

## SWEDISH MULTICULTURALISM: THE CASE OF SLOVENE IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS

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### POVZETEK

#### ŠVEDSKI MULTIKULTURALIZEM: PRIMER SLOVENSKIH IMIGRANTSKIH ORGANIZACIJ

Multikulturalizem je termin, ki je pogosto v rabi kot formula za upravljanje in razumevanje "etničnih odnosov". Bodisi kot ideologija opozicije ali uradne politike, multikulturalizem izziva dominantno ideologijo zajeto v formuli en narod – ena kultura. Švedska je edina evropska država, ki se je sredi sedemdesetih let z impresivnimi cilji enakosti, svobode izbire in partnerstva oklicala za multikulturno, vendar je, kot je prikazano na primeru slovenskih društev, državna birokracija strukturirala imigrantske organizacije na osnovi predhodno definiranega etničnega vzorca in ne na osnovi samoizjasnjevanja priseljencev. Tako ukrojena ureditev naj bi multikulturalizmu dala harmonično in predvidljivo obliko, pod skrbnim nadzorstvom dominantnega "etnosa". Švedski koncept ideologije multikulturalizma je proizvod političnega sistema modernistične vizije demokratične in egalitarne družbe in poizkus iskanja kombinacije demokracije s politiko človekovih pravic. Vendar je v praksi pogosto le estetizacija dominantne ideologije, ki s politizacijo kulture in kulturizacijo političnega jezika postaja bolj podlaga kot boj proti kulturnemu rasizmu. Pod pritiskom postmodernistične diferenciacije švedski multikulturalizem tako ostaja še vedno samo vizija.

### Introduction

Multiculturalism is a term that has become very actual in recent times as a formula for understanding and managing 'ethnic relations'. It is either an official political ideology or opposition coming from different directions and having different aspirations. In essence, multiculturalism addresses the question of how to create a truly democratic and tolerant society. In other words, how to combine a formal system of rights and obligations, with that deeper substance and spirit people often associate with a specific nation or community.

Nobody seems to know what is meant by culture in this context. In "Mistaken Identity" a group of Australian authors asked a rhetorical question: What 'culture'

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can we be pleasantly 'multi' about?<sup>1</sup> They distinguish between definitions of culture at three different levels.<sup>2</sup> First, the basically anthropological definition represents "a theoretical quest to distinguish humans from animals",<sup>3</sup> second follows the conventional Marxist logic in which 'cultures' are seen as 'integrated wholes' and very little diversity is allowed within one and the same social-economic setting. Subjected to a homogenization of world culture we can kid ourselves that our culture is different. As this difference loses its meaning, our need for it as a focus of our identity becomes even greater, as also our acts of self-deception.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the kind of cultures multiculturalism should be multi about are the ones that find their expression at the third, most superficial level; thus to provide identity in an odd selection of symbolic manifestations like foods, festivals and folklore that make, in this case, Australia a more pleasant place to live in.<sup>5</sup> These authors see multiculturalism as an intellectual construction of community through a celebration and fossilization of differences, which are then subsumed into what Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined community' of national cohesion.<sup>6</sup> Culture or ethnicity should thus not be confused with political strategy as ethnic politics should and can only be rejected as an expression of 'mistaken identity'.

If multiculturalism is all about creating pleasant places, then the lived experience of the imagined social unity is increasingly dominated by categories of space and explicitly celebrated by forms, standards and contents of the 'Culture Industry', characteristic for the postmodern era. Thus depth is being replaced by surface, essence by superficiality and history by temporality. If we like to be deceived celebrating the appearance or multiple surfaces of 'multicultural places' by short lived 'intensities' rather than feelings,<sup>7</sup> why then is multiculturalism so often perceived as premonition of the future as having been replaced by a hopeless sense of the end of all that was held dear and was collectively cultivated over time separating 'us' from 'them'?

Because the ideology of multiculturalism allows presence and coexistence of a range of very different cultural groups, acting against the tradition of identifying culture with nation, the first as the substance of the second.

<sup>1</sup> Castles, S., Cope, B., Kalantzis, M. and Morrissey, M. 1988: *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia*. Sidney: Pluto Press. p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p. 122 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p. 123.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* p. 140 f.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* p. 126 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* p. 145.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jameson, F. 1984: Post-modernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, in *New Left Review* 146, July-August, pp. 53-92; Harvey, D. 1989: *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Culture Change*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

## The dominant ideology

The identification of 'demos' and 'ethnos', both of a Greek heritage,<sup>8</sup> was crucial for the self-understanding of nineteenth-century democracies, in view of becoming of democracy and the nation state as nearly identical entities. Subsequently, democracy could not be but interpreted as the political arrangement of a particular ethnos.<sup>9</sup>

The democratic model handed down by the Greeks was quite imperfect. Its ancient legacy also entailed the notion of the 'barbarian'.<sup>10</sup> For general European democratic perception, the foreigner, unless a celebrated emigré, was the equivalent to the rude, wild, uncivilized and uncultured barbarian. Post World War I treatment of refugees was a result of this perception and a prelude to totalitarian population transfers and concentration camps.<sup>11</sup> True enough, democracy added a Christian innovation, solidarity on the one hand and assimilation as an idea and practice on the other. The assimilation, though in many cases both painful and oppressive for the assimilated, was quite often not considered to be final or irrevocable. In any hour of national humiliation or political hysteria, the dominant ethnos could always reverse the process; declaring those having been since long assimilated to be hidden and potentially dangerous aliens and treating them accordingly.<sup>12</sup>

Four historical trends, as identified by Fehér were needed to trigger the reconsideration of this dominant pattern: First, the long shadow of totalitarianism, especially thrown by the Hitler-Stalin experience made it mandatory that totalitarianism should not merely be seen as the 'Other' of democracy, as in certain democratic practices, particularly in the treatment of minorities and foreigners, the seeds of totalitarianism could be recognized. Second, the collapse of colonial empires required western democrats to make amends, among other things by opening the gates of their home countries, naturalizing huge groups of the former colonial subjects and recognizing them as citizens whose presence created an imprint of 'cultural difference' on the domestic scene. Third, the world-wide spread social-political arrangement of modernity, often without being underpinned by its dynamic spirit in arts and thought, made it possible for various human groups to formulate their claims in modernity's dominant vocabulary: the language of rights. Finally, in contrast to this, the advo-

<sup>8</sup> 'ethnos' and 'demos' both mean people; hence demo-cracy government by the people. Webster's new twentieth century Dictionary of the English language. Stockholm 1949.

<sup>9</sup> Fehér, F. 1992: Multi-culturalism, in *Framtider* vol. 2, pp. 22–26.

<sup>10</sup> 'Barbarikos' means foreign; a non-Hellene, a non-Roman, a non-Christian. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on historical principles. Oxford University Press 1973.

<sup>11</sup> Marrus, M. R. 1985: The unwanted European refugees in the twentieth century. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>12</sup> One of the convincing examples is the treatment of the Canadian-Japanese community during World War II. In 1988 Canada's Prime Minister announced a decision to acknowledgement of the unjust treatment of Canadians of Japanese origin who had suffered during that period.



cates of the philosophical crisis of universalism/humanism, have been emphasizing ever more passionately the often hypocritical character of universalism in which the language of rights itself is grounded.<sup>13</sup>

The consecutive waves of nationalism, including the latest one following the collapse of the precedent communist attempt to create an universal melting-pot society in the 'proletarian world republic', have shown that: a) a mere shift of authority rarely suffices for the internal cohesion of a human group and b) a complete divorce of ethnos from demos has thus far almost never worked, at least not in the case of human groups having a continuous and well preserved memory and self-identity.

Furthermore, there has always been a troubling duality at the very heart of the term 'nation'. The term can mean a purely political arrangement with a system of liberties, rights and obligations as well as a type of authority. As such it is not a property of one particular group and it cannot be deepened into – to use Williams' expression – "common structure of feeling" that people so often associate with a nation. The other concept of a nation requires a characteristic ideology, that is not only a symbolic identification with rituals and emblems, like flags and anthems, but also the relation to what is often referred to as 'our way of life'. Žižek, the Slovene philosopher calls this 'Cosa Nostra'.<sup>14</sup> Nationalism, as a political movement has generally sought one, or most frequently both.<sup>15</sup>

The connotation of nation in terms of commonly shared territory and common ancestors serves well in the capacity of Cosa Nostra and it has been emphasized as such by all modern mythologies of nation. Transfigured and genderized as either father's body or mother's womb, one's native land was to be held sacred. One must not tear away oneself permanently from one's parents or from the soil of 'la Patria'.<sup>16</sup>

The ambition of the political, rationalizing and secularizing aspect of nationalism was, however, precisely the rearrangement of the old primordial and patriarchal order. A nation-state should be superimposed over ties of blood, the familial and regional authority as "a legal and political organization with the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens".<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, even a modern phenomenon, historically specific to industrialism, needed ideological legitimation. For "the mind gives the idea of a nation, but it is its community of dreams that creates its iden-

<sup>13</sup> Fehér, F. *ibid.* p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Žižek, S. 1993: Svojega nočemo, tujega ne damo, in *Razgledi*, July 1993, pp. My emphasis.

<sup>15</sup> See for example: Anderson, B. 1983: *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso; Gellner, E. 1983: *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Seton-Watson, H. 1977: *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*. London: Methuen; Smith, A. D. 1986: *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>16</sup> Nation and Nature both stem of nasci, to be born.

<sup>17</sup> Seton-Watson, H. *ibid.* p. 1 ff.



tity."<sup>18</sup> Giving to a nation a feel of mystical blessing and at the same time giving it a formalized, legalistic account culture as the substantive form of nationhood and national self-definition seems to serve equally well. Culture becomes a second nature.

Moreover is culture often associated with civilization. While the latter is primarily rooted in things and rules and is, at least in principle, a universal skill, is the former a process resulting in all the insignia, which further shape our actions and fantasy. As a national substance it is above all grounded in language. While everyone can learn to handle things and obey rules appropriately, the 'natural' use of a language and participation in its 'life' is confined to a particular group.<sup>19</sup> Nationalism, as Gellner points out attempts to construct 'cultural homogeneity' through struggle for the establishment of a new nation state or through assimilation to the cultural pool of an established nation state, universalizing a single national language through a centrally state-run education system.<sup>20</sup>

Inherent to these aspects is the formula one nation – one culture. It is against this dominant ideology that the claim to multiculturalism is raised as the right within a national community. In some countries it has been transformed into a status of official ideology. Fehér perceives multiculturalism as a part of the emerging pattern of contemporary politics, still in an experimental stage: the combination of democracy with the politics of human rights.<sup>21</sup> Seton-Watson however, without specifically referring to multiculturalism, implies that nationalism strives not only for the creation of a sovereign state in which the 'nation' is dominant, but also for a 'national unity,' thus, the incorporation of all groups within the borders of the state that are considered by themselves, or by those who claim to speak for them, to belong to the nation.<sup>22</sup>

### **Multiculturalism as a contemporary solution**

Three immigration countries have officially declared multiculturalism: Australia, Canada and Sweden. The first two owe their very existence to large scale immigration and introduced multiculturalism in the 1970s after the assimilation policies did not give the anticipated results.

Sweden is different. It is unique in Europe in ideology and practice of its avant-garde multicultural policy aims. Although it is important to keep in mind that

<sup>18</sup> A. Malraux quoted in Newman, P. C. 1988: *Home Country. People. Places and Power Politics*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Heller, A. 1992: Ten Theses on immigration, civilization, culture, human rights and "house-rules", in *Framtider*, vol 2, pp. 39–40. See also Fehér, *ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> Gellner, E. *ibid.* pp. 27, 39 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Fehér, F. *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Seton-Watson, H. *ibid.* p. 1 ff.; See also Medved, F. 1992: *Novi regionalizem in evropska integracija*, in *Znanje za razvoj*. Ljubljana: Delo, February 1992.

each and every contemporary European state had its own visions regarding immigration, the Swedish immigrant policy was envisaged to become the European challenge.

Sweden had practically no history of immigration until 1945 and though its population would have actually declined without post World War II immigration, demographic goals have never played a role in its policy. Apart from two autochthonous minorities, the Sami and the Finns, particularly the Tornedal Finns in northern Sweden and a small number of Jews and Gypsies, the population was remarkably homogeneous in culture and ethnic background.

Post World War II immigration, that followed an overall pattern of European post war migration movements, substantially contributed to Swedish population and its heterogeneity. At the end of 1990 almost half a million (484.000 or 5.6 per cent) of the population had foreign citizenship of around 130 different countries; 186.500 or 40 per cent come from the Nordic area, primarily Finland, around 41.000 from the territory of the former Yugoslavia (among them an estimated 6000 Slovenes), 39.000 from Iran, 25.500 from Turkey and almost 20.000 from Chile. More than 12 per cent of all inhabitants are foreign born or have one or both parents born abroad.<sup>23</sup>

In this light the question could be raised why did a unitary state where the matter of cultural identity – or at least the myth or ideology of it, always seemed to be settled, and where experience with cultures other than its own was limited, declare itself multicultural?

First, Sweden rejected the 'guest-worker' strategy for labour import. Direct recruitment by Swedish industry has been taking place over the years, but Sweden accepted foreign workers and their families as individuals and retained its belief that the right to work should not be separated from the right of residence (but not the opposite!). This is, in part, a recognition of the relatively secure legal position of foreigners and demonstrates a desire to treat all resident foreigners as immigrants. In the 1960s, official terminology replaced the term 'utlänning' (alien) with the word 'invandrare' (immigrant). The term has a broad meaning and apart from the statistical, no definition.<sup>24</sup> However it makes Swedes believe that resident foreign citizens plan to stay permanently. In this respect the Swedish regulatory system more resembles the systems of traditional transoceanic immigration countries than of the European. Second, multiculturalism presented as a natural continuation and an important element of the Swedish model of the welfare state would secure the leading role of avant-garde Swedish policy making. Furthermore, an important role in the

<sup>23</sup> Sveriges framtida befolkning. Prognos för åren 1991–2025. Demografiska rapporter 1991:1. Statistiska Centralbyrån. Sveriges officiella statistik. p. 36 ff.

<sup>24</sup> 'Invandrare' is a person who moved to Sweden and intends to stay for at least one year. Besides s/he must be registered in the population register. Ibid. p. 5.

Swedish multicultural policy has been played by the basic principles of the Swedish foreign policy – non alliance in peacetime in order to stay neutral in the event of war, the emphasis on international law and solidarity, and especially the history of Finnish-Swedish relations.

Before the end of the 1960s there was no immigrant policy if we do not count the one based on the idea that immigrants would eventually be assimilated. The official oratory of Swedish multiculturalism emerged in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. It was adopted by the Swedish Riksdag in 1975 and reaffirmed and elaborated in 1986. Welfare ideology objectives centered on equality (*jämlikhet*), occupy the central position. Other policy objectives include freedom of choice (*valfrihet*) and partnership (*samverkan*), paraphrasing the French revolution's promise of "liberté, égalité et fraternité".

Hammar summarized the original intend of these objectives in a following way: the goal of equality implies the continued efforts to give immigrants the same living standard as the rest of the population. The goal of freedom of choice implies that public initiatives are to be taken to assure members of ethnic and linguistic minorities domiciled in Sweden a genuine choice between retaining and developing their cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity. The goal of partnership implies that the different immigrant and minority groups on the one hand and the native population on the other both benefit from working together.<sup>25</sup>

The first goal was a natural application of the welfare ideology to which society has a responsibility for all its members and social inequalities should be eliminated. The second goal may be seen as a result of the period in which the concept of ethnicity had its renaissance all over the world; and ethnic clenches in Sweden, including the legal (mostly unsuccessful) struggle of the Sami population for the recognition of historic ownership of grazing lands and radical demands for 'cultural autonomy' were formulated among Finns in Sweden. A moral prerogative was claimed to ethnic-minority rights that correspond to the historical rights of the established Swedish speaking minority in Finland. The third goal presupposes that immigrant and minority groups as partners in the development of society are not only granted full freedom of association but also the public support needed to build and maintain their own associations.

Formulated in a vague manner of political declarations they merely serve as directions of policy without specifying the degree to which any one of them should be achieved. At the same time they have considerable scope for interpretation by the administrative agencies. It has been noted that these aims are so contradictory they

<sup>25</sup> Hammar, T. (ed.) 1985: European immigration policy. A comparative study. Comparative ethnic and race relations series. Cambridge University Press. p. 33

are near to impossible to achieve simultaneously.<sup>26</sup> The second aim in particular has elucidated most discussion as it poses a "potential challenge to the hegemony of Swedish cultural values".<sup>27</sup> Ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities have the constitutional right to express and develop their cultural heritage, ethnic identity being considered as a matter of individual choice. Nevertheless, the Swedish immigrant policy cannot be described as a minority-oriented policy. Immigrants are not considered as minorities likely to endure over several generations as cohesive communities. The official view appears to be that immigrants will integrate, though not be assimilated into Swedish society. They should be "allowed to live and act in the Swedish cultural community as fully integrated members of society and at the same time develop their cultural heritage. But freedom of choice may not be interpreted in a way that implies a denial of the Swedish language".<sup>28</sup> Therefore, bilingualism is considered as a prerequisite for real freedom of choice.

Contained in these goals was the implication that the general public would accept multicultural aims. Beside considerable legal backing including the voting rights amendment that granted foreign citizens the right to vote in local and regional elections<sup>29</sup> and direct policy measures in various areas such as economic assistance in the immigrant education system, Swedish language tuition, occupational retraining and immigrants' own activities, the state has encouraged a series of courses aimed to build a spirit of ethnic tolerance into local administrators and general public. Thus a legal and moral foundation was provided to support policy aims and to prevent uncontrolled ethnic conflicts and development of segregated society.<sup>30</sup>

Sweden is probably alone in Western Europe in the extent to which its public life is organized, regulated and controlled. The constitution of social identity is essen-

<sup>26</sup> Hammar, T. *ibid.* p. 34 ff.

<sup>27</sup> Lundberg Lithman, E. 1987: Immigration and Immigrant Policy in Sweden. The Swedish Institute in cooperation with the Swedish Ministry of Labour, p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> Government bill 1986, as quoted in Lundberg Lithman, E. *ibid.* p. 18 ff.

<sup>29</sup> The voting rights amendment to the Swedish constitution is one of the most important legal achievements of Swedish immigrant policy. Voting rights for municipal and county councils and eligibility for political office for foreign citizens resident in the country for at least three years prior to the election date was decided in 1975 and exercised for the first time in the 1976 election. During the 1980s attempts were made, led by the Social Democratic Party and the Swedish Communist Party to extend these rights to national elections. In the parliament the necessary support for the required amendment never existed. As an alternative, easier access to double citizenship has been discussed. In spite of great expectations following the electoral reform, there has been not only low, but actually decreasing participation. It was 60 % in 1976, 48 % in 1985. Turnout among Swedes was 90.5 %, respectively 88 %. For documentation and discussion of the elections see for example Hammar, T. 1990: Democracy and the Nation State. Aliens, Denizens and Citizens in a World of International Migration. Research in Ethnic Relations Series. Avenbury.

<sup>30</sup> Lundberg Lithman, E. *ibid.*, Ålund, A., Schierup, C.-U. 1991: Paradoxes of Multiculturalism. Essays on Swedish society. Research in Ethnic Relations Series. Avenbury.



tially the constitution of certain forms of communication resting on the organization and expression of collective experience. Every interest group has an organization, the larger it is the more opportunity it has to exercise influence over policy making and administration. Popular social movements, so called "folk-movements" (*folk-rörelser*) are highly institutionalized and in a symbiotic relationship with the state-bearing élite. They have functioned as effective vehicles for ideological integration and popular mobilization in the construction of the Swedish social-democratic welfare state.<sup>31</sup> The central question in understanding the position of immigrants in Sweden therefore hinges on what possibilities exist for their organization.<sup>32</sup>

Sweden probably has the largest number of organized immigrants in Europe. They are organized in so-called central organizations or national alliances with the state as their main source of finance. Encouraging the creation of these associations was an important objective of immigrant policy; they should not be only meeting places for immigrants with a common background, thus performing social function, but should become increasingly important as partners in a dialogue with the institutions of Swedish society at large. In fact they have become the pivotal force in implementing the principle of partnership. As the system was modelled on the governing state support scheme to other popular movements, ethnic associations built up their own bureaucratically structured systems that have been to varying degrees incorporated in other institutions, especially trade-unions and political parties. In this way they became socialized into the general Swedish model of consensus built up within the corporate welfare state.<sup>33</sup>

### The Slovene national alliance to be ...

Slovenes in Sweden constituted a number of local societies in the early 1970s. In 1975 they formed the central organization based on the right of self-determination, embodied in Sweden's official multicultural policy aims. To attain a position of 'national alliance', which is formally acknowledged by the government, but coordinated and controlled by the Swedish National Board of Immigration, an association has to prove to the latter that it has no religious or political interests in Sweden, or in the country of origin. In other words, that it is formed on a purely 'ethnic' principle. The established administrative practice has been founded on the presupposition of common 'cultural' identity and 'ethnicity' separate from religious affiliation or political interests. The ideal ethnic national alliance is as inclusive as possible, ideally

<sup>31</sup> Hirdman, Y. 1989: *Att Lagga Livet till Rätta*. Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag.

<sup>32</sup> von Kreitor, N. K. 1980: *Minoritet, Kultur, Identitet*. En Antologi. Borås: Invandrarförlaget.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ålund, A., Schierup, C.-U. *ibid.*: Chapter 6.; and Fred, M. A., 1983: *Managing Culture Contact: the Organization of Swedish Immigration policy*, EIFO No 6.

embracing all the members of an, as I would argue in this case, pre-defined ethnic group. Slovenes in Sweden mostly originated from that part of the Slovene ethnic territory, that was the constitutional part of the former Yugoslavia, lacking the nation state of their own. As a result, in the eyes of the Swedish bureaucracy enough unique culture/ethnicity of their own in order to be organizationally separate.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the 'Yugoslav' culture was established as an authorized and standardized collective ordering principle, internalized by immigrants themselves according to the Yugoslav model.<sup>35</sup> This is an obvious example of constructed ethnicity. Under this umbrella, in lack of support for their claims from the Slovene Diaspora and without official political backing from their homeland, Slovene societies reluctantly joined the Yugoslav association. They were finally persuaded by the ethnic élite, thus professionals who had been able to find niches in administration, education and the social welfare sector.<sup>36</sup> As ethnic leaders they were appointed to councils, commissions and offices with state-run programs that they perceived as political center's goodwill, but were at the same time made co-responsible for the administration of state politics. They were caught between their own marginal position in the state structure and the needs and claims of their fellow Slovene 'ethnics' among the grassroots, but aware of the fact that the Yugoslav national alliance had guaranteed and generous state grants. Therefore they translated the claims from the Slovene ethnic community to fit the prescribed ethnic pattern as well as the established practice of state institutions.

### Concluding Remarks

The objective materialization of the proclaimed goal of freedom of choice was turned into the state-sponsorship of the Slovene immigrant organizational life on the prescribed 'ethnic' basis, closely monitored within the dominant ethnos' bureaucratic corporatist frame. Even the most generous public subsidy system in Europe could not manage to provide Slovene organizations with an adequate framework in order for

<sup>34</sup> Source: Correspondence between "Kulturno drustvo Slovenija" and The Swedish Immigration Board (SIV). The archive of "Kulturno drustvo Slovenija", Olofström.

<sup>35</sup> The 'Yugoslav model' permitted separate ethnic development – classified into three-tier system of national rights – but a 'Yugoslav' culture was to be manufactured according to Serbian dominated socialist hegemony, under the slogan of 'brotherhood and unity'. The established 'Yugoslav culture' principle on the Swedish scene suited Yugoslav authorities since through the Yugoslav national organization the Swedish state provided an opportunity for Yugoslavia to influence and control this organization. Especially among the Slovenes this was seen as a continuation of the authoritarian repression and caused dissatisfaction and decline of the membership. A detailed overview over the organizational structure of Yugoslav immigrant associations is given by Bäck, H. 1989: *Jugoslaviska invandrarföreningar i Sverige*. Stockholm: CEIFO.

<sup>36</sup> Based on information gathered through interviews with Slovenes in Sweden, both members and non-members of Slovene societies.

them to establish the alleged right to "choose, retain or develop" their own identity. The selective system of state subsidies, the most powerful instrument for structuring the Swedish immigrant organizations, treated Slovene ethnic loyalty as a weed. Ascription of origin assumed a fixed cultural essence in individuals, categorized and sorted them into cultures and cultures into places. The Slovene national alliance to be of the 1970s did not fit into the multiculturalist theme park of ethnic groups as ready-made subjects for public consumption, as prescribed by the welfare bureaucracy and its consumption state model. A tailored multicultural arrangement created to give multiculturalism a predictable, but most of all controllable form was destined to end up in a shopping mall of cultures, some being marketed as privileged while others ignored. In a likewise organized multicultural society of immigrants' organizational representation, the Slovene ethnic élite was inapt to open up an active dialogue with centers of political power. Thus, what might have led to a real partnership became the ethnic movement's kiss of death, from which the Slovene national alliance, recognized by the Swedish authorities in 1992 – as Slovenia became an independent state – will hardly recover.

I have tried to argue here that, the proclaimed Swedish multicultural ideology is a product of a liberal political system with its grandiose visions of a radically democratic and egalitarian society, seeking to combine democracy with the politics of human rights. In practice, however, resulting in aestheticization of the dominant ideology, politicizing the cultural and culturalizing the political, creating rather than an opponent to, a cover for an authoritarian and intolerant cultural racism. Still threatened by postmodern differentiation, Swedish multiculturalism remains a vision worth struggling for, but is as yet nothing but a vision.

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