
Editorial

Quarter of a Century

For many, the quarter of a century of the Republic of Slovenia (1991–2016) is a relative concept. Some do not think that the anniversary is anything special, others do not want to celebrate it at all at this time due to the many wasted opportunities, while the rest would like to honour the memory of the 25 years since the establishment of the state very conscientiously. The anniversary is also relative for historians and the Slovenian historiography: on the one hand the year 2016 does not represent any significant milestone in history, while on the other hand 25 years of the independent Slovenian state certainly encourages us to start facing the research challenges posed by this period more actively. There are many reasons for this – apart from the aforementioned anniversary.

In this time the image of Slovenia, its society and ourselves has changed completely. The processes that began at the end of the 1980s have left a profound and thorough impression. A new political and economic system has been constructed, privatisation and denationalisation of the socially-owned property has been carried out, scandals unheard of before have taken place, the role of the Church and the civilian society has changed, the attitude towards the disintegrated Yugoslavia and then towards the former Yugoslav countries – successors of the late common state – has altered as well, together with the attitude towards the past, World War II and the attainment of independence... Even habits have changed. Once, in the European East, secret services scrutinised the lives of the people (as the film *Das Leben der Anderen* depicts so wonderfully), while today we voluntarily share information about ourselves on Facebook and Twitter. Language – including political discourse – has changed, and a variety of expressions have been coined or have fallen out of use: the national interest, tycoon, parties of the Slovenian Spring...

These twenty-five years also represent the time that encompasses one third of the post-war period. This period is longer than the span of years during which the first Yugoslav state existed in peace (the First Yugoslavia has been diligently studied for more than fifty years and there are still many challenges ahead of us). According to the information of the Statistical Office, during this period more than half a million children were born: a quarter of the population of Slovenia. This is our time, and it is by all means ripe for historiographic analysis. It has been full of events and issues, and as such it calls for a systemic analysis. At the same time it is a period which is still alive and present. Dilemmas involved in the challenge of exploring the history of the Republic of Slovenia, characteristic for this period of time exclusively, certainly abound.

In light of all of the above we, at the Institute of Contemporary History, have decided to take concrete steps towards the challenge of studying the history of the

last quarter of a century. In June 2016 we therefore organised a consultation entitled “Četrto stoletja Republike Slovenije: izzivi, dileme, pričakovanja” (A Quarter of a Century of the Republic of Slovenia – Challenges, Dilemmas, Expectations). The report on the consultation has been drawn up by Filip Čuček and is included in this issue of Contributions to Contemporary History. The basic goal of the consultation that took place on 15 and 16 June 2016 at the Institute of Contemporary History was not pretentious. Nobody had the intention to write the “great historical truth” about Slovenia. Instead it was aimed at establishing the methodological, scientific and topically suitable foundations for further research.

Experts in various fields were invited (history of diplomacy, political history and political sciences, economic history, archival science, museology, digital humanities, philosophy, etc.). It was taken into account that nowadays the divisions between sciences that focus on the exploration of the present barely exist anymore: what exists are the common problems that should be tackled. The book entitled “Četrto stoletja Republike Slovenije: izzivi, dileme, pričakovanja” (A Quarter of a Century of the Republic of Slovenia – Challenges, Dilemmas, Expectations), written on the basis of the conclusions reached at this consultation, has already been published.

The relevance of the issue and especially the research maturity of the contributions presented at the consultation ultimately resulted in the idea to prepare a special topical issue of the Contributions to Contemporary History journal, entitled Quarter of a Century. Many experts responded to the invitation issued by the editorial board. It was especially heartening that they provided a variety of contributions, differing greatly in terms of contents, approach, scope and methodology. Jurij Hadalin focused on how the disintegrated Yugoslav state was comprehended by the Slovenian historiography and society in the last quarter of a century. Already in the introduction he established that the former Yugoslavia was and still is predominantly a political rather than expert topic. Jure Gašparič shed some light on the issues involved in researching and writing the most recent political history of the Republic of Slovenia. He specifically analysed numerous dilemmas and methodological peculiarities (the issue of historical distance, the sensibility of such efforts, the unmanageability and specificity of sources), while at the same time pointing out the first potential research conclusions. Concrete conclusions on the political development of Slovenia were also contributed by Simona Kustec Lipicer, who carried out an in-depth analysis of the development and character of political parties. Aleksander Lorenčič presented the quandaries, problems and research results that he had encountered and reached during his research of the economic aspect of the Slovenian transition. Tomaž Pavlin's contribution on the Slovenian sport and the issues it had to face is especially interesting in terms of understanding the wider dimensions of the establishment of the Slovenian state. After all, sport has always been deemed as a vital element of the Slovenian culture. Damijan Guštin presented the development of the Slovenian armed forces and described in detail the process of their formation and subsequent transformation. Meanwhile, Bojan Godeša focused on one of the most traumatic social issues of the Slovenian transition: the issue of reconciliation (i.e. on the prob-

lem of the diametrically opposite outlooks on World War II and the events that took place during and after it in Slovenia).

The issue of the materials, relevant for the exploration of the most recent history, was also explored by the archival science expert Vesna Gotovina, who described the issues involved in the acquisition, preservation and arrangement of classic archival materials comprehensively; as well as by Andrej Pančur and Mojca Šorn, who prepared a theoretical, analytical and practical presentation of one of the most topical problems encountered when attempts are made to study our time: the unmanageable quantity of digital sources. Their contribution, written on the basis of a parliamentary materials analysis, presents the Slovenian historiography with completely new methodological challenges. In the conclusion Zdenko Čepič presented an analytical essay about the process of the formation of the independent Slovenian state throughout the 20th century, in which he especially carefully considered three moments when the self-determination of the population had been expressed (the establishment of the First Yugoslavia, the formation of the Second Yugoslavia, and finally during its dissolution). The special issue of Contributions to Contemporary History, Quarter of a Century, is concluded by Jurij Perovšek, who, also in the form of an essay, underlines especially the negative aspects of the political, social and economic transition.

The discussions include quite a few chapters from the development of Slovenia, though many of them are certainly missing. The work in itself certainly illustrates the fast-paced and tumultuous times in which everyone focuses on their own priorities. The topical issue of the Contributions to Contemporary History journal also lacks any precise predictions with regard to the directions in which the Republic of Slovenia might be heading. However, we can safely state that it contains certain questions, guidelines with regard to how to address them, and some answers about our recent past. Thus we can see the Republic of Slovenia more clearly and differently.

Jure Gašparič and Mojca Šorn