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The role of the media in the post-socialist indoctrination of the masses

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ABSTRACT

The subject of the paper is the consideration of neoliberal, political and cultural indoctrination of the masses in the period of post - socialist transition through the media. The aim of this paper is to demystify neoliberalism, its ideological, philosophical, and monistic absolutizations, as well as quasi-neoliberal indoctrination of mass. Also, the aim of this paper is to explain the role of the media in the indoctrination of the masses. The paper is based on two hypotheses: first, that the media

in most cases were politically and financially dependent, i.e., rationally subjective actors in the information market and second, that the media in most countries in transition have abused their position, because they were an active accomplice in all forms of mass indoctrination. The paper uses common methods of social and economic sciences, including the methods of generalization, description, abstraction, comparison, induction and deduction. In conclusion, it is suggested that the role of the media in the period of post-socialist transition was essentially apologetic, and the confirmation of the basic hypothesis is stated.

KEY WORDS: *Media, culture, neoliberal indoctrination, political indoctrination, cultural indoctrination, post socialist societies.*

INTRODUCTION

Neoliberalism as an ideology (and especially quasi-neoliberalism as its abuse) has many negative and dark sides, which its proponents have never pointed out or commented on. On the contrary, they knowingly (but clumsily) hid them. That is why we have tried in many works to prove that mysticism and simulacrum have no place in economics, and other social sciences, because civil behaviour, rational choice, and competition are the essence of optimizing the social life. However, they have been distorted, reduced, blurred, and determined by a privileged minority, which has been politically, lobbyistically, and interestingly organized in most transition countries (Draskovic et al., 2021a). For three decades, this minority (the so-called new elites) has been directing, controlling, and exploiting the disorganized majority (broad masses of the people) in accordance with their networked interests, preferences, and goals. The media played a significant role in that. In such a context, economic freedoms, competition, private property, and entrepreneurship (Panikarova, et al., 2000) as a desirable democratic phenomenon, remained just a slogan and a promise. They have been replaced by new and sophisticated forms of institutional and other violence.

Indoctrination is the instruction of a doctrine or ideology in a dogmatic manner. It is safe to say we are indoctrinated by media. Culturally, they have always been the driving force behind things such as our values. Modern day mass media exists to sway our opinions, influence and control our behaviour and destroy our critical thinking skills. We are subjected to deceptive information which we consciously accept as truth and images or sounds which we subconsciously allow to dictate our perception of ourselves and others. Everything we see, hear or read permeates our minds and distorts our perception or judgment which in turn affects our behaviour.

Media intended to reach the large audience/masses. They it entertains, educates, informs and facilitates cultural transformation between generations (Smith, 2008). In this sense, the media is that authority ("*fourth power*") of the society which scru-

tinizes all the three other powers of the state (executive, legislation & judiciary). Many authors (Gergen, 1999; Khan, 2012; Aykurt & Sesen, 2017; Schrape, 2016) are unanimous in their assessment that the “*media, as a powerful social system, plays an important role in creating a person’s sense of reality*”. Also, some authors tried to elucidate the importance of media, culture and their relationship and influence over each other. At the same time, some of them (Showkat, 2017, p. 55) emphasized “*the belief that in its wider cultural sense, the media largely reinforced those values and norms which had already achieved a wide consensual foundation*”. Others (Gunther et al., 2001; Gunther and Christen, 2002; Bajohr, 2006) emphasized the role of “*the complimentary and independent media*” in creating a democratic society. Others (Geertz, 1973; Schein, 1984) rightly observed the enormous importance of culture as “*integrating mechanism*”, that is “*the social or normative glue that holds together a potentially diverse group of organisational members*”, which is manifested at to distinguish three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions. The key relationship between media and culture is described by Showkar (Ibid.) as follows: “*Media has a great effect (political, cognitive, attitudinal, behavioural, ideological and psychological) on our social behaviour which is a part of our culture*”. A. Dakroury (2014) considers: “*Media and culture are interconnected; levels of understanding various cultures influence media contents, meanwhile media platforms and contents impact cultural and day-to-day practices*”.

J. Kitchens et al. (2003) expound that media usage is both a reason and result for political behaviour, that the cause of media usage is related to looking for information from various sources. People can produce and symbolise cultural identities through the media. Verdugo & Fierro (2014) found that “*communication competence is a complex process of adaptation, understanding, and acceptance of media content, highlighting the ability of subjects to critically own the media through cultural contextualization mechanisms specific to each individual*”. A. Dakroury (Ibid.) properly asserts: “*Media narratives and discourses are created within different forms of texts and images that are complexly related to the cultural perceptions and practices of both those who produce and consume them*”.

Almost 35 years have passed since the revolutions of the late 1980s terminated totalitarian rule in Central Europe. Many things have changed radically in the meantime, but equally important as the shifts themselves is our perception of these changes and of their effects.

Uncertainty reigned (and still exists) as to what would follow in the wake of socialism. In the sense: where they lead market reforms and expansion of global neo-liberalism? G. Spivak (1999, p. 356) wrote that „*today in the post-Soviet world, privatization is the kingpin of economic restructuring for globalisation ... a new attempt to impose unification on the world by and through the 'market'*“. Post socialism is an umbrella term for the uncertain times of various transitions that followed in

socialism's wake. The post socialism is a cultural and social fact. He has various cultural forms and practices in formerly socialist cultural spaces.

With the collapse of communism (the ideologues of which pretended to have discovered the universal laws governing the historical movement of human society and believed in their own capability to plan its “*radiant futures*” accordingly) human history has become as a story with an open end. Why? It is clear to everyone that a huge price has been paid for the changes. But many are not sure if "liberation" really happened, or if unfreedom (dependency) just changed its clothes? That is, how far are they and is it even possible to achieve freedom and democracy in post-socialist societies?

1. INHERITED CULTURE

Inadequate cultural and civilizational environment (Yerznkyan et al., 2017), etatist traditions, introduction of a new elitist order, use of the state as a screen for the manifestation of expansive nomenclature interests and non-market appropriation of its significant resources, propaganda of "absolute truth", etc. - all this has led to a disastrous and long-term tendency that has delayed development. Regardless of the propagated illusion of idyll and progress, socialism was a conflicted and crisis society, in which problems and contradictions accumulated and intensified. Over time, they grew into dissatisfaction, open conflicts, and a general crisis of socialism as a movement, practice, and idea. The success of ideas depends on the people who implement them. When these ideas collapse, there is usually a change of leadership with many previous system links, as well as the introduction of new institutional solutions. However, when institutional changes are implemented slowly and inadequately, old problems become more acute and new ones open up (Draskovic et al., 2017). This has happened in the SEE countries. The decades-long domination of party-bureaucratic centralism (essentially: dirigisme) over the economic base and social superstructure, along with ideological improvisations, has conditioned the reproduction of stagnation and crisis. All reforms undertaken were palliative, unsuccessful, and compromised. The dominance of some socialist habits has been prolonged, and especially wasteful spending according to the needs of rare and hastily enriched individuals.

Unlike culture as the most general social milieu, which essentially consists of many subcultures, different teachings and trends (multi-culturalism, which has no authoritarian inner core), each ideology strives for the privileged status of addressed social domination. Because of this, the attempt to impose neoliberal ideology as a neoliberal culture to the world is a great deception. A feature of every ideology is the desire of its bearers to spread concepts beyond the boundaries of the system ruled by that ideology. The neoliberal aspiration to impose its value system as universal (culture) is a monistic-totalitarian and highly interest-driven project of the ruling elites (large capital). This project cynically implies the existence of media indoc-

trination, through which it will be to justify: exploitation of subordinates, various forms of monopoly, large differences in development and wealth, direct and indirect privileges, abuse of the state institutions, rule of law deficit, domination of neo colonialism, degradation of human freedoms and rights, ignoring the common good and social interest, etc. All of the aforesaid drastically deforms not only culture (as a general social wrapper and, conditionally, a synonym for informal institutions – Alesina and Guliano, 2015), but also all value criteria, preferences, needs, and motivation.

command economy, petty privileges, paternalism, totalitarianism, authoritarianism ...	←	<i>Socialist experiment (dirigisme and Marxist dogmatism)</i>	→	crisis and rare palliative reforms, low external indebtedness, weak economic development and significant growth of socio-cultural capital
↓				
narrow and great interests of the new "elites", recombination, abuse and fiasco of institutions, collapse of state resources and their transformation into private property	←	<i>Post socialist "transition" (quasi- neoliberal monism and dogmatism)</i>	→	spreading and reproducing general crises, large increases in external debt, stagnation of development and erosion of socio- cultural capital

Figure 1. The logic of Path dependence in SEE countries

Source: Delibasic, 2022, p. 245

Socialist “evolution” created many degenerative elements, which continued their destructive effects in the later period. This was especially felt in the part of weak economic development, democracy, the tradition of civil society, and the alienation of centers of power (nomenclature of power). These elements have significantly conditioned the continuation of disastrous *methods of governing* through various divisions, slogans, false promises, external indebtedness, formal institutional and structural reforms, declarative rule of law, and fictitious democracy. A metastatic and recombined mutation of the old dirigisme into the new one was carried out, which resulted in new and socially more severe deviations. The essence of the new problems was in continuing the old trend of opposing real institutional changes, but now due to much larger and more visible interest claims of the government and its

alienation from the people. Methodology of that alienation became comprehensive and sophisticated. It included domination and almost total control in all segments of society, parasitism, opportunism, false patriotism, apologetics, strengthening power, elitism, and privilege with the inviolability of party careerism and clientelism (Delibasic, 2022).

This has enabled the spread of subservience ideology, nepotism, negative selection of staff, and ignorance. It was accompanied by party employment and the creation of a "*private state*", dominated by alternative institutions, run by the top party coalitions in power. The system of social motivation has been unscrupulously destroyed, value criteria have been degraded, as well as the principles of social justice and responsibility. The uncontrolled and unlimited system of non-market (privileged) enrichment has been tacitly affirmed, without the possibility of proving the origin of property, with significant criminalization of society. Unnecessary and dangerous problematization and abuse of national identity issues continued. The economic crisis, rare and dubious investments, and living standards were regulated (serviced) by borrowing abroad. Democratization and the protection of human rights and ecology have been ignored. The new leaderships of the ruling parties (coalitions) continued the tradition of establishing production of (social) relations at will, but allegedly on new messianic (neoliberal) recipes, which created a disastrous system of elitist domination through the aforementioned alternative institutions. They were monistic, voluntaristic, highly interest-driven, exploitative, anti-developmental, and quasi-democratic, based on bureaucratic privileges and quasi-neoliberal dogmas. In this way, the promised development wheel of transition reforms has been turned upside down.

<i>Alternative institutions</i>					
<i>impact (abuse)</i>	<i>deform</i>	<i>control</i>	<i>dominate over</i>	<i>subdue and adapt to themselves</i>	<i>reproduce crisis</i>
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
<i>Formal and informal institutions</i>					

Figure 2. Negative role of alternative institutions in the SEE countries

Source: Delibasic, 2022, p. 248.

After three decades of the regime, which could rightly be called "*post-socialist neo-imperialism*", it is clear that no success has been achieved in any of the main directions of transition: privatization, democratization (with the rule of law), economic stabilization, and real institutional change. Uncontrolled quasi-liberalization was established, which served only the so-called "new elites". The basic problems and functions of economic philosophy (as well as the Pareto optimum) have been forgotten, among which the *origin of wealth* is primary. However, this "*forgetfulness*" was not accidental: it originated from the development of Yugoslav economic

thought, which was greatly influenced by authoritarian rule, etatist dogmatism, voluntarism, formalism, subjectivism and utopianism.

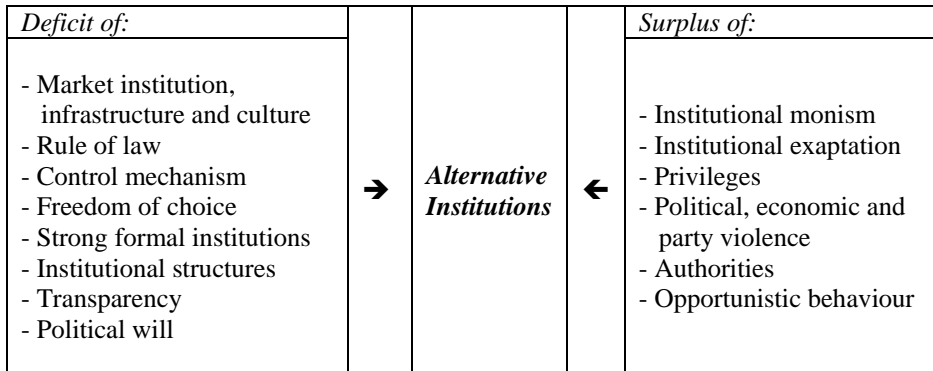


Figure 3. Hypothetical model of the formation of alternative institutions

Source: Draskovic et al., 2021, p. 88.

Observing the transition and its numerous paradoxes¹ in general, it can be stated that it fundamentally contradicted the dialectic and strategy of modern pluralistic development, which verified the need for resource-allocation, organizational, motivational, informational, and institutional interdependence, which must characterize the ideal of the so-called "*acceptable world*". Therefore, it is necessary to explain the modern post-socialist paradox and the phenomenon of post-totalitarianism (or: neo-totalitarianism), which exists in the environment of weak formal and informal institutions, and their faithful satellite and determinant - alternative institutions. It can be concluded that this phenomenon has been imposed on the society by disguised and selfish proponents of *neo-dirigisme*, who abused the state functions entrusted to them. In such a context, economic freedoms, competition, private property and entrepreneurship (as mass phenomena), democracy and the rule of law – remained only as slogans and promises.

2. NEOLIBERALISM IN PRACTICE

Neoliberalism was and remains an ideological attempt to impose a universal and submissive concept of power, which Western elites exported to many post-socialist and other underdeveloped countries. They presented it as the only (non-alternative)

¹ Apologetics and Democracies (abuse of K. Popper) of "*spontaneous order*" and "*minimal state*" (abuse of F. Hayek and A. Smith), marginalization of institutions and mass individualism (abuse of D. North), neoliberalism and alternative institutions in relation to the institution - freedoms - violence, as well as national interests - (abuse of Mc Auley and J. Buchanan).

solution to all social and economic problems. Neoliberal ideology has been presented as a supposedly scientifically based, socially, economically, politically, geopolitically and geoeconomically useful philosophy – as „*the end of history*“ (Fukuyama, 1992). However, its basis was neither theoretical, nor consistent. It was an attempt of interest parties (organizations and individuals) to present this interest-driven and highly unjust ideology as sustainable and infallible.

Clearly, all the above interpretations have not been relevant in practice, which has shown the obvious difference between theoretical „*speeches*“ and completely opposite practical manifestations, or the consequences of neoliberalism. It is symptomatic that even those authors (Saad-Filho, Johnston, 2005) have noticed large proportions between theory and practice, and thus they have concluded that it is impossible to define neoliberalism purely theoretically. Viewed through the prism of several key indicators of social and economic development (the rule of law, individual freedom in mass proportions, democratic governance level, monopolization level, opportunitarian behaviour, elitism in society, poverty, unemployment and violence in society, under which North et al. (2009) imply various forms of social pathology) it can be concluded with certainty that both of these aspects – methodological and institutional – have been significantly negated (degraded, compromised, misused, and neglected) in social and economic reality.

Long-term practice in most SEE countries has shown that there was a real and big discrepancy between neoliberalism as a metaphysical ideal and its controversial practical quasi-manifestations. It is a controversial, inconsistent (Garrett, 2013, p.81) and unsuccessful concept of social development based on neoliberal economic policy as the dominant form of state regulation. It proved its irrelevance, unilateralism, inconsistency, and unsustainability in SEE countries. Namely, numerous limitations and very poor results have emerged in practice. Primarily the key social and formal institutions have been destabilized, and especially those that by its nature must be protected from the market competition (healthcare, education, and science). Highly crisis practice has shown that liberalization is not the same as violence against it. In this way, neoliberalism was manifested as a tried-and-true method of ignoring reality. The social and economic practice has relativized the mythical neoliberal propaganda about the eternity of spontaneous evolution (F. Hayek) and the universality of the „*market self-regulation*“ principle (Fukuyama, 1992). Nevertheless, monistic neoliberal instrumentalizations and institutional improvisations are still present in some SEE countries. Contrary, social and economic reality in developed countries has verified the imperative developmental need for institutional convergences, combinations, and synergy (institutional pluralism).

In the post-socialist countries, neo-liberalism has had in theory an apologetic function, and in practice ideological and interest (redistribution) function, which is linked to macroeconomic politics and parties in power (Delibasic, 2019). The neoliberal experiment was a strong ideological ground for strengthening autocratic, irremovable, and corrupt authorities, rent-oriented, and opportunistic behaviour of the

"*new elites*", and criminalization of society. It weakened cultural, educational (Sedziuviene and Weinhardt, 2018), and other value criteria of society and all economic indicators. The programmed and sophisticated application of neoliberal economic policy conceptually generated a conglomerateically complex, negative, and contradictory economic and social context, which had its doctrinal, terminological, institutional, developmental, cognitive, strategic, interest-oriented, redistributive, property, civilizational, geo-political, and geo-economic sense. This context has been marked by numerous practical quasi-manifestations: paradoxes, contradictions, problems, robberies, frauds, myths, restraints, systemic corruption, monopolies, control and inhibition of change and freedom, greedy, limitless, and non-market enrichment, and strengthening the power of privileged individuals (Delibasic, 2019).

All this was constantly followed by theoretical and media apologetics. The result was devastating: the constant collapse of state resources and their transformation into the private wealth of rare and privileged individuals, most often from the ranks of government nomenclatures and their lobbyists. In this way, the neoliberal experiment had exclusively "quasi" characteristics, in which amorphous, anti-people, anti-developmental, and anti-civilizational abuse of the state and functions of power by irresponsible individuals came to the fore. This quasi-neoliberalism was reproduced through a specific quasi-institutional monism, that is, through the interest-rhetorical absolutization of freedoms and markets, which relativized everything. In practice, it manifested itself as an immoral, inhuman, brutal, chaotic, crisis, hegemonic, and essentially neo-imperial system (order) of power, rule, violence, exploitation, and greed of power structures. However, this was not the first time that the peoples of post-socialist countries hastily clung to promises, to unmake everything (or almost everything) they had worshiped for decades, and then (today) to bow nostalgically over what they once had. In the aforesaid statement, we do not intend to advocate a return to the old, but to point out one of the general causes of great social problems, deformations, and creation of a new dogma, with an uncertain duration.

The forcing of quasi-institutional monism (market type) with various market constraints has contributed to the flourishing of uncontrolled forms of markets, which have nothing in common with the institution of efficient market regulation. A logical consequence followed: crisis elements reproduced (low standard of living, social stratification, weak motivation system, unemployment, declining production and all economic indicators, spreading social pathology, criminalization of economy and society, systemic corruption, grey economy, insufficient rule of law and other). This has deformed and reduced the economic reality and the general institutional structure. Real institutional changes have lagged behind other transitional changes in time, structure, quality, quantity and function, instead of being their support, stimulus, and guarantor. Privileged interests have been turned into the sole guide and motive for economic and any other behaviour. This has turned post-socialist society into a specific managerial organization in which all social values were marginalized

and adapted to the greedy “culture” of business, which was consistently accompanied by destructive and irremovable government policies (Draskovic, 2020, p. 15).

In addition, there was a large gap between formally established economic institutions and economic behaviour in practice, which was far from regular norms. Many market substitutes, mutant and pseudo-market structures, which have only imitated the market infrastructure, have rooted. Competition has been reduced to these primitive market structures. Rigid and inconsistent quasi-neoliberal "development" experiments have been applied in the context of inadequate (imported and imposed) macroeconomic recipes, on the one hand, and inadequate post-socialist microeconomic environments and underdeveloped institutional environments, on the other. This has led to catastrophic and lasting consequences. The absence of institutional pluralism as an important development criterion has caused the application of anti-development strategies, which have neglected knowledge (Mikalauskiene and Atkociuniene, 2019), innovation, production, and employment (Human Development - Linhartova, 2021). In such conditions, the degree of entropy and unsystematicness, external indebtedness, and various forms of dependence of SEE countries were constantly increasing.

2. NEOLIBERAL INDOCTRINATION

The demise of state socialism in Eastern Europe triggered a profound restructuring of individual and collective relationships, that is - socialist cultures. Narratives of the socialist past became important and served as vehicles for making sense of the post-socialist transformation and for orienting one’s own sense of identity and belonging (Mark, 2010; Rabikowska, 2013). Liberal thinkers conceived of culture as a free realm of creative pursuit at once separate from and guaranteed by economic and political activity. Similar vision they prophesied neoliberals, promising that liberal capitalist democracy guaranteed freedom. But, neoliberals’ theory of culture no view culture as a protected, autonomous sphere. They believe that cultural activity is indissolubly connected to economic and political conditions. Cultural activity serves the production and maintenance of particular social orders. The market order not have emerged without the cultural traditions and values, bolstered by myth, faith, art, and law, that guarantee its functioning.

Various methods, forms, elements and rhetoric were used for the radical replacement of the decades-long "socialist culture" with a post-socialist one, and in particular the so-called "neoliberal" culture (conditionally - "reform"). In this sense, in this paper, neoliberal indoctrination (as the sum of all applied methods) is conditionally identified with the broader (more general) term of neoliberal culture. Regardless of the evident crisis of the socialist project (experiment) on a global scale, as well as in all local environments, it was not easy in many countries and nations to quickly "break" many socialist ideals and entrenched "values", long-standing socialist practice and the corresponding "culture". represented a seemingly stable and

tenacious "glue" in the decades-long process of building a new society. It was originally envisioned as a just, free, non-exploitative and non-conflict society, without admixture of capitalist elements (alienation, inequality, insecurity, etc.). But, unfortunately, it did not foresee the existence of some elementary and indisputable values of civil society. In their place, on the altar of socialism, enormous sacrifices of the people were made, with equality at a very low level of living standards and palliative reforms that were never successful.

Three facts are important for our article:

- First, culture is learned, not inherited. The cultural elements of one culture borrowed and incorporated in recipient culture are called diffusion. The processes of diffusion and acculturation aim to bring some kind of cultural changes;
- Second, *sometimes diffusion is due to intermediate contact that occurs through the third party* (here we mean the mass media, which has a political and a persuasive / manipulate power over us). "*Political propaganda, advertising and the so called 'mind-bending' power of the media are long-standing causes of debate and concern. Media has a great effect on our social behaviour which is a part of our culture*", considers N. Showkat (2015, p. 55); and
- Third, In the majority of post-socialist countries, neoliberalism manifested itself in its opposite, as quasi-neoliberalism, in the manifestation and phenomenological sense, which decisively influenced the formation of the so-called "privileged predation culture" (our term).

In practice, neoliberal culture was based on behaviours that misuse power, disregard equality, and enable oppression, foster the existence of authority to control resource allocation (so-called "cult of leaders"), ignore to social inequalities... In addition, it was based on concept of deregulation and individualism, who contributed to the above behaviours, privileges, non-market enrichment and various forms of violence in society. Neoliberalism is a political ideology that advocates for the market to foster economic growth and innovation... supports deregulation, austerity, privatization, capitalism, and individualism... place limits on government spending, regulation, and public ownership. Neoliberalism is generally associated with policies aimed at achieving economic stabilization through governmental deregulation, privatization, decentralization, and individualism.

In the pursuit of "a better life, democracy and the elimination of injustices and privileges", the old socialist cultural values were quickly replaced (the so-called "*plush revolution*") - with new values and new experiments. An indiscriminate and, in a large number of cases, negative shift (inversion) of system values was carried out, with the neglect of exemplary models and civilizational achievements. Instead of the internal imposition of socialist changes, new social reforms and changes

(conditionally: "capitalist", but essentially: imperialist) were imposed from the outside, by international factors. Instead of state dirigism, with a monolithic one-party (monist, communist) system, neoliberal dirigism with a formal multi-party (pluralist) system was established.

Collective (public, social, state, "everyone's and nobody's") property was uncritically, uncontrollably, unjustly and rapaciously transformed into private property. Instead of enriching society, privileged individuals from the ranks of the government's nomenclature became rich. Instead of formal state institutions, alternative institutions were formed (from the shadows), managed by party leaders and the so-called "new elites", in their own interest and to the detriment of the masses. Instead of prosperity, there was a long-term crisis, without any perspective for the promised better life, with unfathomable consequences and problems, of which perhaps the most serious are unemployment, insecurity and numerous post-socialist deviations (criminalization of society, pronounced social pathology, numerous negative externalities, inefficient institutions, government deficit of the law, spread of social poverty, etc.). Instead of the former bureaucratic centralism and the promised democracy, neoliberal autocracy and clientelism of the government was established. Social and institutional coercion have not been reduced; they have only changed their clothes. Instead of a progressive middle class of society, degressive "*efficient entrepreneurs*" who have become rich through privileged and criminal jobs dominate. Privileged and vulgarized individualism, based on monopolistic and lobbyist interests, with thick layers of rhetorical and apologetic facade, replaced disempowered collectivism.

Competition was cruelly reduced and turned into protectionism of enriched "individuals" towards their own impoverished people. Instead of knowledge and solid education at all levels, mass low-quality (not to say: fake) diplomas were introduced, which affirmed ignorance. The "state of development" was replaced by the so-called "grabbing state". It was characterized by mass privatization of profits and nationalization of losses. Because of all this, the propagated neoliberalism was meaningless and compromised and turned into quasi-neoliberalism. Culture inevitably shared the fate of all the aforementioned changes and erosion of social capital. It transformed itself and adapted to the inhumane, immoral and greedy trends of substitution of human values with material and consumerist values. Culture, like society, seems to be ideologically and dictatorially determined, manipulated and changed, according to one's needs and interests. In this sense, the "liberation" of society and the economy in many segments led to the liberation from culture (that is, to its significant, mercantilist, dogmatic and apophatic reduction, which generated non-culture)!

Neoliberal culture was built on lies and broken promises, on the one hand, and the sinister elitist drive of self-interested greed, on the other. The story of pluralism (interest, politics, democracy, freedom, media, etc.) has been replaced by materialistic monism (i.e., enrichment of privileged individuals by non-market methods - at

any cost), party centralization and almost complete control over political and economic processes. The story of institutionalization has been turned into its opposite. Mr. Kolodko (2010, p. 61) noted that in the era of pluralistic hyper-institutionalism and hyper-complementarity of market and state regulation ("invisible hands" and "visible heads") in many transition states, neoliberals denied their synergy and forced institutional monism. Quasi-neoliberal recipes resembled an elitist, destructive and greedy concept of power, which tends to turn into omnipotence, i.e., total domination (of individual states, parties in power, corporations and private property of privileged oligarchs). It was about a new immoral formula of local and global neo-imperialism and neo-totalitarianism for the maintenance and expansion of hegemony, as well as about a virus with a simultaneous double effect: the wastefulness of one and the survival of the other.

In the process of long-term and drastic degradation of social and human values, when everything (or almost everything) got out of control and when retrograde processes were richly rewarded materially, it is clear that the social and economic crisis had a negative impact on culture in multiple ways. Regardless, the forced contradiction between the individual and the collective was enough to lead to cultural destabilization and degradation. Because individually and collectively are inseparable components of not only institutional, but also cultural arrangements. A surplus of individualism, dogmatism, dictates, privileges, government and criminalization of society followed by a deficit of the rule of law, propagated massism and pluralism always leads to the degradation and indoctrination of culture. Neoliberal deregulation essentially corresponded to alternative quasi-institutional regulation. Essentially and methodologically, it had an individual-conductor character. It directly contributed to the reproduction of the braking anti-development mechanism. The forcing and dominance of selective (privileged) individuality was the basis for the existence (not to say dominance) of economic unfreedom, that is, the reduction of choice in economic and social reality, as well as enormous non-market enrichment. All this led to the manifestation of the key neoliberal paradox in society - between the propagated liberalization and practical violence against it!

3. THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL INDOCTRINATION

Despite differing historical, social, political, and cultural traditions and different forms "*democratic regimes of power*", post-socialist media culture it was influenced by various factors: both exogenous ("Americanisation" and "strategic communication") and endogenous (modernization, secularization and commercialization). They are all ultimately contributed to a homogenization of systems media culture, rendering less relevant the particular distinctions among individual countries of transition. Hayek's idea that neoliberalism (embodied in the free market) is the main weapon against the elements of neo totalitarianism has been turned upside down by false

(alibi) reformers into the culture and ideology of neo totalitarianism! In that sense, they used for indoctrination and controlling political, economic and social processes the latest information and communication technologies, the so-called tools of soft power (media).

Certain (mainly dependent) media have significantly contributed to the political and cultural indoctrination of post-socialist society. However, honourable media exceptions must also be mentioned, which indicated that powerful individuals "have earthly and underground power", indicating the existence of destructive elements of total control in society. The comments of J. Körbler (*Vjesnik*, 19.11.2008, p. 9), who in the article "Freedom of the media or money" criticize the large and irresponsible behaviour ("blame") of the media on many important issues, are undoubtedly current. He correctly states that the media did not trample on their own freedom for the sake of money freedom. It has become a universal problem, which has greatly degraded the culture of the media through inaccurate and manipulated information. The mentioned problem affects the most general issues of culture, democracy, freedom of expression, freedom in general and media culture in particular. Media culture is too burdened with sensationalism, apologetics, false ideas about the existing world and its functioning, double standards, deficit of critical spirit, false value standards and criteria and frequent silence about important social problems. In this way, the propagated freedom of the media is paradoxically negated.

In a long period, neoliberal "reformers" have found ways to successfully, sophisticatedly and chorus propagate neoliberal ideas in many media, even though they contradicted social and economic reality. They did it through inept, self-aggrandizing and commissioned media interviews, monologues, messages and idyllic images of neoliberal iconography. In doing so, they justified anything and everything, and took care only of their own interests. They didn't mind that in the wake of the strongest neoliberal campaigns for private property, private initiative and entrepreneurship, they were collecting huge funds from the highest positions in state companies!

Both then and today, it is completely clear that it was a simplified, one-sided, primitive and unrealistic propaganda formula of a neoliberal experiment that failed. He didn't even have a chance to succeed, because he was based on fraud (false promises) and empty rhetorical myths. Thanks to media support, representatives of neoliberalism (so-called "reformers") have turned state regulation into a public enemy. This is evidenced by the permanent and persistent advertising of the so-called "*minimum states*". In this way, public opinion was manipulated in a virtuosic, virtual and long (but methodologically extremely wrong and unscientific) manner in conditions of almost total control of political, economic, quasi-market, quasi-competitive and other processes, among which, unfortunately, educational ones are included. However, it is true that certain media did their job correctly and reported on numerous negative social phenomena.

3.1 Media subjectivity and objectivity

The concept of media subjectivity is one of the important integral characteristics, primarily from the aspect of their relationship with the authorities, but also with business and society in general. It is about their role in the political system and the development of the concrete society. At the same time, it is clear that the degree of subjectivity of the media directly proportionally depends on the degree of their economic (and other) dependence. In unstable socio-economic and political conditions, which characterize more or less all SEE countries, the media have naturally become full participants in the information market. Regardless of the debatability and contradiction of their mission, especially in the part of its research role, the media field is not immune to dependence, and therefore not to subjectivity. It is also clear that behind these media features is a multiple and invisible super-control. It is one of the paradoxes of our modern times, which objectively exists in an apparently transparent media space. After such thoughts and observations, the question can be asked: how much of the mentioned characteristics were influenced by those invisible controlling forces, and how much was the lack of quality, creativity and professionalism of the journalistic branch, which has not found its own respectable identity for a long time!?

Media subjectivity is seen in the literature as "rational" and "systemic". The first is correlated with the degree of dependence in a competitive environment. The second is defined by the position in institutionalized relations or the degree of power of the media discourse (e.g., the Internet network plays the role of an active subject between objects and people). The mentioned context is not important because of the theory, but because of the observation of excessive and unmeasured media promotion in practice. It refers to various "powerful people" ("leaders", "political heroes", "elites" and "gurus") from the ranks of the government, or their messages to the audience. In the post-socialist period, they are most often extremely positively represented in the media, regardless of their (frequent) primitive, false, archaic, dominant, paradoxical, mythomaniac, indoctrinist, populist, self-interested, archaic, apologetic, dogmatic and ideological background. What was important was only a targeted and multiplied message, in various situations, formats and time intervals, which was supposed to influence the mass formation of opinions. This was exactly the case with the application of supposed neoliberalism in the SEE countries. The media did everything to make the mentioned messages seem indisputable ("absolute truths"), legitimate, "understandable" and easy to remember. This is how elitist representations of certain figures from the government (or those close to the government) were created, which turned into specific idolatry, even though they evidently aspired to power, omnipotence, myth and a dangerous cult of personality. Through these leading figures, their party-clan institutions (most often alternative), which were unassailable in society for decades, were simultaneously affirmed.

Subjugation was a recognizable and ubiquitous media path, which ideally fit into contemporary forms of neo-totalitarianism and sophisticated dependence of the

broad masses of the people. The basic mechanism that served as the populist basis of the aforementioned tendencies and manifestations was the apparent, ritual and quasi-neoliberal ideology of the alleged "good" and "innocent" government, which "flawlessly" initiates and controls all processes in society, for the promised and propagated "welfare of the people" (which was barely surviving in constant crises).

We will not enter into numerous theoretical polemics and interpretations of media objectivity, which is impossible in the absolute sense, as claimed by E. Dennis and J. Merrill (1944, p. 15). They proved that the "trap of subjectivity" is natural and inevitable. But it is quite enough for journalists to separate their own opinion and emotions from the facts and allow both sides to express their point of view of the truth. It is a good way for the audience to get the most complete information. The problem of objectivity is not and cannot be a journalist's belief, position and world view. The problem is fan and interest bias, ideological and/or other fanaticism, which are aimed at manipulating the audience. And there was plenty of that during the transition period. Many media outlets acted on behalf of the interests of certain financial or political power centers. The media, as well as their mentors, knew very well how the opinions of the masses can change radically. It is an opportunity to mention the opposite opinion, which E. Vljaki (2013) stated in his, as it seems to us, arbitrary "*criticism for the sake of criticism*" by E. Herman and N. Chomsky (1988). Namely, he idealistically believes that the elites cannot use the media to indoctrinate the masses, because "the masses are not modelling clay". In this sense, he believes that "the media can only reinforce or nuance the basic values of the masses, and cannot radically change them." It is as if the media did not make a big contribution to the three-decade immutability of the government, inadequate methods of governance and the spread of quasi-neoliberal dogma in the period of the post-socialist transition. The echo of the orchestrated media support and propaganda of the pernicious neoliberal ideology overpowered even numerous scientific criticisms, not just the naive understandings and beliefs of the masses.

CONCLUSION

In most post socialist countries, new dogmas, absolutizations, myths, improvisations and monistic privileged choices have emerged, based on path dependence experiences, supplemented by the application of new quasi-neoliberal experiments, and sublimated in the formation and strong action of alternative institutions (from the shadow, parallel, essentially criminal). They actually become the mediator and controller of key relations between the state, the people, and formal institutions. They have become a mechanism of neo-totalitarian order of domination of privileged persons and groups. The biggest contradictions of transition were observed between their leaders (bearers, creators) and outsiders (observers, peoples). They have resulted in palliativeness, failure, increased criminalization of society, opportunistic behaviour, and enslavement of formal and informal institutions by alternative insti-

tutions. It all sublimated in the general crisis. As a result, the transition has lost the epithet of universality, integrity, and competence, and thus the trust of the people in their positive outcome. The boundless quasi-neoliberal dynamics of deregulation broke through the moral and institutional constraints of economic reality and rational human behaviour. Therefore, transition reforms need to be seriously reformed.

New times require new ways of thinking and behaving, which should be reduced to adaptation to the achievements of civilization in order to be actively involved in modern world processes and trends. Therefore, an institutional and developmental alternative is urgently needed. It is contained in all exemplary models of developed countries, which relativize empty, manipulative, unprofessional, hypocritical, and interest-oriented stories about freedom and the market. Unfortunately, the transition countries have failed to provide institutional innovation (even institutional adaptation), but have unsuccessfully tried to change institutional imitations and improvisations. Because of that, the paths and side roads of the transition were much more destructive than creative. Democracy must exist as a meta-institution and part of socio-cultural capital. The influence of political processes must not be directly and rent-oriented reflected on development economic processes. Politics must not be a destiny and a privilege, but an area of collective achievement of set goals (and not individually set goals)! Reducing, relativizing, and controlling the dominance of politics over the economy requires the dominance of institutions over politics and the economy. Real, strong, quality, and efficient institutions must be treated as a social good, because they enable control over all social processes and the elimination of possible destructive effects and tendencies.

The practice of post-socialist countries which have implemented neoliberal ideology, philosophy, culture and the alleged messianic recipe for development, has immorally legitimized egoism and individualism of privileged. Privileged interests have been turned into the sole guide and motive for economic and every other behaviour. This has turned society into a managerial organization in which all social values have been marginalized and adapted to the greedy culture of business. What has long been called neoliberalism in literature and rhetoric was actually a cover for the plunder of the people (middle and lower classes) by the top authorities (as the leaders of the alleged new elites and big capital). In most transition countries, however, the seductiveness of neoliberalism was much greater in terms of ideological symbolism, rhetoric, and false promises, than in the real and chaotic life (results) of post-socialist civilization.

The article phenomenologically and critically identified and demystified the interest connection between the media and neoliberalism, which, among other things, manifested itself through the indoctrination of the masses. The media apologetically portrayed the role of alleged "reformers" and "new elites", which had a negative impact on social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural and institutional development. This descriptive analysis has clearly shown that neoliberal "culture" is the result of systemic and institutional fiasco, which in a paradoxical and organized way

(through abuse, manipulation and indoctrination) enabled the domination of privileged elections and interest-driven individualism over freedoms, knowledge, institutions, and truths. It is certainly the result of the influence of traditional culture and dogmatic thinking, susceptibility to some anachronistic cults, myths and prejudices, but also the actions of neoliberal ideology and "culture". Instead of individual greed and the fraudulent ("cultural") neoliberal Grail, socio-economic development must be sought in civilizational adjustment - political, economic, institutional, geopolitical, geoeconomics, ecological, ethical, scientific and educational.

For decades, on all meridians, it has been lived on paradoxical and ironic consensus of fear, domination, blackmail, interests, stratification, division, forced integration, changes of identity, greed, negative selection, apologetics, indoctrination and much more, what confuses common sense. And it's all happening with abundant cooperation (assistance) of the media, under the thick and blurry layers of apparent democracy, doomed to betrayal by the dirigistic forces of power, alienated from the people (who elected them)!

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