

MANY VOICES, ONE PICTURE

PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF FOREIGN NEWS IN SLOVENIAN DAILY PRESS (1980, 2004)

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Abstract

The paper addresses the issues of information dependency and one-way flow of information through an overview of changes in photographic (and textual) coverage of international news in Slovenian daily newspaper *Delo*. The question of the negative representation of developing countries is addressed against the background of the New World Information and Communication Order debate that serves as a normative framework of the study. Although international news agencies are shown to significantly delimit and frame the agenda of international news, author rejects the simplistic deterministic notion of dependency and emphasises the important role of "indigenous" gate keeping and editorial decisions in the production of published representations, which he sees as decisively shaped by collective identities (professional and national) of imagined community the newspaper serves to inform.

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Introduction

The debates on the international flow of news and the impact of the basic structural inequality of these flows are – in spite of their increasing and continuous homogenisation – significantly absent from the mainstream of contemporary communication research. Although the interest in the dominance of communication flows by developed nations and the consequent information dependence of developing/underdeveloped countries has been to a certain extent revived in the mid 1990s and continues to this day (e.g. Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 1998; Rampal 1995; Sreberny and Stevenson 1999; Wu 2003), it has not reached the scale, attention or the controversy of the news flow research between 1970s and mid 1980s. This earlier research was to a large extent directly related to the debates on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (MacBride et al., 1980/1984) and waned with the loss of NWICO's political momentum with US (and later UK) decision to withdraw from UNESCO in 1984. It should however not be overlooked that the diminished interest in the issues of *information dependency* and *one-way flow of information* as mechanisms of perpetuating a neo-colonial distribution of global power relations symptomatically came about as trans-national companies (TNCs) begun re-inscribing international power relations on an unprecedented scale and re-emerged a decade later as the new political-economic “world order” begun to consolidate.

This paper addresses the question of negative (biased) coverage of the developing world through an overview of changes in the (pictorial) coverage of international news in a leading Slovenian daily newspaper *Delo* between 1980 and 2004. As such, it shall remain confined to the normative frame set by the MacBride report not only because of the timeframe of the study but: (1) because the report explicitly linked communication problems to international economic order (MacBride et al 1984, 59, 11-118), emphasising the links between news, international news agencies, capitalism, nation building and globalisation; and (2) because regardless of its political emanation within the UNESCO, NWICO was essentially a movement aimed at redefining (reclaiming) the right to communicate as a personal, not as property right.¹

There are at least three reasons why *Delo* can serve particularly well to illustrate the changes in the issues of *one-way flow* of news and *information dependency*. Firstly, in 1980 *Delo* was a part of media system of a country (Yugoslavia) that was not only one of the forerunners of the Non-aligned movement and the NWICO debate but also one of the initiators of Third World information exchange in an attempt to reduce the information dependency on Western news sources. Secondly, Slovenia's transition to democracy and free market economy in 1991 makes *Delo* today an illustrative example of possible (non)responses to contemporary structural imbalances in information flows due to the newspaper's weak economic position (limited resources due to small market). Thirdly, Slovenia's in-between position (or semi-periphery, if we put it in Wallerstein's terms), by not entirely being an integral part of the “neo-colonising” developed North and not belonging to the developing countries of the global South, raises a question of the extent to which the negative coverage of the developing world is an “indigenous” activity of Slovenian media producers and gatekeepers.

International News Agencies and the Flow of International News

NWICO debates were important as they explicitly tied the information imbalances and consequent negative coverage of the developing world with the activities of major international (Western) news agencies. At the time, the “Big Four” Western international news agencies (Associated Press, Agence France Press, Reuters and United Press International), followed by Soviet TASS, effectively dominated the international news scene. In 1970s, nearly 80 percent of world news emanated from London, Paris and New York (MacBride et al 1984, 72, 114) and represented even a larger share of news sources *de facto* used by the media (e.g. Argumedo 1982; Schramm et al. 1978), a share that remained relatively unchanged over the following decade (Alleyne and Wagner 1993; Rampal 1995). The “Big Four” news agencies embodied the most direct link between the international news order and persistent legacy of colonial dependencies (championed by Western TNCs): major news agencies, themselves important TNCs, were founded at the peak of European colonialist (imperialist) expansion, and had been “intimately associated with the territorial colonialism of the late nineteenth century” (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 23) The cartel agreement between British Reuters, French Havas, German Wolf and US Associated Press that stipulated the global control of news between 1871 and 1934, left permanent structural imprint on world information distribution: *oligopoly market*, restrictive both to emerging new market players (agencies) and to alternative products (definitions of news).

Both of the major objections, raised by the developing countries – the issue of negative news coverage of developing countries and imbalanced traffic of media products – were the subject of a variety of studies, ranging from “global” IAMCR/ UNESCO sponsored studies such as the “World of the News” (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1984) or television programme flow studies (Nordenstreng and Varis 1974; Varis 1984) to smaller size comparative projects and case studies such as e.g. Schram et al. 1978; Skurnik 1981; Lange 1984; Okigbo 1985; or Becker et al. 1981; Kirat and Weaver 1985 etc. that confirmed that the dissemination of international news was in fact dominated by a small group of powerful players – the Western news agencies – while the implications of this domination were a matter of serious and ideologically charged debate.

On the one hand, developing countries experienced agencies’ type of coverage² – which under the banner of “objective and neutral reporting” provided news content that focused on spot news, crisis and dramatic events and hence continuously represented developing world as a site of armed conflicts, economic and political instability, poverty and natural disasters – as a threat to their political and economic endeavours³ and information dependency as a threat to their culture identity. (e.g. Osolnik 1978; Boyd Barrett, 1980; Mowlana 1986) On the other hand, their opponents did not consider the power of the North to define and interpret the socio-political reality of the South according to its own cultural norms and value systems to be problematic since they viewed the news agency coverage to be “*accurate even if unbalanced*” (Stevenson 1984, 130, original italics). They claimed that Third World media did not operate much differently from their Western counterparts (e.g. “regional bias” was found equally valid for the Third World media which tended not to report on non-regional Third World countries

(Sreberny-Mohammady 1984) nor did they promote alternative news concepts such as “development news”). Similarly, dependency thesis was denounced by stressing the active role of Third World gatekeepers, journalists and interests of national elites in reproducing media content (Skurnik 1981). The news distortion was hence not the result of “Third World seeing their world through Western eyes” but of their “indigenous” selection from the menu of news guided by the national interests of the states (Okigbo 1985; Stevenson 1984).

While the latter view does make a strong case regarding the *active role of “indigenous” gatekeepers* in shaping media content, the autonomy of their selections however remains *decisively constrained* by the contents of the news diet provided by the Western news agencies. What crystallises out of the above described debates is that major news agencies do influence international news to a significant extent and that their influence operates on two basic structural levels: (1) they influence what news gets into the news flow, and (2) they set the standard of content and form/presentation of news. Their definition of news and organisational practice often served as ideal models for newly established national agencies (e.g. Third World in 1980s and former East Bloc countries in 1990s) or established agencies struggling to improve their market position. The “distorted picture” was and still is an outcome of the underlying economic logic: the content of news (what and how is covered and what importance is attributed to it) is primarily determined not in the locations where it is gathered but in the locations where it is consumed and paid for (Chu 1985; Boyd-Barrett 1980).

Two and a half decades later, the international news “order” still retains its basic structural imbalance and world news continue to be purveyed from a single “editorial perspective” shared by a relatively small but culturally homogenous group of newswriters from the developed countries of the global West. In spite of (or perhaps precisely because of) the proliferation of local, regional and global media since the end of the Cold war, the overall structure of “raw news” media market remained relatively intact. While there has been some increase in the diversity regarding the number of players on the international market, major news agencies maintained their leading role in the hierarchy due to their accumulated market benefits. (Boyd-Barrett 1998, 27)

However within this frame of Euro-American structural domination, there have been several important changes, which to a certain extent contribute to the homogenisation of world news. At the first tier of the news agency hierarchy, the number of major players had reduced from five to three (AP, Reuters, AFP), and there has been increase of competition and market share at the second tier by several European national agencies, such as Spain’s EFE and Germany’s DPA. At the third tier, many of the national news agencies of former Second and Third World are in crisis, facing financial difficulties and diminished scale of operations, or in poorer countries, are on the verge of collapse. National news agencies that were symbols of the sovereignty of newly emerged nation states have lost once enthusiastic support of their respective governments as the nation building projects appear completed and the power of economic development control is increasingly transferred from states to TNCs. As the result, world faced weaker service of national news agencies in “democratic nineties” than in “autocratic eighties.” (Boyd-Barrett 2001) Similarly, the fourth tier of alternative news agencies such as Inter Press Service, Pan African

Press Agency or the Non-Aligned Press Agency Pool has all but disappeared as their promise of bringing more “regionally balanced” or “alternative” coverage international news flow was not met “due to their lack of credibility in the eyes of mainstream “first world” newspapers, and financial insecurity” (Boyd-Barrett 1998, 20).

Second set of changes concerns the classical model of news collection and dissemination, which is being continuously undermined by blurring of the distinctions between wholesalers (AFP, AP, Reuters), retailers (national news agencies) and end users. New technologies (e.g. Internet) have enabled major agencies a more direct access to the end-users and simultaneously enabled some strong media players (e.g. BBC, CNN) to become retailers or even wholesalers of their own content to other end-users. Third set of recent developments is the growing discrepancy between the definition of news by which supply (agencies) operate and the concept of news practiced by the increasingly tabloidised media. It has been noted that the “dumbing down” of media content of profit driven, deregulated and privatised media reduces their requirement for traditional new agency services. On the other hand, the agencies themselves have been under increased pressure of commercialisation to which many of them answered by transformation from news to information agencies (Boyd-Barrett 2000).

As economic interests seem to have prevailed over public service and private corporations and interests over the power of states and international negotiation, the international flows of information and news are even more dominated by economic imperatives than they were during the NWICO debate. The rise of new structures in international news flows (such as transnational regional media) and new technologies for news production and dissemination could not effectively challenge the growing homogenisation of international media conglomerates (spurred by mergers in increasingly deregulated legal environment) and the less developed areas of the globe are even more excluded from international communication. They receive news coverage only if that is financially justifiable, which in general means spot news and negative coverage of “coups and disasters.” The major three Western news agencies “now enjoy the status which the rest of the world by and large now seems to tolerate: the ‘dependency’ NWICO discourses [...] have been conquered, temporarily at least, by a worldwide neo-liberal discourse” (Rantanen and Boyd-Barrett 1998, 15-16).

Yugoslav Media and the Reporting of International News

Delo's international news coverage was approached through critical reading of published photographs and a rudimentary content analysis of sources and themes of published articles. The images were interpreted against the background of textual coverage which to a large extent determines their meaning. For each year (1980 and 2004), a 36-day sample was composed from the same randomly selected three months (April, July, October) and two weeks of publications selected out of each. Within this 36-day sample, front and back pages, “International politics” and “Daily news” pages that carried main international news were scrutinised for visual and textual coverage, including geographic location of events, source(s) of news and topics in order to trace the difference between positive and negative coverage.⁴

In 1980, *Delo* was one of the 23 regional newspapers that supplied the daily printed news to 20 million citizens of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Due to its multiethnic and multilingual population as well as Party's strategy to avoid ethnic frictions, the media system was decentralised and the bulk of national audience got their information from regional (republic) media, such as *Delo* (Robinson 1977, 47) Yugoslav media system strongly differed from those of other communist countries and in many ways mirrored country's ambivalent (exceptional) socio-political position which made it share and voice many of the Third World concerns despite its geographic location and political system that positioned it as a country of the Second World. The principal difference was that Yugoslav media system was the only communist media system that was not authoritarian but *paternalistic*: "Its media system was based simultaneously on a state-dominated, one-party political system and centrally planned economy and on self-management pluralism of (mainly political) interests and market economy that introduced some features of civil society" (Splichal 1994, 27).

The self-management system (at least in theory) needed well informed citizens and Yugoslav media were given an uneasy task of providing comprehensive information to its citizens, including *interpretation* and *critique* of "negative phenomena in society," while simultaneously still serving as "means of social education" and contributing to the building of a Socialist society. Due to this "freedom because of responsibility," media were not directly owned and/or controlled by the state or by the Communist party nor were they financially dependent on them but were financed through subscriptions, licence fees and partly from advertising. Consequently, their co-orientation with "the official line" of politics was normally achieved not through direct control but through "informal channels" (Robinson 1977, 146), trial and error reporting or "off the record" consultations, informal pressures and other arrangements – although the regime could (and occasionally would) resort to overt and direct forms of censorship (e.g. banning of publications, suspensions or imprisonment).

If domestic news lacked a clear, all embracing Yugoslav perspective due to the decentralised media system, the international news would reflect a more common Yugoslav perspective on events, fine-tuned to the taste and "needs" of target republic audience. Yugoslavia was strongly dedicated to building horizontal communication between Third World and Non-aligned countries and all Yugoslav media were to some extent involved in consequent launching "of extensive array of self-help and cooperation scheme" (Jakubowitz 1985) to create alternative networks and stimulate news flows and information exchange between the countries of the Third World that would be unmediated by the "Big Four" Western news agencies. In 1975 Yugoslavia's national news agency TANJUG became the coordinator and one of the main contributors to the 41-member NAPAP – the Non Aligned Press Agency Pool (apart from NAPAP, these initiatives included PANA, LATIN, CANA, GNA, and IPS). Even before that, TANJUG had an extensive network of its own correspondents and stringers in Africa, Asia and South America that balanced the overemphasis of major agencies' news diet on the power centres of West and East bloc to the one more attuned to Yugoslav Non-Aligned position. Similarly, individual newspapers had their own networks of foreign correspondents whose stationing reflected country's overall political orientation.

International News in *Delo* in 1980

In 1980, *Delo's* offering of international news would on an average day be comprised of two to five front and back page articles, nine longer and informative articles in the "foreign policy" page and an overview of world events in a form of 10 to 13 short articles and "teleprinter" news section on "daily events" page. Out of the 1228 articles in the sample, well over half (57 percent) was reported by "indigenous" *new sources*: 39 percent by TANJUG wire or TANJUG correspondents and nearly 18 percent by *Delo's* correspondents and journalists. The "Big Four" agencies (AFP, AP, UPI and Reuters) were the source of 25 percent of the news items while national agencies of East European, Non aligned and Third World countries accounted for little less than 10 percent of the news. Articles that offered some background information or interpretation of the main event were generally attributed to Yugoslav sources, either to *Delo's* correspondents or TANJUG (only 11 percent of the 357 such articles were attributed to the "Big Four" agencies).

Geographically, *Delo* selected 54 percent of its coverage from Second and Third World, while news from developed countries of the First World were featured in 40 percent of the articles and 6 percent was concentrated on the work of international organisations such as United Nations. The "regional bias" of the foreign news coverage (e.g. Sreberny-Mohammady, 1984) is confirmed only to some extent and with some reservations: while the immediate geographic area (Europe) did receive the highest coverage, i.e. 36 percent, there was a significant gap between news from its Western and Eastern part. Although Yugoslavia bordered on more countries of the East Bloc than on those from the West, the articles from the latter outnumbered those from the former by a ratio of 3 to 1. Similarly, there were even more news from Africa (11 percent) or Middle East than those from East Europe.

As for the *topics* and the question of *negative coverage*, events from the Third World did receive nearly four times the negative coverage than those from the First World. But it should be stressed that the coverage of the Third World was not limited to the discourse of "coups and disasters" – all regions of the Third World for example featured prominently in "positive" topics of international politics and economy (42 and 15 percent respectively). Through this, the Third World political elites were presented as active and equal opponents to their Western counterparts and the internal dynamics of the Third World was exposed through comprehensive coverage of its regions. While *Delo* generally focused on "spot news" and elite politics, it should also be noted that development issues of the Third World were frequently addressed and that social and economic failures of capitalism in First World countries were occasionally singled out.

Photographic Narrative – Formalism

Yugoslav attempts to stimulate horizontal communication flows remained confined to textual coverage. Neither *Delo* nor TANJUG had permanently stationed photojournalists abroad. While photographs of domestic news were relatively prominently displayed, *Delo's* use of visual material for international news was more reserved and formal. Photographs were more often confined to front and back pages than to the *International politics* page which frequently carried political cartoons from foreign press instead. Photographs were most frequently used to supplement the spot news, serving as a proof of the described events. Generally,

such photographs were static in composition and taken from mid-distance which further emphasised their claim of mere “objective” recordings of the events. They appeared alongside longer articles rather than as independent news items and captions were kept short and factual rather than interpretative as not to obscure the legitimacy of photographs. With rare exceptions, they were not (action) shots of events as they are unfolding but predominantly recordings of their consequences and aftermath (war damage (7.10.), survivors from a sunken ship (25.4.) etc.). This type of “validation” photographs comprised the largest category of the 70 photographs published during the six-week sample period. Second largest category were photographs of political actors (portraits) while the third was comprised of photographs that served mainly to illustrate, not to tell the news, like “every day scenes” from the trenches of Iraq-Iran war (3.10.), or to convey impressions or background information (German election posters (3.10.)).

Delo's sources of the photographic material were restricted and dominated by a single Western source, UPI, which contributed a third of all photographs. Half of the photographs were either archive or non-credited, a significant portion of which were head and shoulder portraits of politicians or military leaders of agency origin. Although there are no big differences in the amount of coverage received by *geographic* regions of First and Third World (the Second World is however nearly invisible), there is a significant difference in the content of the published photographs.

As was already noted above, the underlying concern of the NWICO objections was not just imbalance of quantity but even more importantly, imbalance of content, of topics and the manner in which they were covered and to what purpose they were employed. The photographic discourse on the whole focused on the depiction of “negative” news topics (wars and coups, crime, terrorism) and it was Third World in particular that received *negative* photographic coverage (16 out of 34 photographs), dominated by images of war and destruction. In contrast, First World was presented mainly through its political representatives, mostly in the form of small, passport style identification photographs; only 4 out of 36 photographs depicted negative news such as social unrest and terrorism.

But negative photographic coverage does not refer only to visualisation of negative circumstances and events; equally, if not more important, is the *passivisation* of the Third World through distribution of roles and emphasis given to depicted persons, that is characteristic for published wire photographs. Individuals and groups from Third World were rarely made the focus of attention and were either reduced to backdrop or absent from the photographs altogether. Thus during the sample period, a certain visual binary opposition emerges within which the Third World occupies the passive (or negative) pole.

This negative visual representation of Third World was however confined only to spot news, covered by wire photographs, while photographs accompanying more informative and interpretative articles, published in *Delo's* Saturday supplement – although during the sample period there were few and far between – offer an “alternative picture,” a sort of visual correlate of the development news.

Taken by *Delo's* staff photographers, they depict Third World official representatives (politicians, union representatives) and street scenes (street vendors) in a particularly positive manner. Prominently displayed large photographs presented Third World people as distinctive individuals, not the wire service anonymous vague figures receding into the background. Framing, selective focus, and (low

angle) point of view all enhance the impression of their dignity and the proximity of medium and close range shots contribute to our imagined closeness with the subjects. Even the photographs from Saturday supplement not taken by *Delo's* staff photographers offer a more positive, sympathetic depiction, indicating to the correlation between question of positive/negative coverage and Western news paradigm (depth of coverage) already highlighted by the NWICO-related research of the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 1: *Delo*, 9th of April 1980, international news page

Bo Nimeiri zapustil Sadata?

Ohladitev med Sudanom in Egiptom – Pritisk arabskih prestolnic – Razumevanje kairskega tiska – Gospodarske in politične težave sudanskega predsednika Džaruma Nimeirija

OD DOPISNIKA TANJUGA

KAIRO, 9. aprila – V Kairu prvič javno govorijo o »drugem sestanku Sudana do Egipta« oziroma priznavajo tudi določeno ohladitev v odnosih med državama, opazno zadnje mesece.

Kot je znano, je Sudan ena tistih maloštevilnih držav v tem delu sveta, ki po podpisu mirovnega sporazuma z Izraelom ni pretrgala diplomatskih stikov z Egiptom, zaradi česar so trpeli sudanski odnosi z drugim arabskim svetom, še posebno s sosedi. Počakati bo torej treba, da se bo pokazalo, če je ta ohladitev na relaciji Kartum–Kairo posledica pritiska arabskih držav ali dokončnega spoznanja v vrhovih sudanskega vodstva, kam vodi egiptovsko-izraelski sporazum.

Kot vselej v podobnih razmerah, ponuja tukajšnji tisk odgovor na ta vprašanja in pravi, da »predsednika Nimeirija ne bi smeli obsojati zaradi nenadne spremembe v obnašanju, saj so se nadenj zgornji številni politični in gospodarski pritiski«.

Glavni urednik tednika »Aħbar el Jom« Ibrahim Sida razlaga odnose med državama, ki ju že leta družijo ohlapna vez, bolj

posledica egiptovskega vztrajanja kot sudanskega razumevanja, in pravi, da se je »Nimeiri na vsem lepem spremenil, da so se njegovi odnosi z Egiptom ohladili, uradni funkcionarji v Kartumu pa napadajo egiptovsko politiko«.

Vzroke takšnemu obnašanju uradnega Kartuma išče Ibrahim Sida predvsem v notranjih in zunanjih težavah, s katerimi se sooča režim predsednika Nimeirija, ki mu je, kot pravi ta tednik, »uspelo rešiti notranji položaj, se pobotati z nekdanjimi sovražniki, kar pa ni bilo dovolj, ker je ostala zunanja opozicija, ki mu vedno bolj grozi«.

Po »Aħbar el Jom« bi to opozicijo lahko odpravili edino tako, da bi »predsednik Nimeiri nehal podpirati Egipt in bi javno obsodil predsednika Sadata ter mirovni sporazum z Izraelom«. Kot pa ugotavlja ta tednik, vse to še ne pomeni, da se je Sudan

izneveril Egiptu, ker je predsednik Nimeiri, ko so ga razmere prisilile, da se je k čemu takemu zatekel, izhajal iz svojega vodila, da namen opravičuje sredstvo.

V svoji analizi egiptovsko-sudanskih odnosov Ibrahim Sida navaja, da je bil predsednik Nimeiri »naprej obveščen o egiptovskih namerah pred Camp Davidom in podpisom mirovnega

sporazuma. To po svoje drži, prav tako pa je tudi res tisto, česar Sida nocoj povedati, da je bilo namreč stališče Sudana do egiptovske mirovne pobude že od samega začetka na liniji, ki sicer ni bila odklonilna, ni pa tudi pomenila odločne podpore.

Sudan se je udeležil tudi vseh arabskih srečanj, od bagdadškega naprej, na katerih je bila obsejna mirovna pobuda predsednika Sadata, vendar se ni jasno izrazil, čeprav je po svoje sprejel resolucije arabskega bojkotiranja Egipta, izvemši tiste o prekinitvi diplomatskih odnosov. In tako se je zgodilo, da so ostale Sudan, Oman in Somalia na tem območju edine države, ki so pušile svoje veleposlanke v Kairu tudi po podpisu mirovnega sporazuma med Egiptom in Izraelom.

Vroč pušavski veter hamšin, ki te dni pihá nad mestom ob Nilu, nosčé s seboj valove vročine in peska, kot da je delno znižal temperaturo na političnem termometru. Očitno je to za Kairo zelo neprijetno.

MIROSLAV VIŠNJC



ANVAR EL SADAT – Vroč veter prinaša ohladitev

Figure 2: *Delo*, 9th of October 1980, international news page

Premiki v zunanji politiki ZRN?

Opazovalci ugibajo, ali bo večja teža liberalcev v bonski koaliciji vplivala na »tršč« bonško zunanjo politiko – Wehner sviri pred popuščanjem liberalcem

OD NAŠE SODELAVKE

BONN, 9. oktobra – Nesporni starosta socialnih demokratov, ki pogosto vzemirja lastne ljudi z izzivalnimi izjavami, Herbert Wehner, je že dan po volitvah poskrbel za majhno razburjenje. Potem, ko je v nekem intervjuju porazočeno ocenil način vodenja volilnega boja svoje stranke, je v pogovoru s poljskimi novinarji v štamburu izrekel nekaj vsebinskih kritičnih pripomb na račun vodenja zunanje politike. Skoraj nemogoče je bilo, da kritike na račun »premajhne pripravljenosti na razorožitevna pogajanja« ne bi večina razumela kot kritiko popuščanja vladnim koalicijskim partnerjem (liberalcem) in kot napoved ostrejšega soočanja z linijo, ki jo zastopa zunanji minister Genscher.

Wehnerjeve besede so zagrabili tisti, ki menijo, da so se razmerja moči znotraj vladne koalicije spremenila potem, ko so liberalci dosegli uspeh na parlamentarnih volitvah in zdaj napovedujejo, da koalicija zaradi napokipenih vsebinskih problemov ne bo vzdržala štiri leta do naslednjih volitev. Napovedi o razkolu prizadele »zavrajca«, toda vztrajno se pojavljajo v tisku analize, ki dokazujejo da so s premikom proti meščanski desnici liberalci postali zanimiv koalicijski partner tudi za sedanje opozicijske krščansko demokratske stranke (CDU – CSU), kar

naj bi pomenilo, da svobodni demokrati Hans-Dietrich Genscherja kljub svoji majhnosti pravzaprav izsiljujejo obe strani.

Med temami, ki obvladujejo pogovore o koalicijski platformi socialnih in svobodnih demokratov, zunanja politika v največjem delu ni sporna. Čestitke tujih državnikov so dokazale, da tujina v zmagi koalicijskih strank dosega je Bunske vlade vidi tudi obet za kontinuiteto zunanje politike znane s pojmom politika Schmidt-Genscher. Zanesljivo je tudi mogoče reči, da je bila dosežena politična linija izid volje in pripravljenosti obeh skupin dati

večjo politično težo ZRN Nemčiji kot enakopravnemu zavezniku drugim velikim zahodnim državam, ki naj bi imel zaradi posebnih okoliščin večji manevrski prostor nasproti državam varšavske zveze. O soglasju je mogoče govoriti tudi tedaj, ko gre za osnovno strateško bazo bonške zunanje politike: v enaki meri naj bi jo sestavljala čvrsta vklju-

zgotovilo, da je pripravljena vključiti celotno svoje evropsko ozemlje v območje veljavnosti tako imenovanih ukrepov vzajemnega zaupanja, torej določene- ga vzajemnega nadzora nad premiki oboroženih sil. Del poznavalcev »starega Genscherja«, istega torej, ki mu se ni bilo treba upoštevati socialno demokratskih zunanje-političnih premis, je zdaj prepričan, da s poudarjanjem »usodnosti pomena atlantske vojaške organizacije za Zvezo republiko Nemčijo« dobiva pojem zahodnega zaveznitva nekoliko drugačen pomen in da gre na račun pripravljenosti nadaljevati s politiko popuščanja napetosti. V dejstvu, da je Herbert Wehner v omenjenem pogovoru s poljskimi novinarji govoril o škodi, ki je nastala, ker je »Zahod zapravlil celo leto, preden je začel s pogajanjem«, so opazovalci videli tudi kritiko bonškega stališča in morebitno področje konfliktov med koalicijskima partnerjema.

MOJCA DRČAR – MURKO



HANS-DIETRICH GENSCHER – »Realistična« zunanja politika

Figure 1 and Figure 2: Visual equals: small head and shoulder portrait was *Delo's* dominant mode of depiction of politicians or military leaders in 1980, regardless of their geopolitical affiliation.

International News in *Delo* in 2004

In 1991 Slovenia started its process of “catching up” with the West and the media, which had played an important role in mobilising the civil movements in late eighties that led to country’s independence, were awarded freedom and function equal to their Western counterparts. In accordance with classical liberal theory of the press, they were no longer counterparts but “watchdogs” of state power, their freedom subjected *only* to the power of the market. The ideology of free market and Western standards of journalism and news making came hand in hand, producing inclination toward “power without responsibility” journalism. It should however be noted that the freedom of state interference did not extend to all media alike; while press was for the most part deregulated, the state tends to keep some sort of control over the broadcasting, particularly television, what resorts in a sort of paternalistic-commercial media system typical of many post-socialist states (Splichal 1994). *Delo* today enjoys unrivalled position as the country’s newspaper of record. With an average daily circulation of 89,000 copies, it reaches large share of country’s intelligentsia and decision makers and strongly influences the standards of journalistic practice. Thus for example it still strives to provide “national” interpretation of world events as they unfold through sustaining its foreign correspondents network and sending its special correspondents and photographers to provide either spot news coverage or background reporting and reportage to places ranging from Sierra Leone to Afghanistan.

Not surprisingly, the paper has changed immensely over the last two and a half decades; the most significant changes are reduced number of articles per page and the increased emphasis on visual information and presentation. Previously dense and scattered blocs of text gave way to a much-standardised layout, which is dominated by few large photographs that unmistakably assign the level of importance to articles and guide readers’ attention across the page. The space made available to international news is now limited to front and back pages (where a small section of short (formerly “teleprinter”) news is carried) and one page section of “international politics,” where large, up to half-page advertisements frequently notch into the news space. The six-week sample thus includes only 625 news items, a reduction of nearly 50 percent that accounts mostly for short “teleprinter” news. This reduction can be linked to contemporary “media division of labour” where newspapers tend not to provide as much information as possible but focus on more in-depth coverage of selected events.

Out of the 625 articles, 51 percent were from *Delo*’s correspondents and stringers and 15 percent were written by *Delo*’s journalists (no sources were quoted). Although Slovenian national agency STA is the second most frequently used *source*, it cannot be taken all together as “indigenous” source since its service is mainly composed of translations of major Western wire services. And while the direct use of Western news agencies material has dropped to 10 percent, the alarming change from 1980 is that (attributed) use of material from national or privatised agencies of former Third and Second World countries has completely disappeared.

Geographic distribution of news coverage indicates that *Delo*’s international news are confined mostly to its immediate geographic location – Europe (40 percent) and the countries of former Yugoslavia (17 percent), followed by Asia (due to a correspondent stationed in China), Middle East (due to conflicts in Middle East and

Iraq) and the United States. Africa was reduced to less than five percent of coverage and Central and South America to less than one percent of the 625 articles.

As for the *topics* and the question of *negative coverage*, news articles continue to be dominated by official politics, followed by negative news (wars, coups, crime and terrorism) that make over 80 percent of articles. There is however a notable difference regarding which geo-political areas receive which type of coverage: although ranging from 30 percent of articles on Asia, to 50 percent on Africa and 75 percent on Middle East (inflated by Iraq war), the negative coverage is characteristic for the former Second and Third World countries while coverage of developed countries of global West is restricted to “protocol news” and economy. Another notable change from 1980 is that the negative coverage of developing regions is not complemented, as before, by other type of news such as economy or culture.

Photographic Narrative – Symbolism

Since 1980, photographs had increasingly become an important element of *Delo's* narration of the international news. Not only did the use of photographs more than double but their prominence increased significantly. Large photographs (often up to a quarter of a page, printed in colour) no longer serve only to supplement texts but are often exploited for their own storytelling potential. The imperative of visualisation is so strong that photographs with little or no news value and direct connection to textually described event are occasionally used to alert to “important” events. Another significant change is that published photographs are no longer confined to formal, straightforward recordings of events, although “validation” photographs of unfolding events or their aftermath and identity shots of political actors (portraits) still prevail: there is an increasing number of photographs whose primary function is not just to illustrate but to symbolise the depicted events. These photographs utilise commonly recognisable codes such as body language, symbols and inscriptions to frame and interpret the depicted subject's reactions or relations: examples range from facial expressions and gestures of political actors – Fischer (22.4.), Baroso (14.10.) Sharon (10.7.)) to a juxtaposition of soldiers with a white dove in the streets of Baghdad (18.10.).

Delo's visual coverage of day-to-day events remains dependent on Western news sources: AP, Reuters and a recent entrant into the business, EPA, provided over 80 percent of the 192 photographs used in the 36-day sample period, while *Delo's* staff contributed less than 10 percent. The *geographic distribution* of photographic coverage reveals the same imbalance and “blind spots” revealed by the textual coverage: focus on immediate geographical location and the Global West (60 percent) while Africa (7 percent) or South and Central America (1 percent) are made virtually invisible.

Similarly to 1980, Middle East received high photographic coverage due to ongoing regional conflicts. But structural imbalances become even more apparent when this geographic distribution is mapped on content of published photographs. Out of the two main *topics* of visual coverage, violence and politics, the former is firmly the domain of the less developed countries while coverage of the developed areas rarely departs from the latter. “Protocol news” photographs and those serving to identify political actors are prominently displayed and when compared to those of 1980, are less formal both in terms of content and composition and often feature

“snatched” informal moments of meetings. While the West is mainly personified through important individuals (politicians), the former Third World is more often represented through anonymous individuals, groups and masses that are either the focus of attention or appear in the background of negative events and their aftermath (bomb explosions, military operations etc.). More often than implementing order, former Third World subjects are depicted as the creators of disorder or as passive victims. The third feature of the *negative photographic coverage* is the age of depicted subjects: it is far more likely that the Western subjects will be adults than in case of former Third World, where images of children are frequently featured. The issue of age difference is particularly important to the questions of the NWICO debate as such photographs (starved African children, Arab boys among ruins etc.) contribute to the spread of stereotypical images that tend to legitimise Western (superior) attitude towards less developed countries.

One aspect of this superiority stance is evident in *Delo's* use of photographs: not only are photographs that confirm the above mentioned stereotypical imagery more prominently displayed (e.g. photograph of passive victims – hungry Sudan children in refugee camp – was published more than four times larger than the photograph of active African subjects – Sudan women demonstrating against the ongoing violence) but are used instead even if their connection to the textually reported event is casual or non-existent. Examples range from appointment of the first African war crime tribunal being illustrated by (archive) photograph of armed African peacekeepers (6.7.) to the front-page news of railway explosion in North Korea illustrated by a quarter page photograph of a provincial railway station “somewhere in North Korea” (26.4.).

International News and Their Visualisation in *Delo*

Existing research has generally confirmed that international news reports in contemporary mass media have significant influence on knowledge of and opinion toward foreign nations. Although news photographs play a central role in this process as they serve as symbolic markers that secure enduring representations and interpretations of depicted events and although media are even more dependent on agency materials for visual than textual coverage due to higher production costs, the issue has been significantly absent from both NWICO debates and the subsequent studies of *information dependency* and *one-way flow* of news. The topic thus remains largely an uncharted area despite photography's intimate connection both to Western colonial expansion and to the discourse of objective and factual reporting.

Photographic representations of international news play a key role in shaping ideas about “others” and news photographs are one of the most pervasive instruments of *framing* the news. Particularly the photographs that transgress the traditionally assigned role of “objective recordings” can act like “information-processing schemata” (Entman 1991, 7) that “promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretations, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendations for the item described” (Entman 1993, 52) through conscious or unconscious prioritising of selected concepts, keywords, symbols and metaphors. Although this task is to a certain extent inherent to press photography's mission of communicating the significance of an event in a single image that the viewer should immediately

comprehend, this is most easily and effectively achieved through symbolic coverage that resonates with the set pre-established of images, stereotypes and clichés. Journalism thus turns to visual storytelling because of its ability to contextualise the discrete details in a broader, symbolic frame (Zelizer 2004, 130) and the apparently unmediated realism of news photographs renders more natural and hence more pervasive.

In conclusion I would however like to argue – in spite of the above noted support for the information dependency thesis – that *Delo's* negative photographic representations of international news from the former Third World are to a large extent the result of “indigenous” editorial decisions and gate keeping.

News agencies set the limits of agenda for international news both in terms of which issues are covered and what importance they are attributed to. Thus they to a large extent “determine which characteristics of a given country are known outside that country” and “how those characteristics are assembled into a mosaic that makes up the overall image of one country in the eyes of the residents of another” (Becker et al. 1981, 105). Within this general frame, editors make conscious or unconscious culturally dependent selections that, depending on the event, can decisively shape the preferred reading and interpretation for the audience. Several studies (e.g. Kirat and Weaver 1985) have noted that the news agencies supply far broader news diet than the one that reaches the readers on “international politics” pages and that offerings of wire photographs portray a far more complex version of events that is not reflected in published images (e.g. Fahmy 2004). A recent Slovenian example seems to confirm this argument. A comparative study of the photographic coverage of the US invasion of Iraq in two Slovenian daily newspapers indicated the role of “indigenous gate keeping” in framing the interpretation of events: *Delo*, which featured photographs from four agencies (AP, AFP, EPA, Reuters) and its staff correspondent framed the conflict in the Orientalist discourse of civilised “West” vs. barbarian “Other” and focused on symbolic dimension of the conflict, while *Večer* which relied on a single Western source (AP), produced a distinctively non-symbolic, more neutral and sympathetic war coverage that prominently visualised the Iraqi side (Tomanić Trivundža 2004; 2005).

Due to insufficient standards on how to use an image in news (Zelizer 2004), editorial selections of photographs is often highly personal (Bissell 2000) and reflects organisational routines and practices as well as cultural values and prejudices steaming from collective identities (professional, national etc.).

As Shoemaker (1991) points out, neither individuals, nor organisation and professional routines can escape the fact that they are tied to a broader social system, which remains primarily the context of nation state and collective belonging to *imagined community* of a nation. Studies have increasingly pointed to the pertinent presence of national perspective in the coverage of international news and its dependence on geographical, political or cultural affinity to the reported nation or area and that international news are “a socially constructed product that has been filtered through the national interest” (Yang 2003, 247; see also Nossek 2004). In spite of the growing influence of globalisation, political context still operates on the level of nation state and consequently influences media representations, which is particularly true for elite media, such as *Delo*, which rarely undermine the hegemonic societal self-perception.

When addressing the question of biased (negative) coverage of foreign news, we should take into account as Roach argues, that cultural imperialism is “never simply external force laid over existing social relations” (1990, 278) but a web of complex relations within which “indigenous” practices and appropriations are a force of significant influence. The fact that the ideological colouring of the photographic coverage “need not be deliberately chosen or even explicitly recognised by the editors who deploy them” (Fishman and Marvin 2003, 41) does not negate its presence and connection to broader cultural context. International news is particularly subjected to the socio-cultural binary of “us” vs. “them” matrix of national identity formation, which is never given but historically created and re-created. As Sonwalkar argues, “news must essentially be about ‘us’ ... and even though the contours and constituents of ‘us’ usually remain amorphous, journalists always have a clear conception of what will interest ‘us’” (2004, 208). Nations are *imagined communities* and authors from Tarde (1898/1969) to Anderson (1983/1991) have noted the importance of media in generating and maintaining the awareness of such collective belonging and differentiation.

International news reporting is thus subjected to perceived national identities and national interests and the question of “regional bias” – so often highlighted by NWICO opponents – is thus not a question of “real” geographic categories but of *imagined geography* of *imagined communities*.

Shifts in *Delo*’s editorial policy are an illustrative example. As long as *Delo* was a part of Yugoslav media system, the imagined geography of “our” international news included news from Colombo, Bogotá, Havana, Freetown, Salisbury, Adis Ababa, Bangkok, New Delhi or Bandung while post-independent Slovenia – where negation of past Third world political connections became a political imperative and perceived as hindrance to its now achieved goal of joining European Union – remained confined, like most of *Delo*’s correspondents, to news from Euro-American capitals. A further indicator of the strength of imagined geographies is *Delo*’s coverage of former East European countries, which although geographically or politically close (especially after 1991), were never a part of wider imagined community and were thus textually and visually poorly reported – both in 1980 and in 2004.

The image of a country or nation in media of another country depends on the extent and type of information available and although we can not deny the power of major Western news agencies to set the global agenda of international news, the power that lies with the control of distribution, we should not underestimate the power of “indigenous” gate keeping decisions, first of which is to disregard the available alternative news sources.⁵ But as the images that shape our global reality (despite the proliferation of media) continually come from few and increasingly powerful voices, we are further and further away from pluralism of information sources that – as a necessary pre-requisite for effective practicing of democracy – was demanded by the NWICO movement.

Notes:

1. The underlying definition of communication right as the property right that lies at the core of the “free flow” of information doctrine is a key generator of structural imbalances (domination of developed countries) of international information flows.

2. Several authors (e.g. Barrett 1980) link the agencies' definition of news with the political and social needs of their home countries. More specifically, some authors such as Lange (1984) argue that the negative coverage of the South serves a basic psychological function to Northern societies – it perpetuates and reinforces (also justifies) the superiority of the being Western.

3. These critiques however, were not without historical precedence. Between 1917 and 1948, when Associated Press (AP) was engaged in a campaign to break the existing cartel agreement and institutionalise the “free flow” of information doctrine on a global level, the discontent with the established information order was voiced in a manner that echoes the NWICO critique: the breaking up of the cartel was promoted on the ground that “European monopoly prevented “the advancement of durable peace and understanding among nations of the globe” (Renaud 1984: 15), control of news flows and means of communication was seen as “necessary for the national prosperity of the United States” (Renaud 1984: 12), while media observers “bitterly deplored the unfavourable image of the United States disseminated abroad” and criticised “the injection of national perspectives and values into their reportage despite the agencies’ claims to objectivity” (Bullion 1982: 159-160),

4. Positive coverage topics included: (1) official politics, meetings etc.; (2) economic matters; (3) peacetime military and defence; (4) development, international aid, social service; (5) culture, science and religion. Negative topics were issues of: (6) wars, coups, terrorism etc.; (7) crime, legal issues; and (8) famine, poverty, natural disasters.

5. This “primary” decision is symptomatic as contemporary (Western) mass media function to normalise and obscure the current global and political order and – at times of international crisis – overtly appear not as watchdogs of political power but participants in policy making of certain countries. Through this, they simultaneously obscure Western involvement and responsibility in “failures” of undeveloped countries as well as delimit the array of possible actions and solutions.

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