

Dr. sc. Laurent HASSID  
Chercheur associé à E.E.E (Europe, Européanité, Européanisation)  
Université Bordeaux 3

**Nation and State in Slovenia: the Issue of the Citizenship  
Ph.D.**

Abstract

By its parliamentary political system guaranteed by the Constitution soon after its independence (June 25th 1991), with its convincing results with performing economy rates and by its perception of Human Rights, particularly as it concerns Italian and Hungarian minorities, Slovenia has often been presented as the apt pupil of the former Yugoslavia, even when compared to the other former European communist states.

This 361 pages work, consists of three parts and tries to show a more complicated realistic view.

The first part studies historical and geographic limits of the Slovenian territory.

The four states which border Slovenia (Austria on the north, Hungary on the east, Croatia on the south and Italy on the west) often brought their domination to it. The Habsbourg dynasty was established in Carniola, Styria and Carinthia from the 14th century to 1918 and the Venetian republic occupied the coast until 1797. In the 20th century, Slovenians thought the incorporation of their nation into a Slav country with Serbs and Croats could protect them against Austrian and Italian inclinations. But the annexion of Carinthia to Austria in 1920, the conquest of Western Slovenia by Mussolini's forces (1919-1945) and the restoration of Trieste to Italy in 1954 sparked little interest by Yugoslavian elite (and particularly the Serbs) for their cause. The loss of Carinthia and Trieste is still an issue in Slovenia. With regard to these limits, the integration of Slovenia into different geopolitical maps helps to understand the representations we have of it. To what extent can we mention Slovenia as an Eastern European country? Is it a Balkan or an Alpine state? The way Slovenia is seen is the result of the development of the nation from the mid 20th century and the contributions of the poet, France Preseren, whose work gives more importance to Slovenian language than to German.

The language is the symbol of the Slovenian nation but it is also a proof of a regional diversity in the country: more than forty dialects coexist on this 20 000 km<sup>2</sup> territory. They contribute to maintaining more or less strong representations in different places of Slovenia. The coastal inhabitants are seen as more dishonest, those from Dolenjska (south-east) as wine drinkers and those from Gorenjska (north-east) would be miserly. All these exist under rivalries between the capital and main city of Carniola Ljubljana, and main Styrian town, Maribor.

The second parts deals with ethnic repartition of population and analysis more specifically results of last census in April 2002.

In the course of this research, we learn about 17% of Slovenian population declares another nationality than Slovenian (i.e. their ethnic origin) versus only 12% in former census in 1991. People coming from the other Yugoslav republics almost all represent a non-Slovenian population except Italian and Hungarian minorities (less than 1% both). Among these 17% non-Slovenians, about 10% of them didn't declared any specific origin: this data is five times more accurate compared to the 1991 census and is not verified by any other questions, like for example, the one about their native language (only 5% of the population who are not Slovenians didn't answer this question). Moreover, in the less populated towns, non-Slovenians are more reticent to declare their nationality, which can indicate a certain amount of fear among them: in several Styrian towns of less than 500 inhabitants, more than 95% of non-Slovenians didn't answer the question of nationality.

In the same way, the interpretation of the National Statistical Office of Slovenia (SURS) about ethnic issues is doubtful: cartographic representations of the results of the 2002 census (especially

in the Rapid reports distributed to the general public) are only taking account of non-Slovenians who declared their nationality (either 6% to 17%), which greatly reduced non-Slovenians proportionally by town. This public institution presents the results based on the size of the town (Slovenia is divided into 192 towns), which doesn't allow a precise analysis of the ethnic repartition in Ljubljana, Koper, Kranj or Velenje. However, some Slovenian geographical atlases contain maps showing this ethnical repartition in Ljubljana, without mentioning sources. The contradictions in the results of the 1991 census with some ground studies permit one to deduce that Serbs are spread all over the country, Croats are mainly in the capital and along their homeland border (Bela Krajina) and Muslims mainly inhabit in Jesenice (they represent more than 30% of the city population). In Ljubljana, the five quarters (Centre, Siska, Bežigrad, Vic and Moste) are expected to have a relatively homogenous ethnical repartition, which is against the usual representations we can anticipate. The eastern part of the city is often perceived as a highly populated place with people coming from the other Yugoslav republics who have recently arrived in Slovenia over time: Croats in the fifties, Serbes soon after, Bosniacs in the seventies, Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonians from the eighties.

Apart from this sustained immigration into their territory, some Slovenian people see this as a threat to their nation. They were shocked by the Yugoslavian army attack in June-July 1991 at the time of the independence proclamation, a fact that strengthened anti-Serbian and anti-communist ideas. Moreover after the independence, the changing of historical programmes constituted an important issue even if a large numbers of teachers and intellectuals haven't ceased promoting them (those about Carinthian dukes, counts of Celje, the one of victim people). So, regarding this Slovenian difficulty of dealing with ethnic problems, the post-independence debate about this national issue is presently emerging.

The third and last part shows this issue citing several cases, which have contributed to degrading the political atmosphere on a spectacular way.

The most well known is the case about those "erased" at the independence. Everyone who was living on the Slovenian territory could check on his or her status in the following six months after the independence. Those who didn't check about their status have been illegally and secretly erased from national registers as of February 1992. Unknown for more than 10 years, this case was reopened after the decision of the Constitutional Court that ordered left-center Rop's government to restore the rights for erased people. Some right wing and extrem right wing were strongly opposed to this court mandate, arguing the fact that erased people were enemies of Slovenia, had some ties with Serbia or with communism, or they took part in some atrocities during the Yugoslav war (1991-1995). The main opposition political party, Janez Jansa's SDS joined a third of required deputies needed to organize a referendum in order to repeal a part of the law on the erased which had been voted in during the previous month. Although a minority among the deputies backed this initiative, the referendum was organized because President's Parliament sent back the decision of his assembly to the Constitutional Court a day later. In spite of repeated appeals to boycott from the government, from the President of the Republic, Janez Drnovsek, from the "father of the independence" Milan Kucan, the participation rate (30%) remained similar to previous referendums and the law was spectacularly rejected with more than 95% voting "no". This result paved the way for Jansa's success in legislative elections six months later, the first victory for a right-wing party since independence. Another case, one regarding a mosque construction project in Ljubljana (concerning the 50 000 Muslims in Slovenia) was an opportunity to use ethnic issues for electoral purposes. However, a comparison between maps of ethnic declaration and electoral results (2002 presidential vote and 2004 Parliamentary elections) don't show any link between voting for rights wing parties and the rejection of non-Slovenians, even if excessive speeches against the latter were often attributed to these political parties (what some human rights defenders call "Slovenian hate-speech"). This nationalism, which is going beyond political rivalries has to show how the negative representations of non-Slovenians and their use for political purposes can have a strong effect on Slovenian society. Since Jansa's government has been formed, this political manipulation has become more widespread: in addition to ethnic issues, some historical events which have not been studied as yet by Slovenian historians (especially some massacres which happened in the years following the end of the World War II) are used to encourage the anti-Communist feeling; though

Slovenia is a secular country, the Catholic religion has been reaffirmed in politics and at school; the wish to change some national emblems (i.e flag) periodically appears.

The conclusion opens three different ways of reflecting on the political debate in Slovenia, although it is also available to other former communist states:

- 1) The power of ethnic issues: this question is expected to become more important in the future because the Slovenian population is getting older and the state will need lower cost labour.
- 2) The integration into the European Union in May 2004: would Slovenians feel they are losing the power of their new state inside a group made up of 25 states?
- 3) The key role of history: numerous historical debates were ignored during the Communist period and this opening debate can contribute to calm strong rivalries between the left (former communists and democrats) and the right (conservatives). In Slovenia this is sometimes referred to as the red against the blacks.

Annexes return testimonies and official texts links with the erased case.