



Media, the State and Marginalisation: Tackling Challenges

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Media represent one of the most dynamically changing systems in society. The evolution of media has been determined by the progress in the area of information and communication technologies, their spread and mass usage, whereas it includes numerous and diverse political, economic, cultural, ethical, and social implications. The editor of the publication, Rachna Sharma, stated following in the Introduction: “*Today, while observing ‘movements’ on social issues at an increased frequency, with increased participation of the public, the claimed media interventions and the changing role of governments in this triangular relationship, one is compelled to locate the issue of marginalised sections in society.*”¹

The present is, above all, the time of social media characterised by a high degree of civic activism and individual freedom in the creation and presentation of the content: on the other hand, the power and economic strength of international media conglomerates has been growing on a regional and global scale. It is often discussed the undeniable contribution of the media to building a democratic society, a healthy public environment and their ability to help to radical social transformations, however we may also see that media provide a diametrically different space for the presentations of certain groups. If they highlight specific social participants, others are out of focus of the mainstream media. This bipolarity in displaying marginalised groups in society is one of the paradoxes of the postmodern society and a significant feature of the contemporary mainstream mass media.

Relevant responding to numerous questions related to the establishment and clarification of relations between media, the state and marginalized groups has become the subject of an academic debate, the results of which have the potential to reach the broader social awareness and media practice. In March 2016, the National seminar on the topic *Media, the State and the Marginalized: Tackling Challenges* took place at the Department of Journalism, Kalindi College, University of Delhi in India. The reviewed publication consists of selected papers presented at the seminar, edited by Rachna Sharma, Assistant Professor in the Department of Journalism of Lady Shri Ram College for Women at Delhi University, India. The publication includes 21 chapters summarised in five major thematic areas, as follows: Part I: Media and Political Communication, Part II: Representation of the Marginalised and Media Ethics, Part III: New Media, Social Media and Digital Activism, Part IV: Alternative and Community Media: The Media of the Marginalised? and Part V: Critical Theory, Media Criticism and Media Reforms. A part of the proceedings is a brief dictionary, in which the reader can find definitions of key terms related to the solved issues and an index of concepts and names that will help them in orientation in the content. It consists of 331 pages.

As indicated by the structure of the publication, its ambition is to provide a variety of views on the dynamically changing relation between media, the state and marginalized groups in an effort to comprehensively understand current social-political and social-cultural processes, which the contributors managed to accomplish. Individual authors address selected areas in a comparative and interdisciplinary

1 SHARMA, R.: Introduction. In SHARMA, R. (ed.): *Media, the State and Marginalisation: Tackling Challenges*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018, p. 1.

perspective. This is mainly due to the composition of the authors' team, which includes leading Indian experts from different areas, such as media studies, cultural studies, journalism, sociology, Public Relations, as well as long-standing experts from media practice. It is an interdisciplinary approach to exploring how media are in the digital age, who marginalised groups are in current social-political-economic structures and how they are reported by mainstream media that can be considered as a significant contribution of the publication to the wider debate on the subject. Despite the fact that the issue is dealt with by the authors from the domestic, Indian perspective, its overlap lies in a qualitative and quantitative solution. This approach expands the possibilities of publication's use. It can serve not only to academics and researchers, but also to the students of media studies, journalism, political science, and sociology. However, also workers in the media, especially in the news-service and others who are interested in the issue of marginalized groups in Indian society and its various stances can find a lot of inspirational information. Thus, notions presented in individual contributions may serve as the basis for the theoretical and empirical comparative research of the allocated groups in other countries, as well. I particularly appreciate the fact that the findings published in the book *Media, the State and Marginalisation: Tackling Challenges* may serve as the foundation for institutional debate aimed at addressing the problematic position of the marginalized groups in the Indian society heading towards formulating reforms. Thus, I consider the reviewed publication as an extraordinarily impressive contribution to the discussion on tackling the position of marginalized groups in modern society, with a significant overlap to the theory and the endeavour to practically apply the findings not only in media practice, but also in formulating measures at society-wide level.

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Martin Slivka (1929 – 2002)

Ladislav Volko

'The Master of nine crafts', Professor Karol Plicka, was Martin Slivka's role model and inspiration. A few of his films and scholarly analyses published in several books were devoted to Plicka and his extraordinary artistic accomplishments. He was not only Slivka's inspiration but also the object of his profound research inquiries. Slivka's own creative path unfolded from his Master's work he admired so much. This creative path was extraordinarily rich and diverse – he was an excellent documentary filmmaker, screenwriter, playwright, director, as well as a prominent ethnologist, a scientist and, ultimately, a lecturer who inspired and provoked his students by creating a space for free search of connections through his lectures.

He considered education, creativity and ethics to be the basic values any artist should have possessed. He is one of the key personalities of our culture that need to be re-discovered, reflected on by returning to their messages, confronted with the world. Martin Slivka was the co-founder of modern Slovak documentary film; he made more than 140 remarkable film documents. His independent debut, *Water and Work* (1963), highlighted the fact that a gifted filmmaker possessing a precious artistic opinion has just entered the area. The motion picture, which focuses on technical landmarks such as mills, uses artworks of prominent Slovak artists, e.g. music of Ilja Zeljenka and images of Jozef Grussmann, yet without any explicit spoken comments.

In addition to many other Slivka's films worthy of our attention, the documentary from Bulgaria *Man Is Leaving* (1968) is truly exceptional. "He reconsidered the traditionally descriptive ethnographic film works, (...) talking about the place of death in human life, about things that are common in all cultures," *The History of Slovak Cinematography* (2016) claims. The same publication also states that "During the period of 1963 – 1969, the authors of various generations, e.g. Karol Skřípský (1908), Vlado Kubenko (1924), Martin Slivka (1929), Dušan Hanák (1938) and Dušan Trancík (1946) created their masterpieces, their opuses". However, it was no coincidence; the political situation of the 1960s in our country but also anywhere else in the world seemed to universally inspire the best creators of different generations active in different areas of artistic life.

Martin Slivka used similar artistic approaches to creating films about art and film portraits of prominent Slovak artists (K. Plicka, L. Fulla, M. Rudavská, M. Jonáš, E. Špitz, M. Medvecká, E. Holéčzyová, or photographers P. Socháň and E. Lazišťan). Moreover, he remained faithful to ethnographic film, exploring folk culture in its essence (but through a modern film language), customs and folk theatre that he also reflected on in his academic publications. The publication *The Slovak Folk Theatre* (2002) is the result of his researching and seeking. His precise work preparations necessarily involved searching for co-creators who, in his opinion, would provide their future collective work with the best possible quality. That is why Milan Rúfus, one of the most outstanding personalities of Slovak literature, wrote comments on some of his films. Moreover, world-famous music artists such as Krzysztof Penderecki and Ilja Zeljenka were willing to link their music with Slivka's films. Martin Slivka's filmmaking skills were connected to his ethnological erudition, based on multidisciplinary approaches to the presented themes, as his unique studies on this topic clearly reflected.

He was a rebellious, stubborn debater; his former students, and there are many, are grateful not only for his professional supervision but also for the intellectual search they were lucky to experience while standing beside him. "It is difficult, if I may use his own words, to 'establish Martin Slivka in any structure'. He is a patriarchal tradition of the East and a Renaissance legacy of the West, all in one. His whole being completely smells of humanity," writes one of his most successful students, the film director Mário Homolka.

While appreciating his work, it is impossible to omit the 13-part television series *The Children of the Wind* (1990) about the lives of Gypsies in many European countries. His son Lubomír worked with him and despite many difficulties they experienced in many countries while making the series, they created a unique piece of art that is still unmatched in this area of creative expression and, as I dare say, it will remain unmatched for a long time. The film's value will definitely increase, since it offers a set of thorough, yet subtle expressions of the quickly vanishing Romani traditions. Martin Slivka is the winner of many prizes and awards, one of the most discussed Slovak filmmakers. Above all, he will be remembered as an inventive, wise and loving man, as a true renaissance person who knew how to understand human weaknesses and always tried to overcome these weaknesses through considerable doses of irony that was so typical for all his works.



Today Caricaturist

Milan Stano

*1949

Ladislav Volko

Painter, graphic designer, cartoonist. Publisher, editor, writer and connoisseur of everything connected with travelling around the world. His inspirations are tangible not only in images and writings he has created but also in endless considerations, comparisons and evaluations reflecting on his works. He is original, capable in each of the mentioned creative fields, unrepeatable. He is tough and hardworking. Most of his paintings are landscapes, images of rural environments and urban visions. Following his paintings, he travels across the country with his rack, sketchbook, colours and brushes. *"In his paintings, a calm landscape emerges, radiating harmony, balance; through urban motives and folk architecture, he creates poetic compositions,"* wrote a critic. The humorous images of Slovak folklore and folk traditions also define the cartoons he has been publishing since 1966: *"I love Slovak humour; the soul of the nation, the unbound joy of life, the sense of justice and the mockery of stupidity are all enchanted within it,"* wrote Milan Stano. That is why he also became the publisher, editor and later editor-in-chief of the independent satirical monthly magazine *Kocúrko*, published by *Štúdio humoru a satiry* since 1990. That is where he started to publish books as well. His cartoons are kind, ironic and provocative at the same time, always able to reflect the problems Slovakia has to face – after all, the reader should become acquainted with various cultural or historical contexts –; however, they also point out the more general questions of being, joy and ‘borderless’ stupidity. They represent timelessness and a peculiar dialogue with the universe. His heroes are mostly sketched with a closed line, and that is the hallmark of his work: *"I understand the caricature as a system of fine arts philosophy through which I can contribute to creating a certain atmosphere. For example, a humorous drawing allows me to create a sense of good mood, optimism, while a cartoon satire helps me create an atmosphere of criticism. The caricature is a good companion,"* wrote the author.

