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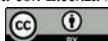
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VISUAL ECONOMY OF SAMENESS: PHOTOGRAPHY OF MINERS AND OF MINING LABOR IN SLOVENIAN PHOTOREPORTAGE OF THE TWENTIETH AND EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

Throughout Slovenia's history, across the various historical periods of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes through Yugoslav Socialism to the Slovenian Liberal republic—photoreportages have consistently portrayed miners and mining labor through a homogeneous visual style characterized by direct, unassuming photography. This article examines how such depictions functioned within shifting political and ideological contexts, focusing on the intersection of visual representation and socio-mythological construction. Drawing on Marx's concept of the commodity form, Barthes's theory of naturalization and myth, and structuralist notions of symbolic exchange, the study employs socio-semiotic analysis to reveal how the imagery of miners gave rise to a "visual economy of sameness." This visual economy abstracted labor into standardized symbolic forms, reinforcing dominant ideological narratives and shaping public memory across historical periods. The article argues that the persistent reduction of miners to emblematic visual signs served as a powerful means of constructing the desired collective identities of different socio-political periods.

Keywords: photography of miners, photography of labor, commodity form, Slovenian photoreportage, myth and photography, symbolic economy, press photography

ECONOMIA VISIVA DELL'UNIFORMITÀ: LA FOTOGRAFIA DEI MINATORI E DEL LAVORO MINERARIO NEL FOTOREPORTAGE SLOVENO DEL XX E DEI PRIMI DECENNI DEL XXI SECOLO

SINTESI

Nel corso della storia slovena, nei diversi periodi storici del XX e dei primi decenni del XXI secolo – dalla monarchia del Regno dei Serbi, Croati e Sloveni al

socialismo jugoslavo fino alla repubblica liberale slovena – i fotoreportage hanno rappresentato con costanza i minatori, il loro lavoro e la loro fatica attraverso uno stile visivo omogeneo, caratterizzato da una fotografia diretta e priva di artifici. Questo articolo esamina il modo in cui tali raffigurazioni hanno operato all'interno di contesti politici e ideologici mutevoli, concentrandosi sull'intersezione tra rappresentazione visiva e costruzione socio-mitologica. Richiamandosi al concetto marxiano di forma-merce, alla teoria barthesiana della naturalizzazione e del mito, nonché alle nozioni strutturaliste di scambio simbolico, lo studio adotta un'analisi sociosemiotica per mostrare come l'immaginario dei minatori abbia dato forma a una "economia visiva dell'uniformità". Questa economia visiva ha astratto il lavoro in forme simboliche standardizzate, rafforzando le narrazioni ideologiche dominanti e plasmando la memoria pubblica nei diversi periodi storici. L'articolo sostiene che la persistente riduzione dei minatori a segni visivi emblematici abbia costituito un potente mezzo di costruzione delle identità collettive desiderate nei vari periodi socio-politici.

Parole chiave: fotografia dei minatori, fotografia del lavoro, forma-merce, fotoreportage sloveno, mito e fotografia, economia simbolica, fotografia di stampa

INTRODUCTION¹

Throughout Slovenia's history, across a range of social and political contexts, there has been a notable consistency in how miners and mining labor were depicted in photoreportages² in print and electronic media. This representational homogeneity—best described as a realistic stylization with a preference for simple, compositionally straightforward photography even to the point of unassuming, amateur aesthetics—is not without its reasons. This observation emerges from research on photoreportages of miners in Slovenian

1 This article results from research conducted for the project N6-0268 *Political Functions of Folktales*, program P6-0435 *The Practices of Conflict Resolution between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today's Slovenia and Neighboring Countries, Large Language Models for Digital Humanities* (LLM4DH, GC-0002), supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), and supported by COST Action CA22149, *Research Network for Interdisciplinary Studies of Transhistorical Deliberative Democracy (CHANGECODE)*, funded by COST, European Cooperation in Science and Technology. The author thanks the reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions for revision, Gallery Jakopič (Ljubljana) for the reproduction-ready images of photoreportages, and the editors for their work.

2 The terms "photo essay," "photo story," and "photoreportage" are used interchangeably, especially within the context of Slovenian photojournalism. Throughout the article, the subtle differences in degrees between photo-news, photoreports, and photoreportage are not explicitly addressed (for more on this topic cf. Tomanič Trivundža & Skočir, 2021).

photojournalism since the early twentieth century, which drew from a variety of sources, including newspapers, weekly publications, illustrated weeklies, and magazines.³

In the Slovenian press of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the “real” miner emerges as an elusive figure—simultaneously visible and invisible. Miners are made visible only through a dual filter of signification: materially, via the visual paraphernalia of lamps, helmets, and soot-covered faces; and symbolically through socio-mythological characteristics of roughness, endurance, perseverance, almost unbridled solidarity, and stoicism in the face of insurmountable odds.⁴ Even before one sees the images of miners one expects their appearance to conform to the normative social image-*image* of miners in both meanings—pictorial and linguistic.⁵ The role of cultural memory in the social image-*image* of the miners is not to be underestimated as it often serves to reinforce the particular socio-political connotations. Even beyond the narrow Slovenian context, one of the main reasons for the strong and prevalent cultural mythology of mining in general (Clark & Szerszynski, 2020; Freese, 2003)—coal mining in particular—lies in its central position in the Industrial Revolution. Coal shaped both the capitalist mode of production (Clark & Szerszynski,

- 3 The research was initially conducted by a team of researchers, focusing on the genre of photoreportage in Slovenian dailies, weeklies, illustrated journals, and—toward the end of the twentieth and into the early twenty-first century—digital media platforms. The corpus encompassed nearly all major and minor Slovenian periodicals in these categories, ensuring broad coverage of the media landscape across different historical and political contexts. While the research included a comprehensive selection of media outlets, it did not aim to examine all photoreportage content within them. Instead, sampling was carried out until a sufficiently diverse and analytically productive range of material was identified, enabling theoretically substantiated inferences about representational patterns, thematic developments, and discursive shifts over time. The study focused on both mature photoreportage formats and earlier proto-photoreportages, with the aim of tracing their visual, representational, and ideological functions across Slovenia’s changing socio-political formations. In the process, the research also engaged with the definition of the photoreportage genre itself, as it unfolded through the history of Slovenian photojournalism—mapping its sub-genres, formal variations, and its border cases with adjacent formats such as photo-news. The findings of the broader research were published by Tomanić et al. (2021), who offer a comprehensive analysis of the genre’s development, functions, and cultural significance. Subsequently, the author conducted a more targeted study—using similar methodological parameters—specifically focused on the visual representation of miners. This sub-study enabled a deeper investigation into recurring visual motifs, ideological framings, and the socio-mythological construction of miners across various historical periods of Slovenia. The research was focused on published material in the media, and it excluded other instances where photojournalistic work might appear, such as photobooks, various exhibitions, art galleries, collections, archives, etc.; the emphasis was on the visual representations in the photoreportages of printed and later electronic media.
- 4 Apart from the numerous examples discussed later in this article, miners’ tales constitute a salient example of the reproduction of dominant narratives and tropes framing miners’ characteristics. Cf., e.g., the many tales collected by Tine Lenarčič (2004), which encapsulate several of these recurrent features. For a more in-depth discussion of the role that folktales and narratives play in the constitution of social subjects and political ideologies, cf. Tratnik (2023).
- 5 Cf. the telling comment written by reporter Jana Župančič while encountering the miners to interview them for the photoreportage as she wrote: “Gathered in front of the store by the mine, they appear virtually unrecognizable due to their civilian clothing, lack of helmets and clean faces” (Župančič, 2007; photographs by Damjan Žibert).

2020, 40, 41) and the everyday life of modernity (Freese, 2003, 143). Furthermore, the modern age, particularly in Europe during the Industrial Revolution, was largely shaped by extractive processes—horizontally through colonialism and vertically through extraction industrialism (Clark & Szerszynski, 2020, 104; cf. Sekula, 2018). But even though coal mining fueled the Industrial Revolution, the industrialization of the mining sector itself came only late in the process of industrialization (Sekula, 1983, 203–204). The pre-industrial narratives and representational tropes surrounding mining and miners (as unsophisticated yet quintessential “toilers” for industrialized societies) and visual iconography that emerged in the sixteenth-century European context (pickaxe, soot-covered or blackened faces, carrying a lamp, later also helmets and headlamps)⁶ persisted well into the twentieth century, even though coal itself more or less disappeared from everyday life late in the century. As George Orwell remarked in 1937 in one of the seminal works of documentary literature, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, on the perception of the miner in society: “He is a sort of grimy caryatid upon whose shoulders nearly everything that is not grimy is supported” (Orwell, 1958, 21).⁷ This notion is particularly noticeable in the case of the figure of a miner in Socialist Yugoslavia after the Second World War (the period when Slovenian photoreportage fully developed as a genre) when miners’ manual labor stood as an epitome of “moral investment in work and citizenship” and miners themselves “may be considered iconic for the (self-)imagination of Yugoslav socialist realities” (Petrović & Hofman, 2017, 62–63). Such a central position of miners, for example, engendered numerous stylized monuments featuring the figure of the miner, far more than workers of other branches of industry (Horvatinčič, 2014, 175). This central position of miners in Yugoslav socialist realities did reach Slovenian photoreportages, but, conversely, the stylization itself, so notably manifested in the monuments, never fully reached photography in the photoreportages. Photoreportages of miners stand out in two significant respects. First, the sheer volume of photoreportages devoted to mining surpasses that of all other sectors of industrial labor, including the second most frequently represented branch, the textile industry, with its predominantly female workforce (cf. Tomanič Trivundža, Babnik & Skočir, 2021, 142, 147). Second, the socio-cultural position of the miner—a highly symbolic and ideologically charged

6 For example, in the sixteenth-century woodcuts in *De Re Metallica*, a 1556 treatise on metallurgy by Georgius Agricola (2011), which represent an early, authoritative visual corpus on mining: they established many standard visual elements of the miner at work (tools, underground setting, lighting, etc.).

7 Orwell’s remark neatly captures one prevailing discourse about miners—as simultaneously excluded from “civilization” yet essential to its development—a discourse traceable back to *De re metallica* (Agricola, 2011) and notable in Slovenian photoreportage (e.g., casting miners as those who “carry the country on their shoulders”). These narratives of underground, unsophisticated yet dignified toilers who shape the industrialization above ground—and their recurring discursive figurations—are, to a lesser extent, repeated in the Slovenian press (e.g., Gačnik & Hladnik-Milharčič, 1992). Another recurrent trope is the ascent-descent pattern (prominent in most Slovenian photoreportages on mining). For a suggestive connection of the ascent-descent mining trope to the classical anabasis/katabasis topos—although originally associated with aristocratic literary forms—cf. Craven (2020).

figure—renders its depiction unique and potentially paradigmatic for broader visual representations of labor. No other segment of the working class in Slovenia—particularly within the Yugoslav context—achieved such a dominant socio-cultural position, wherein the workers themselves were almost entirely subsumed by their social image. Consequently, miners became frequent subjects of monuments, documentaries, films, and photographic projects, serving not merely as representations of labor, but as embodiments of broader ideological narratives (cf. Horvatinčič, 2014; Petrović & Hofman, 2017). While recognizing that images and figures of miners have appeared across a broad spectrum of cultural contexts—from art, film, and monuments to the wider tradition of documentary photography, everyday photographic practices, and official archival records and mine documentation—this article focuses primarily on the representation of miners in photoreportages throughout Slovenian history. Its central interest lies in identifying the most normative, widespread, and far-reaching representations of miners as they circulated in print media and, subsequently, in electronic formats.

As we will observe, a certain pattern emerges from Slovenian photoreportages on mining and miners—or rather a certain tension that arises from the coexistence of rather unassuming visuality and highly connotative text. This creates a paradox of the simultaneous overdetermination and underdetermination of the images. On the one hand, the over-determination stems from the miners' elevated, almost “mythical” status, attributed mostly to coal's primacy as an essential energy source bearing the weight of the nation's progress that, even when not indispensable, persisted well into the twentieth century. On the other hand, there exists a stylistic under-determination of these images, which fails to capture the full complexity of social reality—both the harsh realities of mining work and the social meaning of the miners' labor and their societal identities. The highly connotative text of the photoreportages that usually frames and anchors the images is, on the other hand, always already burdened (connoted) by the images themselves—by the cultural, communicative value of the social *image* of the miners in society. This complex duality constitutes what might best be described as a discursively and connotatively productive *tension*, in our case, the linguistic valorization of miners and the unassuming visual homogenization of their representation.

This article argues that while the representation of miners in Slovenian photoreportage has undergone stylistic and narrative shifts, a deeper structural logic remains consistent. This persistence operates across three interrelated levels: (1) discursive sameness, visible in recurring iconography and tropes—helmets, soot-covered faces, and repeated motifs of endurance and resilience; (2) structural sameness, rooted in photography's capacity to abstract and typify labor; and (3) narrative sameness, which encodes values such as stoicism or sacrifice into reproducible symbolic forms. These levels are mutually constitutive and give rise to a patterned visual economy of sameness across changing historical and cultural contexts. This structural persistence can be understood through a socio-semiotic framework that draws on Marx's critique of abstraction in the *commodity form* (Marx, 2010), Barthes's theory of *naturalization*

and *myth* (Barthes, 1977a–b; 1991), and structuralist models of *communication as symbolic exchange* (Lévi-Strauss, 1971; Greimas, 1987; Bourdieu, 1991; Saussure, 2011). Within this framework, photography can be understood as a paradigmatic *commodity form*—a medium whose meaning lies in its heightened (compared to other sign systems) capacity to abstract, typify, and circulate, “exchange” meaning. As *commodity form*, photographs gain meaning primarily through differential relations (through social practices of signification), enabling the miner’s image to function as a sign within a visual economy that obscures the materiality of labor. As Barthes (1977a–b) and Sekula (1983; 2014) note, this abstraction becomes especially potent within photographic realism, where the apparent naturalness of the image amplifies its symbolic role.

The apparent structural and stylistic “ordinariness” of photography of miners in Slovenian photojournalism, especially so in photoreportages, served to amplify broader socio-political discourses *through* and *with* the photographs. Photographs featured in the photoreportages of the Slovenian press of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries inadvertently abstracted the mining labor through metonymical concentration of the social image of a miner “in-through-with” the photographs and metaphorical extension of the meaning—through symbolic economy of photographs—*visual economy of sameness* as the normative representational economy. The rare deviations and transgressions from the normative visualization of the photoreportages highlight the fact that the normative does not constitute the rigid limits of what can be made visible but rather that which constitutes particular affectiveness and social effectiveness of communicative practices (meaning-effect, i.e. sensemaking or exchange of meaning) and furthermore expose the importance of difference between *visibility* (what can be made visible) and the *visual* (what is visualized) (Traue, Blanc & Cambre, 2019).⁸ Abstraction of labor in photoreportages on miners was structurally no less prominent across Slovenia’s pre-war, socialist, and post-socialist transition periods; yet it manifested with differences.⁹

Slovenian photojournalism, with some variations (especially during the occupation period of 1941–45), evolved through four main eras. From 1918 to 1945, it focused on *nationally-conscious photoreportage*. Post-Second World War, it shifted to *socialism-building photoreportage*, coinciding with the first golden age of the genre and the significant rise of illustrated magazines. The late 1960s to the early 1970s introduced *initiative-giving photoreportage*, which in the late

8 For more on the difference between the visual, visible, and visibility, cf. Traue, Blanc & Cambre’s (2019) explanation of the Foucauldian *enounce* and *enunciation* (what is said and what is sayable) in connection to the visual and visual-discursive analysis.

9 These period designations correspond to major historical phases in the territory of present-day Slovenia: the pre-war period (1918–1941), under the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918–1929) and later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929–1941); the socialist period (1945–late 1980s), as part of Socialist Yugoslavia; and the post-socialist transition period (late 1980s–early 1990s), culminating in Slovenia’s independence in 1991 and the establishment of a liberal-democratic republic. While “socialist” refers to a political-economic system, it is here employed as a temporal shorthand in line with historiographical convention.

1980s transitioned to *watchdog photoreportage*. This shift mirrored journalism's changing role from co-creating Slovenian nationhood and a Slovenian socialist society to acting increasingly as a supervisory institution of the liberal republic (Tomanić Trivundža, Babnik & Skočir, 2021, 126).

MINERS, INDUSTRY, AND LABOR IN THE PRE-WWII PHOTOREPORTAGE

During the interwar period, when photojournalism increasingly turned toward the exploration and documentation of social inequalities and themes, especially in Weimar German photojournalism, where both the liberal and the opposition press were increasingly developing picture stories and photo essays,¹⁰ the Slovenian photographic landscape was still predominantly influenced by the pictorial tradition (cf. Kovič, 1990; Štrumej, 2010), focusing on the everyday and the construction of national identity with only a handful of exceptions.¹¹ This was a time when in Slovenia (at the time largely part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (KSCS)) any concerted effort to establish a workers' press (such as the workers' press of the Weimar Republic, the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* and *Arbeiterfotografie*) faced suppression and difficulties, largely due to its perceived affiliations with the Communist Party, which was banned in KSCS in 1921. Censorship intensified, especially following the onset of the 6 January Dictatorship in 1929, a period marked by the official censorship of the press and a comprehensive ban on political parties (cf. Tomanić Trivundža, Babnik & Skočir, 2021).

Proletarian and socio-critical photographs (especially those related to work and labor) struggled to secure a presence in the mainstream illustrated press, for example *Ilustrirani Slovenec*, *Ilustracija*, and *Družinski tednik*. Despite these constraints, the influence of Weimar worker photography found a place within the activities of photo clubs, particularly in the mining region of Zasavje (Lampič, 1990, 27). Proletarian photographs found an alternative route to the public, circulating among the working class primarily as propaganda material in the form of postcards. Notable examples include a postcard commemorating four miners killed in a clash with the fascist organization Orjuna¹² in Trbovlje on June 1, 1924 (Kralj, 1970, 188), a postcard featuring a photomontage of two victims of the dictatorship

10 For the developments of photography especially in the context of Weimar Republic, documentary photography and workers' photography leagues, seminal collections are Witschey (2011) and Ribalta (2015); for the developments of photojournalism and illustrated press in Weimar Republic, cf. Hardt (1989).

11 Some of the exceptions would be "Iz podzemeljske Ljubljane" (From Underground Ljubljana) from *Ilustracija* (Hafner, 1931, 121–122), about people living in the sewers of the city, "Med barakami na Kodeljevem" (In the Kodeljevo Slum), (Jutro, April 10, 1938, 5), photographer unknown, and "Gramozna jama, ljubljanski Ghetto" (Gramozna Jama, the Ljubljana Ghetto), (Jutro, March 3, 1938, 3), photographer unknown.

12 Orjuna is the acronym for Organizacija jugoslavenskih nacionalista (Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists), organization that stood for a unitarian and centralized Yugoslav state, anticommunism, against separatism and Italian irredentism. It was established in 1921 and dissolved in 1929, along with other parties.

killed by the gendarmerie in 1929 (Kralj, 1970, 250), and postcards depicting opposition candidates with their mouths symbolically tied shut as a protest against the prohibition of rallies (Kacin-Wohinz, 1965, 199).

Work- and labor-themed photoreportages began to emerge in the Slovenian press relatively late in the twentieth century (with only a few exceptions appearing earlier) and they never fully embraced the critically realistic imperative of addressing social inequalities or wider social relations of labor in society. Instead, what evolved were mostly forms of photojournalism, rooted in the tradition of liberal humanistic documentary with a few reaching the stylistic level of those associated with prominent Western illustrated magazines (e.g. *Life*, *Vu*, and *Picture Post*). As a rule, most of the photojournalism adhered to realistic (informative; often illustrative) and less often to stylized (interpretative; often illustrative) aesthetics.¹³ The latter was slowly gaining prominence from the mid-twentieth century onwards (mostly in weekly magazines such as *Mladina*, *Tovariš*, and *7D*).

During the interwar period, the mainstream press in Slovenia scarcely featured standalone photoreportages on physical labor—the few examples tended to unify the visual representation of various types of work (industrial, household, subsistence, and craft) treating them with a uniform visual approach that was characteristic of the era. Whole-page collages dedicated to a specific type of work, as in an example published in *Ilustracija* “V potu svojega obraza boš jedel kruh” (By the Sweat of Your Brow You Will Eat Your Bread) from 1929¹⁴ (Fig. 1), a rare example of this periodical focus on industrial labor. “The withdrawal from the social reality of industrial society to non-industrial national iconography can be seen as a defining feature of early Slovenian photojournalism” (Tomanič Trivundža, Babnik & Skočir, 2021, 131). Slovenian national iconography of the period was decidedly pastoral, tied to a discourse that construed nature as the privileged locus of nation-building, to an idealized and idyllic notion of nationhood rooted in the land and the people, and haunted by the specter of industrialism. Allan Sekula noted the conflict between idealist historiography and industrialism in mining photographs in general:

The mining photographs, however, present a nature that had already been radically altered by organized human energies. They introduce another spectre, that of industry. That spectre, because it raises the issue of practice, proves to be embarrassing for idealist historiography. (Sekula, 1983, 228)

13 The difference between realistic and stylistic is not rigid nor is it easily defined as it is related to the question of social facts building through different visualization strategies. Some of the main authors, useful for this purpose, are mentioned in the concluding part of the article. The difference could be summarized as the difference between stylistic and factual tendencies of photography. For the factographic tradition of Soviet avantgardes that elaborated on these two tendencies quite extensively in its writings, cf., e.g., Tret'iakov (2006a–b). For the difference between critical social documentary and liberal humanistic documentary photography, cf. Sekula (1978), Rosler (2006), and Ribalta (2015).

14 *Ilustracija*, 1929, 1, 5: V potu svojega obraza boš jedel kruh, 146. Photographer unknown.

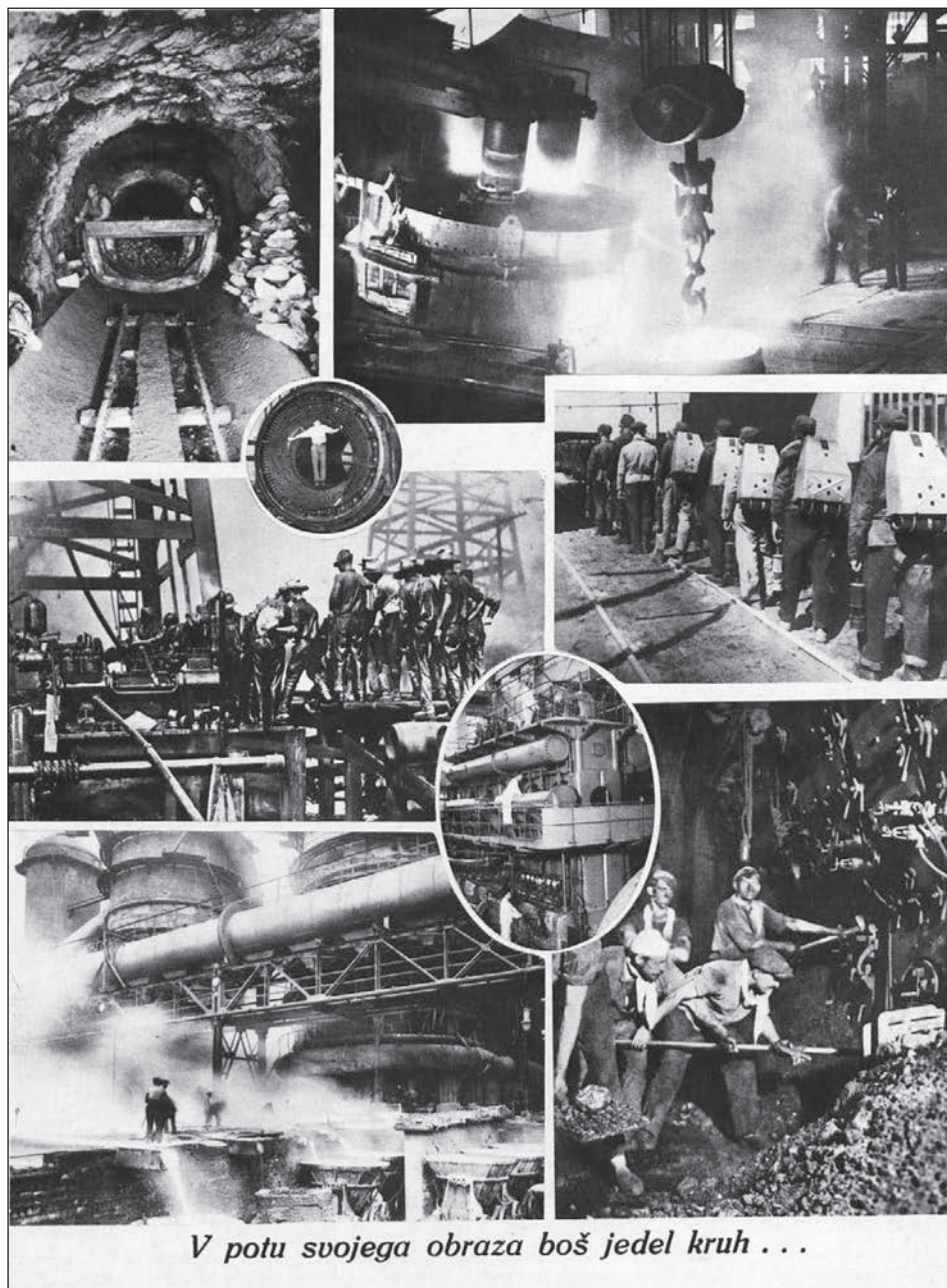


Fig. 1: “By the Sweat of Your Brow You Will Eat Your Bread” (Ilustracija, 1929, 1, 5, 146; photographer unknown).

[illegible]



Fig. 2–3: Filip Uratnik, “Impressions from the Mining District of Trbovlje,” published in *Delavec*, photographer unknown (Uratnik, 1933, 1–2).

Sekula yet again, “avoided the iconography of industrialism, preferring instead the pastoral, the baroque, the sentimental, and the romantic individualism of the portrait” (Sekula, 1983, 223). Common features of the time were whole-page collages of portraits of founders of established firms with photographs of the exterior facades of the company’s buildings, particularly in the weekly *Ilustrirani Slovenec* (a weekly supplement to *Slovenec*, a conservative daily newspaper) and *Domači prijatelj*, as were the interior workshop shots, which often resembled advertisement photography.

One of the rare examples of realistic representations of workers' living conditions of the time, notably the miners', is Filip Uratnik's "Vtisi iz Trboveljskih revirjev" (Impressions from the Trbovlje Mining District), published in *Delavec* pages 1 and 2 on July 25, 1933 (Uratnik, 1933), which includes several photographs of the mining community: bone-thin children's bodies under telling captions "Are we going to bed hungry?," a photograph of an overcrowded miners' colony with the title "Unfriendly colony," and a photograph of parents who are "Gravely concerned" (Uratnik, 1933, 1–2) (Fig. 2–3). The text vividly depicts the hunger of miners' families and their struggle to survive on meagre wages in deplorable, damp, and overcrowded barracks. This is one of the few photoreportages that uses photographs in an explicitly evidential and accusative manner, not surprisingly published by the Slovenian Trade Union Movement; it also stands out as one of the few illustrated articles in the periodical's history.

MINERS IN PHOTOREPORTAGES IN THE PERIOD OF YUGOSLAV SOCIALISM

Industrial working-class iconography in the Slovenian press of the mid-to late twentieth century is epitomized by figures such as the ironworker, rail worker, foundry worker, and most notably, the miner. Characterized by a face smeared with soot, a helmet, and a tool in hand, these workers are often depicted against the dramatic backdrop of white-hot materials in the process of being worked, enveloped in the luminance of ironwork sparks or, in the case of miners, illuminated by the surrounding miners' headlamps. However, it was uncommon for such powerful symbolic imagery to be featured within photoreportages dedicated solely to the theme of labor. More frequently, such symbolic images were found accompanying articles addressing the political and social dynamics of Yugoslav development, self-management, and the advancement of socialist society, as well as significant state anniversaries and commemorations (as exemplified by the numerous covers of periodicals featuring articles on the economy, self-management, syndicalism movements). By contrast, the photographs included in photojournalism pieces, were compositionally far less complex and unassuming, purposefully relegated to the role of illustrating the text rather than standing as focal visual points in their own right.

In the period immediately after the Second World War, the initial postwar press in Yugoslavia concentrated on fragmented portrayals of industrial accomplishments, including power stations, coal mines, trains, and dams, which Sergei Tret'iakov (2006b, 75) might have termed as "heaps of scrap metal". Additionally, this era featured portrayals of shock workers, often through full-page collages of their portraits, celebrating physical labor and highlighting the contributions of workers' collectives and exceptional individuals in achieving

JESENIŠKI DELAVCI SO NA ČELU UDARNIKOV



JAKOPIC FRANCISKA je zaposlen na »Orichel«
stiskalnici v kamniški opskurni. Jakobčeva sodeluje v skupini, ki je prekoračila proizvodnjo iz leta 1939. za 30 do 40 % in je doprinesla za ta uspeh znaten delež



TIHOMIR ANTON, sodelavec kamniarne v skupini na »Orichel«
stiskalnici. S svojo prispevnostjo in vestnostjo je pripomogel, da je kolektiv povečal proizvodnjo stroja za 40 % nad predelovno normo.



KALAN MATEJEV, vodja delovne mize druge izmene je sodeloval izboljšanje postopka za dvigovanje ingotov na težki prosti, s katerim bodo reparaturni deli skrajšani za nad 30 % in tako omogočena večja storitev proge



RAJNHARD STANKO, je zaposlen kot prvi voljavec na prosti tanke pločevine. Pripomogel je pri kolektivnem delu, da je prekoračila proizvodnjo proge prednja za 22 % in da je uspela izdelati specialne dinamo na troje pločevine



PLASINI CIRIL, prvi voljavec gotovega enovredja na prosti tanke pločevine je pri kolektivnem delu vse poase največ pripomogel, da je proge v mesecu januar, februar in marec prekoračila predpisano storitev za 22 %. S strokovnim znanjem je pripomogel k izdelavi dinamo in troje pločevine, ki je dostavljena v delovni čas izdelovalci

Tekmovalno v obnovi in izgradnji domovine. Tovariš s tovarišem, skupina s skupino, podjetje s podjetjem, kraj s krajem, republika z republiko, ves narod se je združil v tekmovalno. V času službene zaposlitve so se tukaj stare norme, delavce in delovni inteligent sta združila izkustva, združila sta teorijo s prakso. Tako so nastali novi izumi, novi načini organizacije dela in s tem se je visoko dvignila storitost in kakovost, pristopili smo k racionalizaciji proizvodnje.

Naka ljudska oblast je izdala pravilnik za tekmovalno, hotel s tem dati trdne temelje nadaljnjemu tekmovalno, dati možnost pravilne primerjave in ocenitve uspehov, izdelano pa tudi formalno priznanje najboljšim borcem v tem boju. Ta pravilnik dohaja naslov »udarnik«
tistemu tovarišu ali tovariščici, ki v trimesečnem nepretrganem tekmovalno v osmurnem delavniku stalno prekoračuje delovno normo vsaj za 20 % ali povprečno storitev vsaj za 30 %, ali ki prihrani v istem razdobju vsaj 10 % na materialu, mazivu, gorivu in podobnem, ali pa s svojimi iznajdbami ali predlogi racionalizacije in pospešitve proizvodnje in podjetja ali ustanovi prinaša gnetno korist. Lepi so uspehi. Od avgusta na september t. l. se je število udarnikov zvečalo za 23 %, kar je neoporekni dokaz, da delovni polet ljudskih množic hitro narašča in izboljšuje upanje reakcije, da se bo naka delovno ljudstvo naveličalo, utrudilo.

Ni lahko postati udarnik, pogoj so težki. Udarnik mora sodelovati v dela teoriji s prakso, vzdržljivost s strokovnim znanjem. Skoraj 1/4 udarnikov je v starosti od 30 do 50 let, to je v dobri največje zmogljivosti in je pridobljivih delovnih izkušenj. O potrebi strokovne izobrazbe za častni naziv »udarnik«
prča dejstvo, da je več kot 1/4 udarnikov kvalificiranih delavcev in samobitnih.

Ko govorimo o delovnem poletu nalaga ljudstva, ne smemo pozabiti na naka mladino. Res je, med udarniki ali število zastopana, ker ji manjka delovnih izkušenj, toda toliko bolj število je zastopana na vsakem prostovoljnem dela. Praga Brekč—Bavčič je spomnik delovnega poleta naka mladine.

Kdo so naši prostovoljci, kdo so naši udarniki? To so ljudje, ki alio nikdar niso bili v kakršnih izjemno dobrih pogojih, so delavci različnih strok, tudi delavci nestrokovnjaki, telaki, ki live pogostoma v najtežjih pogojih, in vendar radejo preizkušene norme, dvigajo proizvodnjo, obnavljajo, gradijo. To so znanili začeta splošnega prepoveda, prehoda od osebnega egoizma k vrhovni ideji skupnosti.

Danes ne delamo za grabaljševga tujca ali za domalega izkoriščevalca, danes btrujemo z veseljem svoje delovne sile za boljše bodočnost nas vseh. S svojim delom ne polnimo lepro pajdelcem, danes gradimo novo srečanje skupnosti, Titova Zagoslavlja.



FRANČIČ BORIS, asistent v matici orbi, je za izboljšanje dela doprinesel prihranek na času in materialu za nad 25.000.— din. S samostojno organizacijo, s pospešitvijo izdelavih reparatur, z vodstvom pobudo in z vsagledno dodatekoma dela je vodil kolektiv, ki je znanost racionalizacije dela ter doprinesel s tem stvarne gospodarske koristi



PEKAR GABRIEL, vodja delovne mize je dal pobudo za napravo za dvigovanje ingotov na rite na težki prosti. Z izvedbo te naprave bo povečana proizvodnja, kajti v primeru okvare bo prihranjen na zalogi proge nad 30 % časa



MIRC MARTIN, znanor in vodja mehanizne skupine na prosti rite voljave je samostojno izboljšanje varovalnega korita za zanke, s katerim je preprečen znaten odstotek izmetov ter izboljšal zalogi proge. Podvig doprinesel prihranek na času in materialu



MIRC ADOLF, sodelavec na »Orichel«
stiskalnici v kamniški opskurni je član, prav za pravi organizator udarniške skupine, ki je prekoračila predpisano proizvodnjo stroja za 30 do 40 %. Tovariš Mirc je izločilni sodelavec, ki je vsem vsigled prisloži



ZLATIC JANEZ, toplec v marinarstvu je prekoračil normo delovnega časa za 30 odstotkov. Svoje delo na enem izmed najtežjih mest izlavlja z vsagledno pospešitvijo in vestnostjo, dviga udarniškega duha in doprinesel tako materialne koristi

tovariš. 17

Fig. 4: "The Workers from Jesenice are at the Forefront of Shock Workers" (Tovariš, 1946, 10, 17; photographer unknown).

production targets. These portraits of shock workers served as a postwar counterpart to the pre-war bourgeois portraits of company founders often featured in mainstream illustrated press. The importance of achieving and surpassing production goals was also accentuated in short comparative reportages on different production collectives competing in achieving state-assigned quotas, or with reportages on exemplary workers and collectives—for instance: “S Hukičevim načinom vrtanja se bo proizvodnja nafte lahko podvojila” (With the Hukič Method of Drilling We Will be Able to Double Oil Production), published in *Slovenski poročevalec* on November 5, 1949,¹⁵ or “Jeseniški delavci so na čelu udarnikov” (The Workers from Jesenice are at the Forefront of Shock Workers) published in *Tovariš*, no. 10, 1946¹⁶ (Fig. 4). A whole preceding page to the latter is devoted entirely to the description and praise of the Stakhanov or Stakhanovite movement, the Soviet movement of shock workers named after “the first among shock workers” which excelled in reaching production quotas and which “proved that one man can work for six.”¹⁷ Celebrating the heroes of socialist labor and promoting higher productivity in postwar reconstruction, industrialization, and socialist state-building. In this respect most of the periodicals were similar to the Soviet agitprop model, while it was the *Tovariš* magazine, which was far more focused on visual representation; as a consequence *Tovariš*, especially in the 1950s, developed recognizable aesthetics.

As indicated, the majority of the images in the photoreportages were deliberately assigned a subordinate role, serving primarily to illustrate the text rather than functioning as independent visual focal points. A telling example of this *apparent* subservience of the image to the written word can be found in a photoreportage published on the Miners’ Day in *Dnevnik* on July 3, 1980 “Luč kopačeve toplote” (Light of the Digger’s Warmth). In the lead section of the article, we can read: “It was in the mining districts where the Slovenian proletariat was forged. [...] The flames of revolutionary rebellion raged [...] However, men with strong fists, tired muscles, and soot-covered faces are saving our homeland yet again” (Šefic, 1980, 9; photographs by Lado Čuk).

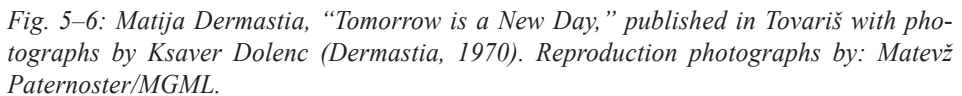
If one expected the predominance of social realism style imagery in the photoreportages of the mainstream media (heroization of the proletariat, heroic realism) one would be surprised to find the photographs in this photoreportage quite straightforward and stylistically rather unassuming; the miners are presented as cheerful.¹⁸ The images are doubly “miscoded”: on the one hand,

15 *Slovenski poročevalec*, 5. 11. 1949: S Hukičevim načinom vrtanja se bo proizvodnja nafte lahko podvojila, 1. Photographer unknown.

16 *Tovariš*, 1946, 2, 10: Jeseniški delavci so na čelu udarnikov, 17. Photographer unknown.

17 *Tovariš*, 1946, 2, 10: Stehanov in njegovo delo, 16.

18 Highly stylized and heroic imagery was usually reserved for the covers of magazines and dailies or for the title images of the articles on commemorations.



being almost neutral, they are in contrast to the strong textual socialist valorization of the miner as the prototype proletarian (social realist heroization of the proletariat), and, on the other, they are incompatible with the article's subtitle which pointed out: "Mining is hard work—systemic solutions will be necessary" (Šefić, 1980, 9). The entire whole-page reportage informs readers that while their work may well be difficult, the mighty miners can handle it.

The culmination of this socialist realist valorization (again, importantly, with a striking lack of heroic socialist imagery) can be found in the photoreportage about a horrific mining accident, an explosion of methane in the Sretno shaft of the Breza mine in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which forty-nine miners were killed. Entitled "Jutri bo nov dan" (Tomorrow is a New Day) and published in *Tovariš* in 1970 with photographs by Ksaver Dolenc (Dermastia, 1970) (Fig. 5–6), the photographic presentation of the accident includes the photographs of the solemn parade of townspeople of Breza past coffins and wreaths, images of relatives in mourning, the mourning crowd, and miner pallbearers. The text persistently reminds us that this was a case of natural disaster that tore a deep gash into the self-management goals of the entire district and the miners' wishes and hopes for a better life and a decent salary. The article concludes with a tell-tale note that the townspeople of Breza "showed us what they were made of. They were able to take the cruel blows of nature without panicking, one might even say in a stoic manner. Tomorrow is a new day" (Dermastia, 1970, 13). This reportage reminds the public that the "real" victim of the accident is the self-management goal of the community and, importantly, miners and miners' communities are framed through notions of perseverance, endurance, and stoicism. Especially in the *initiative-giving* period of photoreportage they were presented as the ones that are "carrying the country on their shoulders" as the miners served as an ideal and topical symbol of the sacrifice for the common good—"if miners can do it, so can you." Miners stand metonymically for the citizens of the self-management era and metaphorically evoke the image of the ideal citizenry.

The importance of the role of miners and mining in the visual mythology of labor and the labor movement in general is further corroborated by its unified representation throughout the history of socialist self-management, as well as in numerous reportages about commemorative events connected to the history of the labor movement. Among these, a prominent example was the skirmish between the members of the fascist Orjuna and workers that took place in the town of Trbovlje in 1924. The numerous reportages appearing after the Second World War commemorating this event conflated the struggle for workers' and miners' rights, the Communist Party, anti-fascism, and, last but not least, the National Liberation Struggle (in effect amalgamating the figures of the worker, the communist, the proletarian, and the liberation movement



Fig. 7–8: Jože Belin, “A Wall Made of Living Bodies,” published in *Tovariš* (Belin, 1964, 8–11).

fighter).¹⁹ Anti-fascism is highlighted in the photoreportage covering the commemorative event honoring the fortieth anniversary of the skirmish, entitled “Rdeči revirji grobarji Orjune” (Red Districts²⁰ Buried Orjuna) and published in *7D* (Jančar, 1974; photographs by Dragiša Modrinjak) with photographs showing the miners’ ceremonial guard, the laying of carnations, and the unveiling of the monument to the victims, which was attended by a representative of the Communist Party of Spain, who thanked the “Spanish fighters” (members of the International Brigades fighting in the Spanish Civil War) from the ranks of Zasavje miners. Another typical commemorative reportage was published in *Tovariš*, entitled “Zid živih teles” (A Wall Made of Living Bodies) (Belin, 1964) (Fig. 7–8), composed of archival photographs (including a reprint of a postcard featuring the workers killed in the skirmish with Orjuna), photographs of surviving miners who took part in the fight, and photographs of the sites where the fighting took place. The testimony of one of the victims of the violence, miner Karel Razboršek’s, describing his recuperation, very poignantly reveals the ideology behind such commemorative reportages and can be taken as a paradigmatic example of it: “But I got lucky, so that I was able to work in the mine for thirty-nine years and a half with only my right eye and deaf in the left ear” (Belin, 1964, 10). His experience of the Orjuna attack, and the head injury that physically marked him for life, is discursively subordinated to the notion that this was a small price to pay for the ability to work and contribute to the wider social collective. Tellingly the image shows him pointing to his injuries, to the point where the bullet struck his head next to his right eye and exited near his left ear. In effect, the variation of the visual motifs (victims, survivors, site of the attack) and written testimonies shows an attempt to restructure the event to fit the regime’s ideological narrative of the importance of the worker’s struggle and sacrifice for the constitution of Slovenian (and Yugoslav) socialism.

19 A similar conflation is evident in the socialist monuments of the period. In 1980, such monuments were officially designated as “Monuments to the Revolutionary Labor Movement, the National Liberation War, and the Socialist Revolution,” an umbrella title that encapsulates the ideological synthesis of labor movement, anti-fascist resistance, and socialist revolution. A particularly illustrative example is the monument by sculptor Ivan Sabolić erected in Husino in 1954, dedicated to miners. As Horvatinčič (2014, 175–176) explains, the process of constructing this statue involved broad community engagement, including miners, cultural workers, and members of both the city and municipal boards, who collectively deliberated on the appropriate iconography to represent the miners’ legacy. The monument depicts a miner standing with a rifle in hand, while a pickaxe, lamp, and drill lie at his feet; an iconographic arrangement that captures the transformation of the worker into a liberation movement fighter. The miner is “captured” in the moment of leaving behind his tools and taking up arms, symbolically enlisting in the National Liberation Struggle. This visual narrative materially enacts the ideological fusion of labor, communism, and anti-fascist resistance that was central to postwar commemorative discourse.

20 “Rdeči revirji” (Red Districts) is a Slovenian colloquial term for the mining districts of Trbovlje, Zagorje, and Hrastnik.

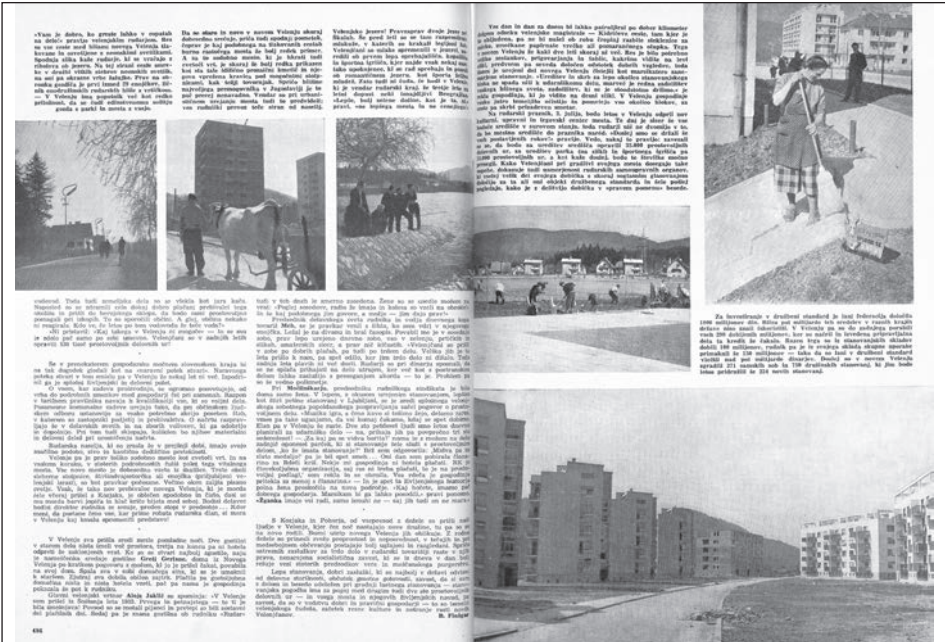


Fig. 9–10: B. Finžgar, “The Velenje Miracle,” published in *Tovariš* on May 1 (Finžgar, 1959).

Igor Gureli

to consider in the next section. It

[illegible]

Tašno, pred čemer svarijo, je fotoaparatorji in mestni nadzorniki, da bi šlo do krmila, da bi nadzorovali, ali se ne pojavijo v prepovedanih krajih, ali vstopijo v mesta, kjer so nevarni. Vse to mora prebrati in analizirati vsa mesta, kjer se pojavijo, in jih iskane vozila kakovosti, naprave morajo svariti pred morebitnimi nevarnostmi.

Vzdržljivi pa so japonski Priglasila, ki so jih razvili v 1980. letih, v kateri pa je v zrakah od 0,5 do 2,0 odzvoča. Radniki je torej izmislili, da bi jih lahko uporabljali v mestih, kjer so nevarni, kar pomeni, da mora biti v njih velika napetost, saj morajo biti sposobni prenesti velike količine energije, kar pomeni, da mora biti v njih velika napetost, saj morajo biti sposobni prenesti velike količine energije, kar pomeni, da mora biti v njih velika napetost, saj morajo biti sposobni prenesti velike količine energije.

Radniki uporabljajo posebne zbirne naprave, ki jih imenujejo "zbirne naprave" in jih imenujejo "zbirne naprave". Te naprave so namenjene zbiranju odpadkov, ki jih imenujejo "zbirne naprave" in jih imenujejo "zbirne naprave". Te naprave so namenjene zbiranju odpadkov, ki jih imenujejo "zbirne naprave" in jih imenujejo "zbirne naprave".

U katere je dišalo po so-
kazala četrh deset eno popoli-
podoben prenapolnjeni žele-
kalnikah ne postopajo
popravljeni molže v belih
in rdečih plastičnih čelada
zaščitne kisli-
nega, drovčino je samo nevtrali-
zna in vlažna.

»Je kaj razne, kajne?« Pionirski
svoj načrdu do maksimuma, kar
je, in jim bolj samostojno »vse-
ga« in »nič« in »nič« in »nič« in »nič«
informacije službe Radnika
lajše Valenoje (RLV). »Zato imi
je za izredno pomembno, kaj si do-
biš iz preizkušnje, 24 ur na dan.
Od 3100 nadzornih je v službi
načrta, da jih bo 17.550 na
dnevno nakopajo približno
2.000 ton v »kaj« pomolže
izrednih nadzornih delajo-
jih, ki jih bodo v »kaj« pomolže
kaj raznosoma neodvisno
izrednih pogojem. Furtje so
je izredno potrdovani. Bona pomolže
so sprejeli potrdbo izrednih
illegitimi konceptov in »kaj«
na je RLV potrdovanih 4.

13 tisoč rudariskih ton

Velenjski rudarji in drugi žlani delavci REK so doslej za večji končni letni uspeh. Prva rudarska »vinkna« leta so pobodo rudniških DPO. Udeleženi skupščin študijske in uprave, vključno s Slavkom Janžičem in glavnim vodnikom rudarstva Avgustom Trglavcem, janskih krstov »kar dobro odzvenijo« torej košično, emalo idujskimi in Tudi druga rudarska skicja, v njej Organizaciji so jo na imenitno sin- več kot 2000 zaposlenih. Klor gars rudnik, je sodeval pri šifrenju in Prav tako so obšli presoj metrov blizu 6500 ton premaga.

je. Prostor je bil na las poln. Našli čakalniki, da je po vsebini delovne oblike odprti, rumenasti, zeleni in ki jim od pasu visijo še maske.

ako zelo nas briga po vsebinskem
smislu, preča vsaj kilometer dob-
ro vesta tovarnjakov najrazličnej-
še registracij, razpeta od kritične
do proti Šofljanu do nakladalne

ne organizacije RI.V ter sonda
iskop preroğa hitrovski le dvi
je bila 24. novembra, in sicer
se je je 1200 knapov, delavce
direktorjev REK. Velenje in
in proizvodnje dpt. izdelavce
sta se po besedah prekalnih
Nakopali so 5500 ton lignita,
ele redne izmene.

[illegible][illegible]

13 tisoč udarniških toč

Velenjski rudarji in drugi štiri delavci REK so doslej za večji končni letni dohodek. Prva udarnika »vokod« na pobudo rudniških DPO. Udeleženi skupnosti sta bili v upravnem, vključno s Slavkom Janžičem in glavnim vodnikom rudarstva Avgustom Teršlacem, janskih kriv »kakr« dubo odzvali torej kolonije, enako izkopišči ena. Tudi druga udarnika slika, v nedeljo. Organizirali so jo na iniciativno sin več kot 2000 zaposlenih. Kakor sin rudnik, je sodeloval pri oblikovanju. Prav tako so obiskali presoji metrov blizu 4500 ton premaga.

ne organizacije RLV ter sonda
čirsko premoška hrbtnostali še dnev
je bila 24. novembra, in sicer
se je je 1200 knapov, delavcev
direktorijem REK Velenje ind
in proizvodnje dipl. inženirjev
sta se po besedah prekaljenih
Nakopali so 6500 ton lignita,
ekle rodne izmene.
12. decembra, je lepo uspela
ata REK Velenje, prtiljo pa je
izdravstvenih razlogov ne smel v
javno okolico, poti in skladih.
čistih pregov ter spet nakopali

[illegible]

Prvi udarec je prejem doživel ob gospodarski neuspehi leta 1965. Premagovasilno je postal neomakoparno s drugimi gospodarskimi panogami: prejem je bil podoben, njegove cene so bile daleč pod ekonomskimi, bile so

[illegible]

22. Omenjeni vse papiristični prenosniki premaga, dales pa je slovenskoga premaga le še 12,6 odstotka. Rodniki delajo na robu bioloških zmogljivosti, rezerve za večji odskop se počasi iztrajujejo, odpadna dela in modernizacija jara pa zaostajajo za najmanj dve leti.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]



Fig. 11–13: Rok Guzelj, “Miners are the Economy’s Red Blood Cells,” published in *Teleks* with photographs by Dragan Arrigler (Guzelj, 1982). Reproduction photographs by Matevž Paternoster/MGML.

Thus, in the photoreportages of this period, the unifying rhetoric comes full circle. What amalgamates the worker, the communist, the proletarian, the liberation movement fighter is precisely the endurance of the suffering, the sacrifice willing to be made for the good of the many, of the Whole. Instead of the actualization of a person through work in an individualistic sense, there is an emphasis on the actualization of society through a person’s work—the “social body,” the collective work taking precedence over the individual, or to put it another way, the actualization of the individual’s work runs through the collective.²¹ Not coincidentally, the photographs followed suit, serving not to actualize a person, a class, or a profession, but rather to operate as atomized building blocks in the symbolic actualization of society as a whole. In the same vein but far more focused on the achievements of the socialist self-management and its contribution to the community was the photoreportage “Velenjski čudež” (The Velenje Miracle) published in *Tovariš* on International Workers’ Day on May 1, 1959 (Finžgar, 1959; photographer unknown) (Fig. 9–10), which focused on the mining town of Velenje, its urbanistic

21 Cf. Andrea Komlosy (2018) and Gareth Lloyd (2008) for a closer explanation of Marx’s multifaceted concepts of alienation, actualization, and self-actualization through work.

development, social infrastructure, and living standards with numerous testimonies by locals on their volunteering for the community in workers' brigades (e.g. in building the water pipelines) and, quite tellingly, on how the town authorities were able to engage the peasants from the surrounding villages to work in the mines. "[I]n a word, how to turn anarchic peasant half-proletarians into self-disciplined industrial workers in the shortest possible time," while bringing their "fresh simplicity and straightforwardness" into the town, where they would become more refined and educated (Finžgar, 1959, 485, 486). Numerous photographs showcase the tidy city, volunteer work brigades, leisure activities, and locals cleaning the pavements, with only one, although central, tell-tale image of a miner working in the tunnels. More than any other, this reportage was a rare breach of the otherwise canonical aesthetics of mining and conflation of miners, communists, and resistance fighters; it focused rather on the results of miners' labor and work activities (the town and the community) emphasizing the self-organization of workers, their volunteering, and community-oriented spirit. As Finžgar wrote: "Due to fair wages in mining, the true, unpretentious socialist consciousness grows among the miners' camaraderie, slowly liberating itself from the century-old shackles of religion and bourgeois self-righteousness" (Finžgar, 1959, 486).

Depiction of mining activities more often remained confined to the recurring visual motifs connected to mineshafts, elevator towers, and the imagery of soot-covered mining overalls suspended from chains (in contrast to the previous example). An exemplary case of this type of depiction, which struggled to move beyond these conventional representations, can be found in the photoreportage "Novo življenje živosrebrnega rudnika" (A New Life for the Mercury Mine), published in *Teleks* on April 14, 1983, written by Marjan Raztresen with photographs by Miško Kranjec (Raztresen, 1983). However, there was room to broaden the scope of visual exploration within the mining context. For example the photoreportage titled "Rudarji so rdeče krvničke gospodarstva" (Miners are the Economy's Red Blood Cells), featured in *Teleks* on December 16, 1982, written by Igor Guzelj with photographs by Dragan Arrigler (Guzelj, 1982). This photoreportage represented the miners' labor far more comprehensively, albeit with a recognizable realistic style, canonical valorization of miners, and persisting in their labor environment. It captures moments from their last cigarette before descending into the mine, their elevator journey into the mine, the process of installing support beams, featuring the photograph of the advanced Russian mining drill head, and the interiors of the rescue squad headquarters—complete with emergency breathing apparatuses in the backdrop—and even including a portrait of the rescue team's leader (Fig. 11–13). An earlier example of such comprehensive visualization would be "V zagorskem revirju" (In the Zagorje Mining District) published in *Tovariš* no. 51, in 1949 with the photographs by J. Štravs of the new mining colony, images of various underground and surface activities of mining and, which stands out from most of the other photoreportages, even with the addition of visualization of the leisure time: miners relaxing in front of the mountain lodge which they helped to build "by sacrificing their leave time" (Fig. 14).²²

22 *Tovariš*, 1949, 5, 51: V zagorskem revirju, 838. Photographs by J. Štravs.



Fig. 14: "In the Zagorje Mining District" (Tovariš, 1949, 5, 51, 838; photographs by J. Štravs).

The lead text of the 1980 *Dnevnik* reportage “Light of the Digger’s Warmth” (Šefic, 1980, 9) adeptly encapsulates the prevailing social imagery of miners, framing them as embodiments of the proletariat, revolutionary resistance fighters, and saviors of the country. This narrative consistently portrayed miners as archetypal, vigorous individuals (Slovenian “knap”), their identities visually signified by soot-covered faces, protective helmets, and captured in the stark clarity of black-and-white photography—a stylistic choice that persisted even into the era of the color press.

Mythologization operates through visual and textual strategies that cast the miner as an emblem of endurance, resistance, and proletarian revolution. Iconographic elements—such as the helmet, the lamp, and the soot-covered face—serve as a visual currency in the circulation of meaning, connoting stoicism, sacrifice, and perseverance as core attributes of the ideal socialist citizen. Photoreportage constructs a sense of historical continuity between the labor movement, the resistance during the Second World War, and the socialist revolution, thereby reinforcing the ideological model of socialist citizenship. Throughout this period, photoreportages consistently convey this narrative, presenting these movements as historically and ideologically inseparable, and ultimately contributing to the legitimization of the Communist Party’s central historical role.

Until the mid-1980s, dailies generally adhered to realistic, straightforward compositions to depict work and labor. Meanwhile, weekly magazines published compositionally more elaborate photoreportages (e.g., from the 1950s in *Tovariš*, and later, in the 1980, in *7D*, *Teleks*, and *Mladina*). However, only a few Slovenian publications achieved the level of critical and stylistic engagement—and the frequency of labor-themed photoreportage—established during the Weimar Republic, particularly in the workers’ press, such as *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* and *Arbeiterfotografie*. Contrary to what might be expected of a socialist media system, most adopted a cross-class mode of representation similar to that found in the mainstream press of capitalist countries, especially in their depictions of miners and mining labor. Moreover, while their work epitomized manual, socialist labor, they were at the same time materially positioned on the social periphery (Petrović & Hofman, 2017, 64).

MINERS IN PHOTOREPORTAGES DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD AND IN THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

The plain, stylistically straightforward tradition in the representation of miners began to crumble with the dynamization and gradual liberalization of the media toward the end of the 1980s.²³ Largely because of the changing political

23 In Slovenia, the 1980s saw a resurgence in socially engaged photoreportage, particularly as the era of “self-management” in media reporting was drawing to a close. This was a time when the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation and the transition to a new socio-economic system prompted a phase of introspection and reassessment of the new and old, marked by critique and, importantly, of visual “creation” of the new social relations.

and social climate, as this was a period of gradual liberalization of Yugoslav societies, a period of growing interethnic and inter-republic tensions, as well as increasing centralization of socialist institutions. With the outbreak of the strike in the Stari Trg mine in Kosovo in 1989, Slovenian society identified with the struggle of the Kosovo Albanian miners against the institutional repression of the Belgrade government. This brought forth a number of photoreportages from Kosovo published in the Slovenian press that focused on miners in a new light, quite different from that of previous reportages in two important aspects. Photoreportages became more focused on visual storytelling, aiming to explain the socio-political context, and usually framed through the stories and images of specific individuals. Furthermore, the representation of mining work was no longer limited to the “atomized” representations of the working act (marking the transition in reporting from *initiative-giving* to *watchdog* reportage). Moreover, the image of Kosovo miners turned into a powerful symbol of the struggle against the central government in Belgrade as the miners’ political agenda coincided with the late-1980s Slovenian socio-political agenda. Only at this point did visual representations of miners reach more profoundly and frequently beyond the visual trappings of the shafts, helmets, and soot-covered faces and entered the wider public space. For instance, as miners took to the streets in protest against the declaration of the state of emergency in Kosovo in “Proti izrednemu stanju” (Against the State of Emergency) in *Mladina*, published on March 8, 1989, with photographs by Jože Suhadolnik,²⁴ or at home where the Kosovo miners were depicted as victims in “Albanci ne pòjejo več” (Albanians are no Longer Singing) in *Mladina* (Lesjak, 1989; photographs by Tone Stojko), often sharing the pages of the Slovenian media with supportive protesters from Slovenia (with photographs of Tito in hand as a sign of unity and against centralism) while “participating” in the solidarity rally in the Cankarjev Dom cultural center in “Scenarij ‘zlahka obljubljene naglice’” (Scenario of “Easily Promised Haste”) in *Delavska enotnost* (Žitnik, 1989; photographer unknown).

A 1992 reportage in *Mladina* entitled “Pod mojo deželo” (Under My Country) foregrounded the miners’ nationality in a significant statement of one of the miners: “You turn Slovenian by going underground” (Gačnik & Hladnik - Milharčič; photographs by Borut Krajnc). This was one of the few acknowledgements of the multi-national character of miners (Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks worked side by side in the mine, even though ethnic tensions were almost at their peak—the Bosnian War “officially” started in April 1992), which was symbolically accentuated by photographs of naked miners in the shower. The reportage emphasized the role of mining in the development of the country “above” and the disillusionment of the district-level policies that perceived mining as “the remnant of the old regime” (Gačnik & Hladnik - Milharčič, 1992, 12).

24 *Mladina*, 8. 3. 1989: Proti izrednemu stanju, 6. Photographs by Jože Suhadolnik.

By the end of the twentieth century, in 1999, miners more visibly “step out of the mines”—be it as pensioners in front of their retirement homes in “Mesto upokojencev” (The Pensioners’ Town) in *Mladina* (Krese, 1999) or as occupying abandoned administrative buildings at mine sites in the reportage “Od rudnika Stari trg do Cankarjevega doma in nazaj” (From the Stari trg Mine to Cankarjev Dom and Back Again) (Hladnik - Milharčič, 2007, 16–19; photographs by Tomaž Skale).



14

sobotnaPRILOGA

DELO, 3. marca 2007



Utrujen korak pred prhanjem in prvim toplim obrokom v dnevnu. Optimizma je iz dneva v dan manj.

»A v Zasavju boljega ni. Če si že 20 let tukaj, kam boš šel drugam?« se vpraša Stefan. »In kdo bo sploh vzel rudarja? Kaj naj dela drugega? Ta poklic je povsem specifičen ... Lahko vzame le lopato v roke, gre na cesto, k židarem ali kam? Res nimaš kam iti ...« Miško iz Kisovca je najprej delal v Zagorju, zdaj v Hrastniku, če bo sreča, še v Trbovljah. »Vse bo dal skozi!« »Ja, pa še vedno ne bom šel v penzijo,« grenko doda in pristavi: »Še 13 let.«

Na najgloblji točki v rudniku, približno 250 metrov pod površjem, dva predstavnika mlajše in starejše generacije urejata dostavno pot. Vinko, ki gre naslednje leto v pokoj, utrjeno dvigne pogled. Za nekaj trenutkov prevlada zgovoren molk: Kaj nas hodi te gledat, kot da smo v živalskem vrtu? Pojma ni matel! »Po delu si utrujen kot pes. Spiš kot otrok, za kaj več ni energije.« Ob vprašanju, kaj bo počel, ko bo končno v penziji, spusti pogled na lopato. Uživaj! »Eh, malo zaslužim tukaj. Kaj si boš privoščil s tem drobižem?«

»Po starem zakonu so knapi odhajali v pokoj med 45. in 48. letom, zdaj pa se starostna meja knapov zvišuje. Če bi šlo za intelektualno delo, bi to pomenilo najboljša leta, češar pa za rudarja zaradi fizične izčrpanosti ne moremo reči,« je povedal pomočnik tehničnega direktorja v RTH. Med napornim fizičnim delom namreč najbolj trpita hrbtnica in križ, zaradi vilage po sklepih trga revma, pogoste so okvare vida in sluha, saj se hrup pod zemljo nima kam širiti.

Ko pozneje s knapi z dizelsko železnico zapuščano javno nedrja jame Ojstro, med ozkimi vagoni, v katere se komajda spravijo štirje možje, glasno odnevaajo ugičanja, ali je med njimi dejansko kakšen abrahamovec. Nihče se ne spomni nikogar. »Korenine smo le videli, mogoče je dobro videti le lupina,« na kompliment odgovori Rufad. V Slovenijo je prišel iz Bosne kot najstnik, končal kovinarsko šolo, s podzemnim delom si služi kruh že 25 let. »Tukaj imam družino in prijatelje, zato se 'dol' ne bom vračal.«

... nekam v kot v muzej se bo zadigal v štil poplujan herc

Kljub zapiranju zasavskih rudnikov in ukijanju z njimi povezanih dejavnosti, kar je in bo povzročalo velike gospodarske, demografske, socialne, zdravstvene in prostorsko-pokrajinske spremembe, tretjino bruto dodane vrednosti še vedno prispevaajo dejavnosti rudarstva in predelovalne industrije oziroma 49 odstotkov sekundarni sektor v celoti. Spremembe so kažejo zlasti v še vedno nadpovprečno rudarskoenergetski in industrijski gospodarski strukturi,

izraziti dnevni migraciji in socialni sestavi prebivalstva. Zalog premoga je še veliko, še posebej v jami Hrastnik – par milijonov ton –, ampak je že zaprta. Tudi prihodnje delovanje TET, ki jo sedaj poganja edinoletni premog iz RTH, je še zavito v dim. Stopnja registrirane brezposelnosti v Zasavju je že zdaj druga najvišja v Sloveniji – 13,2-odstotna (v državi je 10,2). Regionalni razvojni program sicer kot eno od rešilnih bilk med drugim predvideva tudi spodbujanje razvoja turizma v regiji, pri čemer šteje rudarsko delo za turistični potencial. Zlasti po nekdanjem in še aktivnem rudarstvu prepoznavna regija naj bi to lahko izkoristila v najrazličnejših oblikah, med drugim z vključevanjem rudarske dediščine v turistično ponudbo, oblikovanjem tematske rudarske poti in z ureditvijo rudarskega muzeja v Trbovljah.

... in ko se zadnji zagorce bo na brifot najdu, z njim umri bo še spomin. Adijo, knapi! (Naslov in mednaslovi so iz pesmi Adijo, knapi zagorske skupine Orlek)



Vso odkopno opremo bodo po zaprtju jame Ojstro odpeljali v Trbovlje. Češar ne bo moglo uporabiti, bo ostalo pod zemljo, kjer naj bi se do leta 2015 končala zapiralna dela.



Jutranja temna je končana. Zbor je ob 6. uri zjutraj, tisti, ki se vozijo iz Dolenjske, so vstali že ob pol štirih zjutraj. Pred odhodom pod zemljo sešatek, na katerem so dobili navodila za delo. Šest ur garanja, pol ure za malico. Zdaj čakajo le še dizelsko železnico, da jih bo odpeljala na površje. Po meter na sekundo.



Po prihodu iz rudnika. Preznojene, zaprašene in blatne delovne obleke knapi obešajo na verigo, nato pa jo do naslednjega dne potegnajo pod strop, da se vse skupaj posuši in prežari. Pranje obvezne rudarske opreme – boksalic, nogavic, blaz, kratkih majic, srajc in površnikov – je enkrat na teden.

Fig. 15–16: Jana Župančič, "The Trbovlje-Hrastnik Mine Is Shutting Down: Farewell, Miners!," published in *Sobotna priloga* with photographs by Damjan Žibert (Župančič, 2007). Reproduction photographs by: Matevž Paternoster/MGML.



Fig. 17–18: Ervin Hladnik - Milharčič, “From the Stari Trg Mine to Cankarjev Dom and Back Again,” published in *Dnevnikov objektiv* with photographs by Tomaž Skale (Hladnik - Milharčič, 2007, 16–19).

[illegible][illegible]

50

Trbovlje

Mladina 43 / 25.10.2013

07



7. Stanovanjska stavba, v kateri so živeli zaposleni v termoelektrarni

A družbeno življenje mesta se ne razkaja v vseh točkah. Kulturna dejavnost na primer ni v celoti izginila, le prestavila se je čez parkirišče pred Delavskim domom v Mladinski center. Tam se je oblikovala skupina mladih aktivistov, ki prirejajo različne socialne in kulturne, pa tudi politične, izobraževalne in športne dogodke. Hkrati pa Mladinski center s sodelovanjem z drugimi mesti in državami mladim v Trbovljah omogoča stik z družbenimi procesi in gibanji, ki potekajo in delujejo drugje. Ta in druge sordne pobude zato dajejo upanje, da je mogoča drugačna prihodnost. V njej bi prebivalci Trbovelj kljub razmeram ali prav zaradi gospodarskega in socialnega opustošenja končno zgrabili izjemno priložnost, ki jim jo ponujata družbena infrastruktura delavskih prednikov ter zgodovina njihovih uporov proti fašizmu in kapitalizmu, partiji in enoumju. Na tej podlagi bi lahko zgradili mesto resnične demokracije in enakosti, mesto demokratičnega socializma.

Razsežnosti demokratičnega socializma

V vsakem primeru so Trbovlje opomnik resničnih razsežnosti demokratičnega socialističnega projekta. Zaradi omejenosti politične razprave se pogosto zameglijo razlike med strankami, to pa odpira prostor njihovega uveljavljanja mimo vsebine, na primer z obljubami novih brezmadežnih in etičnih obrazov. Zato nastaja vtis, da je demokratični socializem le nadaljevanje sindikalnega stališča z drugimi sredstvi, vračanje ali v najboljšem primeru obramba že izbojevanih delavskih, socialnih in človekovih pravic, ne pa spoprijem z družbenimi silami, ki jih ogrožajo. Hkrati pa lahko zlahka dobimo tudi vtis omejevanja le na te pravice, čeprav jih želi tudi radikalno razširiti in uvesti nove.

Drugače povedano: demokratični socializem se ne ustavlja pri zahtevi po uvedbi socialne države, progresivnega davčnega sistema ali reguliranja trga delovne sile, niti pri zahtevi po uvedbi družbenega lastništva in upravljanja posameznih podjetij ali vsega gospodarstva. Ne konča se torej pri izhodu iz podjetja, šole ali bolnišnice, njegovega napredovanja pa ni mogoče meriti le s stopnjo dohodkovne neenakosti, progresivnosti davčnega sistema ali družbenega lastništva podjetij. V socializmu je na načelih demokracije in enakosti zgrajeno vse družbeno življenje, njegov osnovni gradnik pa ni podjetje ali gospodarstvo, ampak – mesto. x

braniti. Hkrati pa je nujno prepoznati, da je materialne pogoje kritike v veliki meri ustvaril prav njen predmet. Laibachov in kolektiva Neue Slowenische Kunst si tako ni mogoče zamisliti brez Delavskega doma, brez njegove petindvajsetletne kulturne proizvodnje in samega prostora, kjer bi se moral leta 1980 zgoditi njihov slavno prepovedani nastop. Tudi v tem pogledu je bil socialistični modernizem protisloven in v tej protislovnosti produktiven. S tem ko je delavcem in njihovim družinam odprl nova področja družbenega življenja, se je izpostavil možnosti njihove kritike in nepredvidenih smeri razvoja.

V novem družbenem sistemu sta se zasnova in delovanje Trbovelj začela počasi, a vztrajno spreminjati. Družbena stanovanja je že na začetku prehoda v kapitalizem odpravil Jazbinškov zakon in so, če njihovi zasebni lastniki ne poskrbijo drugače, prepuščena propadu, še hitreje pa razpadajo skupnosti, ki jih naseljujejo. Nekdaj odprt in zračen vhod v letno kopališče danes zapolnjujeta restavracija in gostinski lokal. V Delavskem domu je vse manj lastne kulturne proizvodnje, pa tudi gledalcev in poslušalcev. Družbeno življenje mesta pomembno narekujejo na vsakem vogalu vznikle diskontne trgovine. Zato nekdanja središča socialnega, kulturnega in športnega življenja mesta postajajo spomeniki preteklosti in netržkariščne priložnosti.

Fig. 19–21: Rok Kogej, “The Socialist Town” published in Mladina with photographs by Jošt Franko (Kogej, 2014, 46–50). Reproduction photographs by: Matevž Paternoster/MGML.



Prihod rudarjev iz jame po končani stavki v rudniku Trbovlje-Hrastnik. /Foto: Borut Krajnc

Medina 12 / 21.03.2014

Revščina zaposlenih

19

NE SREČNO!

Zakaj številni Slovenci konca krize in recesije ne bodo čutili

Piše: Marcel Štefancič, jr.

Evropska komisija je nedavno sporočila, da bo zamrznila približno milijardo evrov, ki naj bi jo Slovenija dobila za sofinanciranje projektov. In zakaj bo izplačilo tega razvojnega denarja zamrznila? Zaradi nepravilnosti in sistemskih napak, ki jih je ugotovila pri črpanju evropskih sredstev in nadzoru.

Kako lahko tako zamočiš, da izgubiš milijardo? Kako te lahko tako zanese, da ti spodnese masivno investicijo v regionalni razvoj in infrastrukturo? Se pri tem zavedaš, da take investicije pomenijo nova delovna mesta, višji BDP in manjšo brezposelnost?

Ironija je v tem, da se vlada verjetno zaveda, kaj to pomeni – in ji je prav zato vseeno za ta razvojni, investicijski denar. Velike investicije pač niso v skladu s politiko te vlade, toda tudi v skladu s politiko prejšnjih dveh kriznih vlad niso bile. Vse tri krizne vlade so imele jasno politiko: obstaja le ena pravilna pot do okrevanja in višje rasti – varčevanje. Ne pa trošenje. Ne pa državne investicije. Trošenje je nepravilnost. Zato ga zlahka pogrešamo.

V Sloveniji pa je okrog 130 tisoč brezposelnih. Uradno. Dejansko je brezposelnih še bistveno več. Vse več pa je tudi tistih, ki so zaposleni, a se počutijo, kot da so brezposelni. Iz knjige *Revščina zaposlenih*, ki so jo napisale Vesna Leskošek, Simona Smolej, Ljiljana Rihter, Ružica Boškić, Barbara Kresal in Maja Breznik, namreč vemo, da se pri nas vse bolj razrašča nova skupina prebivalstva, ki je »kljub zaposlitvi padla pod prag tveganja

revščine«. Ti ljudje so torej zaposleni, a kljub temu revni. Revni zaposleni, zaposleni revni. Prekarci, fleksibilci, honorarci, samozaposleni.

In to je hudo neobičajno, celo absurdno: zaposleni so, a tvegajo revščino. Prej je veljalo, pravi Leskoškova, da je zaposlitev najučinkovitejši način obvarovanja pred tveganjem revščine, zdaj pa nič več – če si zaposlen, še ne pomeni, da nisi reven ali pa da ne tvegaš revščine. Revščina je prej veljala za posledico brezposelnosti, zdaj pa postaja posledica zaposelnosti.

In to je trend, ki ga ne bo mogoče spreminiti: država je namreč navdušena nad fleksibilizacijo trga dela. Kakovost zaposlovanja je ne zanima. Zanima jo le konkurenčnost Slovenije. Slovenija naj bi tako postala vse mikavnejša za tuje investitorje, ki hočejo čim cenejšo in čim brezpravnejšo delovno silo – in vlada to upošteva. Tuji kapital pač išče trge, na katerih ni stavk – vsi ti honorarci, prekarci in fleksibilci pa so idealni trg, saj so tako razpršeni, da se ne morejo celovsko ali sindikalno povezati. Noben sindikat jih ne varuje. Nimajo niti svojega lobija niti svojega varuha.

Ta trend je slika slovenske prihodnosti. Ne edina. Statistični urad RS je nedavno sporočil, da je bil slovenski BDP v zadnjem četrtletju lanskega leta za 2,1 odstotka višji kot predlani v istem četrtletju. Toda ta podatek, ki bi moral povzročiti vsesplošno veselje, ni nikogar razveselil. Ne brez razloga: BDP je narasel, toda narasla je tudi brezposelnost. Ironično: tega, da se je BDP povečal,

ljudje niso čutili, še najmanj brezposelni ali pa revni zaposleni. Od povečanja BDP-ja niso imeli nič. Še bolj rečeno: okrevali smo, ne da bi to čutili.

Rekli so: to povečanje BDP-ja je bilo osamljeno in enkratno, le odklon, le anomalija, zato ni čudno, da ga ljudje niso čutili! Toda: kaj če je ta anomalija slika slovenske prihodnosti? Kaj če je ta odklon prihodnje pravilo – in trend prihodnosti? Kaj če večina ljudi od okrevanja ne bo imela nič? Kaj če se rast ne bo prevajala v splošno blaginjo? To lahko pomeni le eno: da številni Slovenci tudi konca recesije ne bodo čutili. Okrevali bomo, toda brez povečanja zaposelnosti.

In natanko to pravi Paul Mattick, avtor knjige *Vse po starem*, ki je – v prevodu Marka Kržana – izšla tudi pri nas. Velika recesija se po splošnem prepričanju sicer preveša v okrevanje, toda: »To okrevanje bo okrevanje brez zaposlitev.« Tisti, ki so mislili, da bo okrevanje vrnilo blaginjo in delovna mesta, so se zmotili. Politiki, ki so to obljubljali, so lagali. Ljudje, ki potrežljivo – in miroljubno, dostojanstveno, konstruktivno – čakajo, da se bo vse uredilo, da se bo vse spet postavilo na svoje mesto, da bo trg spet navduševal s svojo nezmotljivo samodejnostjo in da bo vse spet po starem, so se ujeli v past. Prav zato, ker bo vse po starem, ne bo nič več po starem.

Kapitalizem pač ni sistem za zagotavljanje zaposelnosti, temveč »sistem za zaposlovanje ljudi, ki proizvajajo profit«. Kapitalizmu namreč »kljub svoji dinamičnosti in ogromnemu povečanju produktivnosti človeškega

Tema
NESREČNO!

Revščina zaposlenih

Mladina 12 / 21. 03. 2014

Vse tri krizne vlade so imele jasno politiko: obstaja le ena pravilna pot do okrevanja in višje rasti – varčevanje. Ne pa trošenje.

Predsednica vlade Alenka Bratušek je rudarje obiskala med stavko v jami. /Foto: Stanislav Rožanc

dela, ki ga je dosegel od začetka 19. stoletja, in kljub odpravi političnih in družbenih ovir za njegovo širitev v 20. stoletju, ni uspelo ustvariti dovolj profita, da bi glavino svetovnega prebivalstva vključil v svoj industrijski sistem».

Če malce bolje pomislite, je kapitalizem res stalno v minusu. Ne pozabite, koliko dokapitalizacij je bilo potrebnih zadnja leta. Stalno ga je treba dokapitalizirati. Stalno ga je treba reševati. Brez državnih spodbud – potemtakem brez stalnega državnega trošenja – ne bi preživel.

A po drugi strani, tudi sam OECD je pred časom napovedal, da delovnih mest, socialnih izdatkov in pravic, ki jih je vzela recesija, zelo verjetno ne bo nazaj niti, ko se bo začelo okrevanje, ko bosta višja rast in BDP. Ne, visoka stopnja brezposelnosti

ne bo izginila. Še huje: postala bo dolgoročna, strukturna. Toda tudi dolgoročna visoka stopnja brezposelnosti sama po sebi ni nič novega, prava novost je, pravi Enrico Pugliese, »da so se ljudje danes navadili živeti z desetodstotno in ponekod še z višjo stopnjo brezposelnosti,« kar seveda pomeni, da visoka brezposelnost ne ustvarja več kritičnih, eksplozivnih socialnih razmer, kot se je dogajalo v tridesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja, v času velike gospodarske in finančne krize.

Veliki test

In res se zdi, kot da vlade širom po svetu vsa ta leta krize izvajajo veliki socialni eksperiment, veliki test: za koliko lahko še povečajo stopnjo brezposelnosti, ne da bi to povzročilo socialno eksplozijo, nemire, upor

ali revolucijo? Za koliko lahko še razgradijo socialno državo, ne da bi počilo? Za koliko lahko še zmanjšajo socialne izdatke, koliko pravic lahko še posekajo in koliko tretjestvo delovne zakonodaje lahko še vsilijo, ne da bi se ljudem zmešalo? Koliko razdejavanja lahko še vnesejo v življenje ljudi in koliko jih lahko še fleksibilizirajo in prekarizirajo, ne da bi ponoreli? In koliko splošne bede – in revščine zaposlenih – lahko še ustvarijo, ne da bi jih ljudje postavili pred strelski vod?

Če se ozrete naokrog, zlahka ugotovite, da je veliki socialni eksperiment čudovito uspel – ljudje so test uspešno prestali. Eksplozije ni bilo. Kaj šele revolucije. Nemiri in vstaje so bili le praske, ki so za sabo potegnile nove in nove teste, še uspešnejše od prejšnjih. Prehod v kapitalizem je s tem končan, pravi Mattick. Ljudje kapitalizem, ki je zdaj bolj kot kadarkoli svetovni sistem, doživljajo kot povsem naravno in samoumevno ureditev. »Čeprav se ljudje nič manj kot prej ne zavedajo, da živijo v razredni družbi, ki jo zaznamuje zatiranje in izkoriščanje, je to zanje naravno stanje, ki nima realne alternative.«

Tako kot se ljudje navadijo živeti s tako hudo, fatalno boleznijo, so se navadili živeti z desetodstotno brezposelnostjo, z zatiranjem in izkoriščanjem, z varčevalnimi ukrepi in izgubljanjem socialnih pravic, z razgradnjo socialne države in zatonom blaginje. Vse to so postopoma sprejeli kot naravno in samoumevno ureditev. Ali bolje rečeno: kapitalizem so prepustili njemu samemu. Kar je napaka. »Če bo kapitalizem prepustjen sam sebi, si lahko od njega ometamo desetletja gospodarskih težav z vse hujšimi napadi na zasluge in delovne razmere tistih, ki bodo imeli srečo, da bodo ostali medni delavci, valove bankrotov in prestrukturiranj za kapitalistične firme ter vse hujša nasprotja med gospodarskimi subjekti in državami glede tega, kdo bo za vse to plačal.«

Ni kaj, veliki test je uspel: vlade so kapitalizmu vrnile vso svobodo, tako da lahko počne, kar hoče, ljudi pa so brez enega samega izstreljenega naboja privadile živeti z desetodstotno brezposelnostjo, z zatiranjem in izkoriščanjem, z varčevalnimi ukrepi in izgubljanjem socialnih pravic, z razgradnjo socialne države in zatonom blaginje, hja, s hudo, fatalno boleznijo.

Tako kot je boleč pogled na politiko, ki je kapitalizem – sredi najhujše krize po II. svetovni vojni! – prepustila samemu sebi, je boleč tudi pogled na ljudi, ki vdano in konstruktivno čakajo na vrnitev objubljenе blaginje (in da bo spet »vse po starem«), pa če tudi je jasno, da kapitalizem, ki je itak stalno v minusu, ne bo mogel poskrbeti za vse, da jih je torej odpisal, prekvafiliciral v odvečno prebivalstvo in obsodil na življenje v neviđnem slumu. V Sloveniji robove tega neviđnega sluma že okuša petina prebivalstva, ki živi pod pragom revščine, z revnimi

Fig. 22–24: Marcel Štefančič Jr., "No luck!: Why so many Slovenians will not feel the crisis and recession" published in Mladina with photographs by Borut Krajnc (Štefančič, 2014, 18–20).

One of the very few photoreportages that moved well beyond canonical depictions of miners and mining labor was “Socialistično mesto” (The Socialist Town) published in *Mladina* (Kogej, 2014; photographs by Jošt Franko) (Fig. 19–21), which did not focus narrowly on mining work, but rather presented mining in the context of urban development. Photographs of mining work (monitoring the coal flow, handling dynamite) were intertwined and connected to the miners’ everyday environment—the cultural center Delavski Dom Trbovlje, the swimming pool, and even a calendar featuring naked bodies in a Rudnik Trbovlje Hrastnik mine mechanical repair shop. In a sense, it followed in the footsteps of “The Velenje Miracle” (Finžgar, 1959) but in retrospect focused on the lost, and by now, neglected benefits of “democratic socialism,” echoing the resentment of the transitional era (*Mladina* is one of the weeklies in Slovenia most prominently addressing and criticizing the “myth” of liberal and neoliberal capitalism).

By 2014, miners had left the mines for good. In Marcel Štefančič Jr.’s article on capitalism, unemployment, recession, and crisis, “Ne srečno!: Zakaj številni Slovenci krize in recesije ne bodo čutili” (No Luck!²⁵: Why So Many Slovenians Will Not Feel the Crisis and Recession) (Fig. 22–24), published in *Mladina*, Borut Krajnc’s featured photograph shows two miners leaving the Trbovlje-Hrastnik mine carrying a Slovenian flag after the conclusion of the strike. The strike was interpreted in the mainstream media to be “the last real proletarian strike in Slovenia” (Hrastar, 2014). This marks the culmination of the miner’s symbolic transformation into an image of crisis, Sloveneness, the free market, unemployment, and labor.

CONCLUSION

As has been famously argued by Sekula, the first daguerreotype to capture a human figure also depicted a blurred, laboring body—abstract and unrecognizable. The image, taken by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre around 1838, shows a bourgeois dandy having his shoes polished on the Boulevard du Temple in Paris, with the shoe polisher blurred beyond recognition due to the long exposure time and his working activity. One might add that this was also the first photographic capture of labor relations and, indeed, of the *commodity-form* of labor itself. Disillusioned by the prevalent twentieth-century liberal art discourse that praised this “first arrestment of the human figure,” Sekula wrote:

What is celebrated? The static moment of consumption, the fashionable pose. What is obscured, denied, disavowed? The productive moment, the energetic blur of that other body, unacknowledged, the working body, the invisible shoe-black. A silhouette and a blur. The former is enough to give us a fictitious

25 “Srečno!” (“Good luck!”) is a greeting written on most mine entrances in Slovenia, wishing good luck to miners entering at the start of their shift. At the same time, it is a recognizable Slovenian miners’ greeting and farewell expression.

identity, replete with style. The latter gives us only this: an instance of average labor, eminently replaceable, eminently forgettable, vaporizing in the flux of the moving throng. (Sekula, 2014, 25)

If one aims to understand how social circumstances and power dynamics are manifested in the public sphere, the focus should not solely be on whether a specific social class or profession is made visible. Instead, the inquiry should revolve around the manner of this visibility: *how* the labor of an individual or a group is presented and integrated into the broader public sphere and, furthermore, on *what* is made visible against the background of the understanding that *visibility* (what can be visualized in a particular dispositive) is tied to the *invisibility* (what cannot be visualized in a particular dispositive) (cf. Keller, 2013; Traue, Blanc & Cambre, 2019).

Despite the visibility of labor in the Slovenian press, abstraction and fragmentation still persist; a certain “blurring” remains present, a certain invisibility or inability of visualization remains. In the process of making labor visible, certain aspects are inevitably omitted or made invisible; some possible visibilities related to labor and work are inevitably suppressed. In the case of Slovenian photoreportages in the mainstream press, the visibility of labor predominantly took the form of typified, abstract representations of work activities. The importance of labor was reduced to the importance of active work, the activity itself—and to catch a worker “in the act” means to catch him *at* work—i.e. to represent labor. In the case of mining, labor was predominantly represented by photographs taken at the time of the beginning of the shift and at the end of it (miners before descending the mineshafts and/or riding the elevator down and miners exiting the mineshafts) and, although less frequently, miners depicted in the mineshafts (drilling or placing support beams).²⁶ One thing that unites most of the visualizations is the predominance of a miner with a helmet, headlamp, and—if “caught” at work or at the end of the shift after exiting the shaft—soot-covered face with only a few visualizations of the intellectual labor involved in mining activities. The engineers, controllers, planners, foremen, directors, and other intellectual experts are featured only scarcely if at all. The highly skilled intellectual labor of the mining sector, its professional and managerial cadres, rarely received the attention given to the manual labor.

Notwithstanding their “factual” concreteness and realism, photoreportages and photographs in general inevitably retained an abstract character which only rarely reached the level of what Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites would call “artistically accomplished depictions of social reality encouraging public thought.”

26 Even though one might be tempted to explain this on the grounds of development of photographic technology (advancement in film emulsions and lenses providing ever shorter exposure times over the twentieth century) or the developments in the electrical lighting of the mines, the research found the photographs “in the tunnels” early in the twentieth century (e. g., in *Ilustrirani Slovenec* and later in *Tovariš*); and while certain compositional and stylistic changes are notable over the years, they are not substantial enough to warrant the narrow techno-deterministic conclusion.

More often they remained at the level of “typified perceptions encouraging mythologies of political participation that serve those projecting the shadows on the wall” (Hariman & Lucaites, 2016, 37). Thus, photoreportages often fulfilled the function of preserving and mediating a normative “mythological” image of social relationships, passing through the predominant social filters: self-management, free market, working class, or nationality, to name only a few. In the case of miners, the difficult working conditions are often seen as inherent to their social and working class, or rather, as a mere reflection and characteristic of that class. The individual miner is frequently portrayed merely as a bearer of the discursive typology and visual iconography established through tradition as pertaining to its social class and profession. Not surprisingly, Allan Sekula aptly remarked that “photographic realism is zombie realism” (Sekula, 2014, 18).

The image of the miner in the Slovenian press hardly changed over a hundred years or so, despite developments in both “media”: ore extraction technology (with the diminishment of dependence on coal as the primary source of fossil fuel), and photography “extraction” technology (the diminishment of its uniqueness in the ubiquitous visuality of today). The frequency of photoreportages featuring mining work and labor oscillated in accordance with the assumed political-economic salience of the role of mining and/or miners in society. From a distinctly neutral, straightforward photography in a photo-collage about industrial work in general, published in *Ilustracija* “By the Sweat of Your Brow You Will Eat Your Bread” in 1929,²⁷ to “The Trbovlje-Hrastnik Mine Is Shutting Down: Farewell, Miners!” (Župančič, 2007), the photographic image of miners and their labor remains tied to mines, helmets, and headlamps. On the other hand, their social image was usually conflated with any other current topical social issue except for their own (e.g. work safety, wages, social position, leisure time, cultural activities, social relations that mining engenders in society, etc.).²⁸ Photoreportages that did not directly address mining or mining labor (e.g., “The Socialist Town” (Kogej, 2014) and “The Velenje Miracle” (Finžgar, 1959)) were able to present labor not only in its abstract form, reduced to the perception of a concrete work act, but also in its concrete social meaning—bringing to the fore the broader social role of labor within the network of bonds woven across social time and space, that is, within social relations. These two photoreportages foregrounded the relationship between the working class, culture, socialism, and economy for the urbanism in the mining towns of Velenje and Trbovlje.

27 *Ilustracija*, 1929, 1, 5: V potu svojega obraza boš jedel kruh, 146. Photographer unknown.

28 This does not mean that the severe working conditions were ignored; rather, it suggests that the critical, factual accounts of these conditions served more as a backdrop, reinforcing and naturalizing the broader message without directly emphasizing or addressing these conditions in wider social and economic relations. However, this began to change in the late 1980s and during the transition to a liberal economy, when the working conditions were put in the wider social perspective.

Perhaps unexpectedly, socialist photoreportage in general failed to produce a genuinely “more socialist” representation of miners, their labor, and their lived experience. It fell short of constructing a social image of the miner that would really embody the socialist ideal of a classless society. In a manner characteristic of mainstream media practices—including those in capitalist Western contexts—it reduced miners to the physicality of their laboring bodies and the immediate environment structured by that labor. The ideologized body of the miner was objectified and aestheticized to the point of near-erasure, displaced by the symbolic prominence of tools and paraphernalia associated with mining. The body itself appeared not as a subject of history but as a passive bearer of ideological meaning.

Only when miners’ status ceased to have a salience in economic terms toward the end of the twentieth century did critical photoreportages begin to appear more frequently. Wages, working conditions, health issues, syndicalism movements, retirement, the shifting employment landscape, and the role of mining in the development of the regions, came more frequently to the fore. These reportages addressed the transitional Slovenian society in the 1990s amid growing criticism of liberal reforms and privatization in general. Once the image of miners and mining could be “archived” and safely historicized, the shift in photoreportages toward a non-abstract meaning of the labor in society was frequently more conceivable. The unrecognizable, atomized representation gave way to more individualized photoreportages (identifiable individuals coming to terms with *neoliberal* economy) and to the broader representation of labor (its role in society) only at the point when capitalism deems the working atomized miners’ bodies as being already redundant in the new post-industrial capitalist exchange. The recognition of a laboring body as being always already exchangeable, replaceable, fragmented—that is, abstract—comes only in retrospect, at the conclusion of a certain socio-political constellation, and it comes at the expense of the recognition of the impossibility of actualization through mining labor itself. In the Slovenian press of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, mining labor becomes visible only on the condition of its loss of salience, on the condition of its “disappearance” from the public sphere.

The discrepancy between the textual valorization and photography’s plainness observed in the photoreportages is structurally functional; it does not create a spectacle of labor. Photographs’ aesthetic of ordinariness—frequently bordering on the amateur or vernacular—facilitates affective identification. Viewers are more likely to identify with representations perceived as simple, familiar, or unstaged, which grants such images a heightened sense of realism and proximity. By presenting labor in a typified, visually unremarkable way, the photographs affectively (*sic*) participate in the interpellation of the observer as a political and social subject. This occurs through multi-layered visual-discursive connotations: the images appear subservient and merely illustrative, but in fact play an active

role in co-constructing a highly connotative discourse.

For an effective and affective communicative role, the photographs in Slovenian photoreportages on mining and miners “had to” adhere to an aesthetic of the ordinary, steering clear of overly stylized depictions of labor as well as remaining in line with the prevalent notion of the period’s valuation of manual labor. This visual strategy is evident across different historical phases of Slovenian photoreportage: from proto-photoreportages²⁹ in the interwar period to more developed examples from the mid- to late twentieth century, and even in the specific ways individual photographs were used; deviations from this visual norm are rare.

“[M]an likes signs, and likes them clear,” stated Barthes (1977a, 29). Yet, even with photography, the proverbial realistic, analogical medium, this depends less on its supposed realism or denotative capacity than on the circulation—the “traffic” in signs. Visual elements become intelligible through repetition, habit, social use, and the mythologization process that “converts” signs into culturally resonant symbols. A key feature of commodity fetishism—unlike other forms of fetishism—is that it is produced within and through the very structures of production (Lloyd, 2008, 7–9). Sergei Tret’iakov, a Soviet productivist theorist concerned with the “taming” of photography for social purposes, would add: “Style arises out of social practice” (Tret’iakov, 2006a, 68).³⁰ Photoreportages of miners in the Slovenian press of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries reinforced the specific notion of labor—labor in the abstract. The power of photography in these photoreportages lay in representing, in a symbolically useful form, only those aspects of mining that could be easily abstracted and exchanged. These atomized fragments of labor—abstract representations—correspond to what Sekula described as “an instance[s] of average labor, eminently replaceable, eminently forgettable, vaporizing in the flux” (Sekula, 2014, 25). The depiction of miners in the Slovenian press serves as a testament to the role of photography as an ideal medium for the exchange of ideologically charged meanings or values. The consistency and relative uniformity of photoreportages on mining and miners produced in what is now Slovenia—across four social systems and five states—supports this perspective, with only rare deviations

29 Early versions of photoreportage can be termed proto-photoreportage. The term describes the nascent state of Slovenian photoreportage of the interwar period (Tomanič Trivundža, Babnik & Skočir, 2021, 123).

30 For a more detailed exploration of the relationship between labor, laboring body, photography and reproduction, and the similarity between the labor and photography (both are meaningful in the capitalist exchange only on the condition of their reproducibility—they are “embodied reproducibility”), cf. Novak (2007, 142). For the alternative “socialist” conceptions of photography in the reproduction of the everyday, cf. Tret’iakov (2006a–b), Osip Birk (1989a–c), Fore (2006), and Buchloh (1984). For a more general conception of the construction (or production) of the socialist everyday through socialist “appropriation” of commodity fetishism, cf. Arvatov (2017).

from the norm.³¹ And Slovenian photoreportages of miners (with some mentioned exceptions) *fragmented* the laboring miner and the labor itself to its most “unassuming” visual form, to the most readily recognizable visual signs—making the miners and mining labor anonymous, equalized, and, importantly, interchangeable and repetitively reproducible. This enabled an intensified *meaning exchange*—amplified levels of connotation—*unification* of meaning in these *visual-discursive composites*.

The research in the photoreportages of miners in the Slovenian press has shown that photography *reified* the abstract mining labor through the process of *forgetting* its *use value* (social labor relations) via the double transfer—metonymical “concentration” of the social and cultural memory in the image of the miner and metaphorical displacement, or “extension,” producing connotative, symbolic, *exchange value* photographs most effective for the interpellation of subjects. This was done through the conflation of miners with the workers’ movement, the communist movement, the Second World War resistance fighter, and the socialist proletarian; through the conflation of miners with a self-managed, self-organized communal worker-citizen; through the conflation of miners with a main protagonist of a fight against the centralist Yugoslav government; and finally through the construction of miners as a sign of a transitional society leaving behind its “proletarian” past.

31 Although rare, these examples (among others Borut Krajnc’s naked bodies of the showering miners from “Under My Country” (Gačnik & Hladnik - Milharčič, 1992), Jošt Franko’s and Rok Kogej’s attempt to overcome the abstract meaning of mining labor in “Socialist Town” (Kogej, 2014), Filip Uratnik’s accusative and evidential photoreportage “Impressions from the Mining District of Trbovlje” (Uratnik, 1933)) are all testimonies to the impossibility of the total naturalization of the sign—the impossibility of creation of a *total* social sign—and speak about the signification game between “centripetal and centrifugal” forces that unfolds between the center (normative narratives) and the periphery (counter narratives); cf. Bakhtin’s (1981) concepts of centrifugal, centripetal, and metalinguistic.

VIZUALNA EKONOMIJA ISTOSTI: FOTOGRAFIJA RUDARJEV IN RUDARSKEGA DELA V SLOVENSKI FOTOREPORTAŽI 20. IN ZGODNJEGA 21. STOLETJA

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POVZETEK

Članek analizira reprezentacije rudarjev v slovenskih fotoreportažah od začetkov žanra v zgodnjem 20. stoletju do začetka 21. stoletja. V okviru obdobja, ki zajema narodnozavedno fotoreportažo v obdobju med obema vojnama, graditeljsko fotoreportažo socializma po letu 1945, pobudniško fotoreportažo v poznih 60. in 70. letih ter nadzorstveno, poročevalsko fotoreportažo, ki se je pojavila v poznih 80. letih, članek sledi temu, kako je bila vizualizacija rudarjev in njihovega dela oblikovana in preoblikovana skozi dominantne ideološke narative. Na podlagi Marxovega koncepta blagovne forme ter Barthesovih pojmov naturalizacije in mita ter strukturalističnega razumevanja komunikacije kot simbolne izmenjave, članek razkriva, kako so fotoreportaže abstrahirale delo prek simbolne ekonomije – »vizualne ekonomije istosti«. Analiza pokaže, kako so normativne vizualizacije delovale v okvirih širših družbeno-kulturnih komunikacijskih praks ter kako so določene podobe rudarjev postale kulturno razširjene. Rudarji in njihovo delo so bili abstrahirani v ponavljajoče se vizualne znake – predvsem s sajami prekrite obraze, čelade in svetilke na glavi – ki so utrjevali socio-mitološki status rudarja, ki je vztrajal skozi različne zgodovinske formacije. Takšna vizualna reprezentacija je rudarja konstruirala kot skoraj razosebljeno ikono, prilagojeno »želeni« kolektivni identiteti določenega zgodovinskega obdobja. Članek sledi premikom v reprezentacijah rudarjev in njihovega dela: od poveljnega enačenja rudarjev z delavskim in komunističnim gibanjem; prek njihove upodobitve kot skupnostnih, samoorganiziranih delavcev-državljanov v srednjem obdobju jugoslovanskega socializma; kot simbolov odpora proti centralistični jugoslovanski oblasti v poznejši fazi federacije; ter nazadnje k njihovem uokvirjanju kot sledov proletarske preteklosti v ideološkem okviru slovenske liberalne republike. Kljub slogovnim in tematskim variacijam je prevladujoča podoba rudarja kot vzdržljivega, samopožrtovalnega delavca vztrajala – ob tem pa je večinoma prezrla materialne stvarnosti dela in družbenega položaja. Abstrakcija dela se tako izkaže kot strukturna značilnost slovenske fotoreportaže o rudarjih skozi njeno zgodovinsko pot.

Ključne besede: fotografija rudarjev, fotografija dela, blagovna forma, slovensko fotoreporterstvo, mit in fotografija, simbolna ekonomija, novinarska fotografija

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