ostalgie* in ex-East Germany, Soviet nostalgia in the ex-Soviet Union, *jugonostalgija* in ex-Yugoslavia, and various other socialist nostalgias – appeared for varying reasons, among various groups of people, and took differing forms and features. From the Baltics to the Balkans, from the Czech Republic to Russia, we find images of the past regime in mass culture, advertising, design, art, political iconography, in street culture, in everyday conversation as well as in popular imagination and in the mentality of the people. Yugonostalgia is but one example: We find nostalgic reveries of the post-World War Two decades as a *golden age*, with *true solidarity, brotherhood, welfare, development, respect, a rightful political system* – and of course of *the just ruler*. Posthumous veneration of the president of Yugoslavia in its heydays, Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980), is one of the cornerstones of Yugonostalgia, as his personality cult was one of the cornerstones of the political mythology of socialist Yugoslavia. Titostalgia broke out when Yugoslavia collapsed in 1991 and troubled, if not catastrophic years started for most of its population.

During socialist times, Broz’s images and name could be found everywhere, from offices, classrooms and other public places, stamps, names of streets and towns, to people’s homes. They were the ultimate part of the official propaganda. Today, 28 years after his death and more than twenty years since his historical role was diminished, even blackened in all dominant public discourses and media, these same images have reappeared in many places and discourses. His, to be sarcastic, “second coming” surprised many observers, scholars, and people in general: Some find it disturbing, others consider it as something completely normal, understandable; for some it is just another transitional curiosity, for others a firm cri-

- 1 This text is part of my broader research on Titostalgia in all ex-Yugoslav republics, and, more generally, on post-socialist nostalgias. The ironic neologism *Titouage* was invented by my cultural studies student Nena Močnik, who allowed me to use it for this text.
- 2 The Slovenian minister of education Milan Zver, from the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party, News on TV Slovenia, July 2007. Maister was a commander of Slovenian troops on the Slovenian-Austrian border immediately after World War I, “defending” the Slovenian northern border.
- 3 Inscription in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian on a T-shirt with Broz looking at his watch, on sale in Ljubljana.

tique of the present; more paranoid natures consider it as another conspiracy of the *Old Structures*, *Commies* and *Yugonostalgics* who would want to rebuild the old state/regime, still others as a pure joke, or as a commercial niche, or as an aesthetic inspiration. No matter how, today, Broz's images and name have reappeared: In everyday conversation, in popular and consumer culture, on the walls as graffiti and in web-sites, in market stalls and on T-shirts. Although this is far from the extent and depths of idolization in socialist times, it nevertheless is a mass phenomenon that needs to be properly explored.

Basic research questions posed in this contribution are: Why all this sudden positive attention to Broz's personality; why all this new imagery? Why was he reborn, reinvented, and rediscovered in all abovementioned forms also in contemporary Slovenia? Is it an imposed discourse; or do people really feel that way? How to explain Broz's "long and deep shadow" that does not fade away, but instead acquires new nuances? What are the main differences and similarities to Titostalgic discourses in other post-Yugoslav countries? In short: Why are Broz's personality and image so popular – and not someone else's? For example why not some other important person from the past: some pre-socialist/post-socialist politician, dissident, national hero, religious personality, local communist/partisan/anti-partisan leader? In order to answer these questions, I use several research tools: discourse analysis, analyses of visual materials, of public-opinion data, as well as of empirical data from my own research.

My approach to these phenomena takes two intertwined perspectives as its starting point. The first is a "top-down" view: Nostalgia is seen here as an imposed, hegemonic discourse of certain groups and their media – I call this "the culture of nostalgia". The second is the reverse: "the bottom-up" view where nostalgia is a "hard" socio-cultural fact or a "real" mentality pattern – I call this "nostalgic culture". "Culture of nostalgia" thus represents a discourse constructed and promoted by some more or less influential groups in society (like political parties, enterprises, producers of popular culture, artists, subcultural groups, advertisers, or simply by some nostalgic enthusiasts). It is instrumental, created by its inventors or/and promoters who wish to achieve something with it. "Nostalgic culture" reflects people's imagination, their inclination toward some nostalgized past. In other words, nostalgic narratives ("culture of nostalgia") need not reflect whether people "really" feel nostalgia ("nostalgic culture") for the past; and vice versa, it may happen that people are nostalgic, but that this is not adequately present in the dominant social discourses. Both these "ideal types" act parallel and refer to each other; yet because in some occasions they are congruent and in some contrary to each other, it is important to distinguish between the two.

Definitions of nostalgia go from essentialist/positivistic to constructivist. For the author of the classical study on the sociology of nostalgia, Fred Davis, it is "a nice sort of sadness – bitter-sweet", a "joy clouded with sadness".⁴ Christopher Lasch writes that "nostalgic representations of the past evoke a time irretrievably lost and for that reason timeless and unchanging".⁵ They are "emblems of that bitter-sweet yearning directed across space and

4 Fred Davis: *Yearning for Yesterday – A Sociology of Nostalgia*, New York/London 1979, pp. 14, 19.

5 Christopher Lasch: *The True and Only Heaven. Progress and Its Critics*, New York/London 1991, p. 83.

time”.⁶ For these authors, nostalgia deals with really experienced past events, episodes, times, personalities etc. – it is a first-hand, authentic sentiment of those who actually lived the times they are nostalgic for. Others see nostalgia simply as yet another narrative, a constructed story as good as any other in contemporary Debordian society of spectacle, with its abundance and coexistence of different cultural, political, historical and other traditions. As Susan Stewart convincingly puts it, “nostalgia – like any form of narrative – is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative”.⁷ It can also be called a second-handed, indirect, mediated feeling, an invented and/or borrowed image of/from the past that was not experienced by the nostalgics. In short, here nostalgia is a positive, nice story of the past (“memory minus pain”⁸) that might never have existed as such: Hence, it is not only about how we once were, but also how we never were.

Another important distinction must be made here: The one between nostalgia and retro. For the American expert of retro-trends in art, Elizabeth Guffey, nostalgia “is always characterized by a certain seriousness” while “retro tempers these associations with a heavy dose of cynicism or detachment” – it is always a bit ironic, grotesque, satiric.⁹ In other words, “retro demythologizes its subject”, it “implicitly ruptures us from what came before”, while nostalgia insists on continuity with the past.¹⁰ According to Guffey, its main attributes are self-reflexiveness, ironic reinterpretation, and disregard for the sort of traditional boundaries that had separated “high” and “low” art. For example, with regard to the popularity of Che Guevara T-shirts, the Californian art historian David Kunzle states that “of course, wearing Che on your chest does not necessarily mean bearing him in your heart”.¹¹ Nostalgia, on the other hand, always features this emotional surplus, it is a kind of “sad love”; “nostalgic longing” is always “defined by loss of the original object of desire, and by its spatial and temporal displacement”.¹²

Yet, all these definitions do not suffice to explain the existence of nostalgic feelings among the young generations: As we will see later, Titostalgia is not only a matter for the Yugoslav generations. This means that the concept of nostalgia as we know it must be upgraded – not for the first time, since during the past three and a half centuries the meaning of this term changed from the medical and psychiatric to the social, cultural and, political.¹³ For this

- 6 Roger Cardinal: *Collecting and Collage-Making. The Case of Kurt Schwitters*, in: John Elsner/Roger Cardinal (eds.): *The Cultures of Collecting*, Cambridge 1994, p. 93.
- 7 Susan Stewart: *On Longing – Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Durham/London 1993.
- 8 The American columnist Herb Caen defines nostalgia as “memory with the pain removed”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 15, 1975, p. 17.
- 9 Elizabeth Guffey: *Retro. The Culture of Revival*, Chicago 2006, p. 20.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 11 David Kunzle: *Che Guevara. Icon, Myth, and Message*, 1997, p. 21.
- 12 Svetlana Boym: *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York 2001, p. 38.
- 13 See Frow: *Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia*, p. 135; Turner: *A Note on Nostalgia*, pp. 147–49; Davis: *Yearning for Yesterday*, pp. 1–7; Lasch: *The True and Only Heaven*, p. 105, 106; Lowenthal: *Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn't*, p. 20, 21; Boym: *The Future of Nostalgia*, pp. 3–11; Chase/Shaw: *The Dimensions of Nostalgia*, p. 1.

reason, I introduce a new concept here: “new-nostalgia” or short “neostalgia”. I coined this term to refer to derived nostalgic images and feelings, “invented” positive memories and inclinations of individuals and groups who actually did not really live through a certain epoch or event: They subsume the nostalgic view of other people. I consider this “new wave” of nostalgia – neostalgia – as a new cultural, even subcultural retort to dominant discourses: It offers new identities on the basis of obsolete ones, new socio-cultural values deriving from previous ones despite – or, better to say, because of – the present-day contempt and disregard towards them. Neostalgia as a cultural hybrid form is, in that sense, similar to counter-memory because it “forces revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past”.¹⁴

Yet it does much more: It gives sense to the present; it constructs identities; it is “here and now”. The fact that neostalgia cultivates affirmative dialogues with the past make it subversive with regard to the present. In other words: Dominant signs, emblems or personalities of the previous regime have become free-floating signifiers of present-day alternative identities. Huyssen writes how “especially in youth cultures or subcultures, identities are provisionally taken up and articulated via lifestyle patterns and elaborate subcultural codes”.¹⁵ Hence, neostalgic constructs develop in ideologically pluralistic societies from a most heterogenic, yet still circumscribed repertoire: episodes from various historical epochs, media realities, popular culture, and borrowed memories. They do not tend to seek authenticity: Neostalgic products, outfits, events etc. do not pretend to look *as it was back then*, “real”, as it is demanded by “usual”, “direct” nostalgic projections (which are mimetic and taken seriously). No: They deliberately combine different elements into new, somehow “artificial”, “hybrid”, “surreal”, even “hyperreal” forms. They do not even try to accurately capture the atmosphere of *then*, but develop an ironic distance toward it. As will become clear from a multitude of examples (like Broz as a sleeveless biker with tattoos, as a comic character resembling Homer Simpson, as smoking dope instead of a cigar etc.), neostalgia escapes the attempt to reproduce the past the way nostalgia often does. Instead, it intentionally fabricates it, manipulates with it, and makes fun of it – yet always in a positive sense.

“He Had Everything, Really Everything!”¹⁶ – Culture of Titostalgia in Slovenia

The American memory researcher George Lipsitz argues how today we are facing the “transformation of real historical traditions and cultures into superficial icons and images”.¹⁷ The use of images from the past – nostalgic or retro – is a part of different contemporary discourses. However, the post-socialist situation here is specific, because of the whole set of different

14 George Lipsitz: *Time Passages – Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, Minneapolis/London 1997, p. 213.

15 Andreas Huyssen: *Twilight Memories – Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*; New York/London, 1995, p.32.

16 Advertisement for Mercedes where Broz appears in Mercedes limousine; Slovenia, mid-nineties.

17 Lipsitz: *Time Passages*, p. 134.

transitions pertaining to it: from the socialist to the parliamentary political system, in some cases from a multi-national state to national ones, from planned to capitalist economy. People face not only identity crises, but also serious disruptions of their memory-narratives (personal and social). In times of a Tofflerian “future shock” they often recourse to idyllic images of stable, just, friendly times and social organization. It is not a surprise that they should be susceptible to different discourses and productions of “culture of Titostalgia” present in Slovenia today. Broz’s image, signature or/and renown sayings can be found in different social environments and in unimaginably many different forms: on souvenirs and memorabilia (lockets for keys, lighters, magnets, pens, calendars, little statues, vases, pens, decorative plates etc.),¹⁸ as part of outfits (T-shirts, socks, badges), and as one of the most exposed articles in flea-markets and in antique-shops. A Slovenian tourist agency offers a kind of Tito-trip, visits to some of his residencies in Slovenia and Croatia (Villa Bled, Brioni islands – the advertising slogan goes *Marshal Tito. Experience the Magic Life of One of the World’s Magnates!*).

He appears also in advertising: His name almost became a brand in itself in commercials for Mercedes cars, Canon copying machines, the *Dnevnik* daily, Jägermeister and Marshal liqueur, a DVD-collection of ex-Yugoslav films, on sugar-packages in coffee-shops etc. Books,¹⁹ articles, and (photo-)reportages about him are published very frequently (those in the yellow-press in a spicy tone, about his personal life, love-affairs, glamour, favourite dishes²⁰ etc.), then we find Broz in street-culture (graffiti and stencils like *Long Live Comrade Tito!; Tito, Yugoslavia, Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Liberation Front; Long Live November 29, Day of Republic* [of course, of Socialist Yugoslavia], or *Back with Tito*),²¹ in huge stone inscriptions on some hills in the Slovene coastal region Primorska, in different web-sites, in art (Radoslav Zlanač’s theatre piece “How we loved Comrade Tito” was put on stage in theatres in Sežana and Nova Gorica; his image is also reinterpreted by various young Slovenian visual artists like Barbara Jakše Jeršič, Arjan Pregl, Tanja Lazetić, Natan and others; a punk band from the nineties chose the name “Tito in ekšn”, which phonetically stands for “Tito in action”), in special events and parties (on his alleged birthday on May 25, the former *Day of Youth*, there are simulations of socialist-like celebrations in some places in Slovenia; in the Metelkova alternative centre in Ljubljana a Tito-fest is organized with concerts of alternative bands), and in popular culture (e. g. with the imitator Ivo Godnič). The motives for creating and selling such products and events and promoting and popularizing such

18 In Russia, similar products featuring Lenin’s image are called *Leninalia*.

19 The most recent, published by the Slovenian author Miro Simčič, is symptomatically entitled *Tito brez maske* [Tito without Mask], Ljubljana, 2007.

20 Typical titles include *Tito-myth rises again and with vigour; Tito goes to Hollywood; Secrets of Tito’s cuisine*; or *Tito and hard-boiled buckwheat mush* (in Slovenian, *ajdovi žganci*, a popular peasant’s dish).

21 In 2005, on walls in Ljubljana very simple posters appeared, of an anonymous author, in form of a warrant against Broz, together with his photos, *because of the founded suspicion that he committed very serious criminal offences as follows* – and then there was a list of good deeds like *because he for 50 years most severely prohibited wars, hunger, poverty and chauvinism; because he built factories and apartments for workers and secured them regular salaries and decent pensions* etc.

discourses vary greatly: They go from the commercial to the artistic – yet what unites them to represent a “culture of Titostalgia” is their instrumentality, wish, and endeavour to achieve something with it.

“How do you discretely get to know someone’s age? Ask her/him how old s/he was when Tito died!”²² – Titostalgic culture in Slovenia

Let us now reverse the perspective and see how Broz is generally (dis)appreciated among the people. Besides measured public attention to the abovementioned culture of nostalgia, a firm indicator of Broz’s popularity are public-opinion surveys made and published by research institutes and media. It was quite shocking for the present-day political elites and their media that his historic role was evaluated as “very positive” and “positive” by 83,6 per cent (in 1995), by 84,3 (in 1998) and by a meteoric 90 per cent (in 2003) of respondents.²³ In 2000, his rule was seen as either “excellent” or “good” by 45,1 per cent, and only 10 per cent responded “poor”.²⁴ In the polls of 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004 and 2007, Tito was considered as a “positive personality” by 67,2–63,9–79,3–79,5 and 81,4 per cent of those questioned, and as “negative” by only 10–10,2–7,2–12,1 and 10,6 per cent.²⁵ In an inquiry conducted on the occasion of the 25th-anniversary of his death in May 2005 by the Slovenian daily *Delo*, he was considered as a “positive personality” by 69 per cent and as “negative” by 24 per cent; in the one carried out by POP TV he was considered as “positive” by three-quarters and as “negative” by the remaining quarter.²⁶ In a longitudinal research he was judged as the sixth (in 1995), the fourth (in 1998) and again the fourth (in 2003) most important personality in Slovenian history.²⁷ The high esteem mirrored in these public opinion surveys in Slovenia resembles those in other post-Yugoslav states.

Slovenes are among the most frequent visitors of Broz’s birthplace in Kumrovec in Croatia or of his tomb in Belgrade – according to some data, they make up almost half of all visitors to both places. In the guest books in these two places, we read notes from Slovenian “pilgrims” like *We are happy because we lived in his time; We would need you, you Old man!*;²⁸ *We love you, you great man, inscribed in the history of humanity among other great men; As long as you were alive, there was peace, there was prosperity. Thank you; We Slovenes respect history; or*

22 A piece of advice from a friend of mine from Ljubljana.

23 Niko Toš et al.: *Vrednote v prehodu II.* – Slovensko javno mnenje 1990–1998, Ljubljana 1999, pp. 563, 870; Niko Toš et al.: *Vrednote v prehodu III.* – Slovensko javno mnenje 1999–2004, Ljubljana 2004, p. 473.

24 Brian Požun: *Tito Is Dead ... Long Live Tito!*, in: *Central European Review*, Vol. 2, no. 19, May 15, 2000.

25 Mateja Hrastar/Vanja Pirc, *Ljubi diktator – Ljubiti, prezirati, častiti ali sovražiti lik in delo Josipa Broza Tita* [To love, to despise, to honour, or to hate the figure and work of Josip Borz Tito], in: *Mladina*, May 24, 2004, p. 23; and Božo Repe: *Lik in delo tovariša Tita* [The figure and work of Comrade Tito], in: *Mladina*, May 19, 2007, p. 46.

26 POP TV 24ur.com *Ankete*, March 2005 (accessed August 12, 2005).

27 Toš et al.: *Vrednote v prehodu II.*, pp. 554, 866; Toš et al.: *Vrednote v prehodu III.*, p. 468.

28 *Old man (Stari)* was one of Broz’s nicknames from the Partisan times on.

Dear Comrade Tito, we, Pioneers of Koper, came to visit you. Rest in peace. Ten streets and squares in Slovenian towns are still bearing his name, and there is a huge monument of Broz in the central square of the industrial town of Velenje. There are, like in other parts of ex-Yugoslavia, some Tito-associations and clubs, involved in all kind of Titostalgic activities, including sending delegations to commemorations or celebrations dedicated to him; the youth branches of the Social Democratic Party and of Partisan associations sometimes also take part. The initiator of the nostalgia museum in Ljubljana, himself a passionate collector of Yugonostalgic relics and the founder of the “Nostalgia Institute”, says that *Tito is surely an icon with which I grew up, and I cannot avoid him. Some people like him, others do not, but I can assure you that he is a part of me.*²⁹ Plus, Broz’s images are somewhat still part of interior design: Pictures, needleworks, and decorations from the Yugoslav times can still be seen on the walls of some retro-places (In the nineties, there were also two Yugonostalgic bars in Ljubljana, one named *Tito*, and the other *Nostalgia*), alternative clubs, some offices as well as in some homes.

“He was a genius!”³⁰ – (Mis)Understanding Titostalgia

In one way or another, it seems that Broz is “reborn” into a politically, ideologically, socially, and culturally different world and that he adapted well into it. There are some significant differences in the ways of devotion to him “before and after” the dissolution of Yugoslavia: In socialist times it was collective, while now it is also individual (at the most in small groups); back then it was compulsory and organized by the state apparatus; now it is strictly voluntary. *In those times* it consisted of a closed, standardized, canonized system of representation, while today it is open (including trivia that accompany every media personality, with the usual bunch of scandals, gossips etc.). Now everything fits into the narrative: Former ideological exclusivity was replaced by pop-cultural eclectics and heteroculture. This means that the semantics and aims of present-day Titostalgia do not simply resume old affection: Continuity is accompanied by discontinuity, new elements and generations are introduced, and there’s a spread of profitable nostalgic production (from popular culture to memorabilia).

This lasting and firm veneration of Broz cannot be understood easily, as a consequence of one or few factors. Interpretations of such a complex social phenomenon must avoid popular simplistic explanations, which mostly rest on ideological binarisms and aprioristic (dis)qualifications. It is often stated that Broz is venerated only by the elder generations, by *old Comrades* who crave for their youth, enthusiasm, and the (socialist) world they have lost. Yet nostalgic sentiment and pose (wearing T-shirts, writing graffiti, visiting Tito’s birthplace or his tomb during students’ excursions etc.) are spread also among young, post-Yugoslav gen-

29 Iva Gruden: Muzejska energija nostalgije [The museum’s energy of nostalgia], in: Nedelo, 6. 2008, p. 23.

30 Answer of the Slovenian comic Tone Fornezzi to the question “What is your opinion about Tito?” during a TV interview with Jože Činč, Čarli TV, May 3, 2008.

erations. This is why introducing the concept of neostalgia seems appropriate. Others explain the whole Titostalgia as mere business: “Tito sells well!”, so why not turn his image into another commodity and consumer product? However, many of these artefacts, activities, events have no commercial value or purpose whatsoever. Rather than being only a new advertising trick, Tito is also something very intimate, non-instrumental: a “reflective nostalgia”, as Boym would put it.³¹ Thirdly, the “rehabilitation” of Broz in media culture, marketing and people’s imagination is often interpreted as just another passatism that is a fascination with the past, which frequently is to be found in fast-changing societies. This again is only a partial truth, because other nostalgic currents, e. g. Austroalgia are less popular.³²

It is often maintained that Titostalgics are supposedly Leftists, adherents of the communist or socialist ideology – yet we find them also among nationalists or right-wingers. The leader of the extremist Slovene National Party, Drago Jelinčič, even erected a new monument to Broz in his private backyard and publicly praises him as *one of the coolest guys in our history*;³³ his party even suggested that the central street in Ljubljana be renamed back to “Tito’s street”, as it was before 1991. The candidate of the Slovene People’s Party in the elections in 2006 put Broz’s painting next to a long quote from his famous speech during the Trieste-crisis in 1953. Opinion polls show that Broz is not considered as a “positive personality” only among supporters of the Left and the Liberals (100 per cent of pensioner party supporters, 92,9 per cent of the Social Democrats, and 92,3 per cent of the Liberal Democrats), and among the secular nationalists of the abovementioned Jelinčič (88,9 per cent), but also among the majority of the electorate of the right-wing parties (an amazing 80 per cent of those who vote for the People’s Party, 59,8 per cent of supporters of the Slovenian Democratic Party, and 52,2 per cent of those who vote for the pro-Catholic New Slovenia party.³⁴ Titostalgia does not exclude religious feelings: An inscription from a Slovenian visitor in the guest book at his tomb in Belgrade goes *Dear Josip Broz Tito, let the Almighty God give you eternal peace and rest!*

Some more (mis)interpretations of this strange and lasting devotion to Broz exist. Some consider it as oriented exclusively backwards, as old fashioned and static – as an exact reproduction, using old means. However, even a superficial insight reveals that Broz *is alive* also in new media and in new products: in numerous web-pages, in witty sounds and images for cell-phones, on mouse-pads; on his birthday funny greeting-cards with his photos and comments are send via e-mail, and there is even a competition for bloggers about *Tito’s connection*

31 Boym: *The Future of Nostalgia*, pp. 44–51.

32 Bojan Baskar: *Ambivalent Dealings with an Imperial Past. The Habsburg Legacy and New Nationhood in ex-Yugoslavia*, lecture at the Institut für Ethnologie, Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie, Vienna, November 11th 2003, <hw.oeaw.ac.at/x-coll80623/band010.pdf>.

33 Symptomatically, high politicians from the “Left” did not make any positive remarks on Broz or referred to him in the immediate transition period, although they had made a political career already during Yugoslav times: the first president of the independent Slovenia, Milan Kučan, had been the leader of the Slovenian League of Communists, while the first prime minister, Janez Drnovšek, had even been President of Yugoslavia.

34 Božo Repe: *Lik in delo tovariša Tita*, in: *Mladina*, May 19, 2007, p. 46.

with Slovenian bloggers on <www.drugisvet.com/news/tito.html> – the first fifty of them who will give their opinion about him will receive a discount of ten euros in a given web shop. Frequently, we find the explanation that Titostalgia is a simple continuation of the old personality cult with his charismatic rule, the often narcissistic self-image so systematically and carefully built from Partisan times onwards and enforced after the split with Stalin. Here I partly agree, given that other myths of great men, ‘hero-archy’ in Thomas Carlyle’s words, in Slovenian history come and go, while Broz not only remained, but acquired new dimensions (including ironic: For example in one of Ljubljana’s alternative outings there is Broz’s photo on the doors of the men’s restrooms and his wife Jovanka’s on the women’s ...). Yet, Titostalgia cannot be understood as a mechanical transfer of positive memories and opinions from the old to the younger generation: In the receptions and the productions of the latter, his image and historical role are often decontextualized and signify something different from what their (grand)parents knew. And finally, since nostalgia is always an implicit critique of the present condition – it tells more about what goes wrong now than what went good *back then* – Titostalgia can be understood as a subversive discourse, or a mere provocation, or a kind of defence against new ideological currents (like nationalism, consumerism, new Eurocentrism,³⁵ neoliberalism, or better to say, turbo-capitalism, retraditionalization, desecularization ...). Still, together with this negation of present-day ideologies it does affirm past ones – socialism, Yugoslavism, social justice, solidarity, and brotherhood between nations – in short, *Tito’s lost world*.

“Come Back, You Legend!”³⁶ – Instead of a conclusion

Surprisingly, both the culture of Titostalgia and Titostalgic culture do not considerably differ as for which ex-Yugoslav state they appear in. Slovenia was the only republic that escaped the catastrophic events of the nineties (wars, killings, devastation, economic decay, political extremism, social unrests etc.) which determine developments also in the decade after the turn of the millennium. Nostalgia in other parts of ex-Yugoslavia seems understandable: Because Broz was a symbol of friendship, solidarity, welfare, safety, it seems logical that people should long for him and *his times*. As a rule, such sentiments are stronger when the present is much harsher than the past. Dissatisfaction and despair fuel nostalgia: Reveries of past *happy days* seem to be a refuge in a troubled and degenerated world. Yet why are there so many of these nostalgic elements also in Slovenia, which evaded the tragedy of the other ex-Yugoslav republics, and whose post-socialist transition is relatively smooth in comparison?

I would argue with Lasch that “progress implied nostalgia as its mirror image”.³⁷ To explain Titostalgia in Slovenia, I have to return to the very core of nostalgia as a collective sentiment. I call this phenomenon nostalgia and not simply retro because of its definitely

35 Mitja Velikonja: Eurosis – A critique of the New Eurocentrism, Ljubljana 2005, <mediawatch.mirovni-institut.si/eng/eurosis.pdf>.

36 Quote from the guest book at Kumrovec, 2007.

37 Lasch: The True and Only Heaven, p. 92.

positive emotional charge. It is a “crepuscular emotion”, writes Davis.³⁸ Titostalgia grew on the selected, prettified, idealized image of someone, sometime, but while retro is superficial, ironic, instrumental, and transitory, nostalgia goes deeper: It is sentimental, it has pathos, it’s elegiac (and often defensive). In all abovementioned products, artefacts, constructs, opinions etc. we find affirmative elements: Symptomatically, there are almost no anti-Broz graffiti, T-shirts, other products, images, or jokes that would make fun of him or blacken him. After decades of explanations, controversies, critics, and praises about who Broz actually was – *infallible leader* or just another *ruthless tyrant, worldwide respected politician* or *mass-murderer of political opponents, liberator* or *agent of the Komintern* – he retained a sort of “indefinable positivity”. Namely, when you ask people, *why Tito* is a part of their positive memories, why his image appears on various products, or why they consider him as a respectable political personality, the answers often remain shallow like *after all, he was cool; in general, he was good, honest, fair* etc. They do not and cannot give you a more concrete answer.

Broz’s meta-position as being *basically good* represents in fact a mythical position of the universal as an empty form, which can be filled with the most different ideological meanings. In other words, everyone can invest in *him* what (s)he wants: one person likes him simply because at *his time* (s)he was young; some other because *his regime* helped him or her with his or her job or housing; still some other because of his left ideology, for being a *rebel*, for being able to unify for so long so many different nations; some people associate him with the memory on the *innocence of those times*; still others consider him *great* for being a respectable person in international politics; or simply because he was a *tough guy, a ladies’ man*, because of his glamour, and so on.

It must be pointed out that ex-Yugoslavs are not at all uncritical of Broz’s historical role: They are not – as it is still often heard – *stultified, seduced by red propaganda, or brainwashed*. They are well aware of the other faces of Broz (and Yugoslavia), of the mistakes, repressions, persecutions, injustices, and violence executed in his name and/or under his rule. Some try to rationalize Titostalgia by making a kind of mathematical calculation, a “balance of accounts”, in order to “sum up his pluses and minuses” – and as the former seem to be more, this would explain the development of nostalgic feelings. However, we must take into account that any conception of history is both about remembering and about forgetting. When speaking about nostalgia, we must move one step further: The positive image of Broz has, in my view, less to do with *who he actually was*, but with *who we want he was*, with *what we wish now he was then*. Nostalgia reproduces a past that actually never was, that never occurred as such – it has to do less with past realities than with past dreams and hopes. It usually develops in conditions that are worse than the previous ones: But on the other hand – and that is the case of Yugonostalgia and Titostalgia in Slovenia – it is part of parallel social discourses and cultural practices, no matter how the present-day situation is.

This means that the positivistic efforts of trying to explain *why/what/who was better then* in a way misses the point: Nostalgia is a wish that cannot be realized – it is broken in itself; it yearns not only for the impossible, for the times/things/people passed, but also for the

38 Davis: *Yearning for Yesterday*, p. 110.

never-existent. As Stewart aptly states³⁹, nostalgia is “a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience”; it is a “desire for desire”; “it remains behind and before that experience”. In other words, “nostalgia is the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity of all repetition and denies the repetition’s capacity to form identity”. It is a safe, and on the other side frustrating discourse: It speaks about *paradise lost* that cannot return, even more, that never actually really existed.

For Debord, in our image culture, “all that once was directly lived has become mere representation”.⁴⁰ Hyperreality can be understood as “models of a real without origin or reality”.⁴¹ But another dimension must be added to this change in representation. Different nostalgic narratives – in this case post-socialist ones, *Ostalgie*, *jugonostalgija*, *Titostalgia*, Soviet nostalgia – actually do not deal with the “real” historical epoch, events, personalities etc. Surprisingly, they are not as much about Yugoslavia, Tito, *solidarity of socialist times* etc. as it seems at first glance, and as they usually present themselves, but they are about an indeterminably rightful, safe and friendly world. At the bottom of socialist, or more precisely, Titoist simulacra – like the reproduction of celebrations for his birthday, the appearance of his image on all kind of paraphernalia, his rebirth on the web, theatrical imitations of him, positive reinterpretations of his life in popular imagination etc. – we always find positive utopia, undefined longing and searching for better times, a “transcendence of reality” or a “transcendence of the existent” in Mannheim’s terms.⁴² Utopia, as Jameson understands it, “as a form is not the representation of the radical alternatives; it is rather simply the imperative to imagine them”.⁴³ While all kind of futurists look for their utopias in the future, esoterics in some parallel worlds, in other dimensions, nostalgics find them in the past – for them, *la belle époque* is already over.⁴⁴

Paradoxically, Broz’s promises, optimism, and efforts to make a better world for the Yugoslav nations survived only in the fictive world of nostalgia: a “future-to-be” turned into “retrospective utopia”, a true historical personality into a typical myth, a politician resurrected as pop-idol, and an ardent communist became a commercial brand. According to Jugonostalgic and Titostalgic narratives “Yu was a flawless country” and “Broz was an impeccable leader”. But such perfection can come into being, can live and can survive only in utopia – which literally means “no-place”, “a place that does not exist”.

39 Susan Stewart: *On Longing – Narratives of the Miniature, the gigantic, the Souvenir, the collection*, Durham, London 1993, p. 23.

40 Guy Debord: *The Society of the Spectacle*, New York 1994, p. 12.

41 Jean Baudrillard: *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ann Arbor 1994, p. 1.

42 Karl Mannheim: *Ideologija i utopija*, Beograd 1968, pp. 157, 160 (dt. *Ideologie und Utopie*, Frankfurt am Main 81995).

43 Fredric Jameson: *Archaeologies of the Future – The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, London/New York 2005, p. 416.

44 Karl Mannheim: *Ideologija i utopija*, Beograd 1968, p. 212, warns against the disappearance of utopia, as it would bring “a transformation of the entire human nature and development” and a “static objectivity in which man himself will become an object”.