

ie. Nonetheless, the film can be taken as evidence in favour of Levi's observation: "Although the flames of nationalism fully flooded the region in [the] 1990s, during the mid and late 1980s they were carefully and patiently nurtured by the 'ethnically concerned' intellectual and cultural elites" (Levi, 2007: p. 11). *Rams and Mammoths* actually confronted the discourses of a new construction of ethnic identity in Yugoslav federal republics, which Levi has in mind. The film did this at the time these discourses were entering the public sphere, and it meets them head-on by exposing social phenomena of ethnic myths and prejudices.

### *Ethnicity in the Balkans under Communism*

The expression of ethnic identity in multi-ethnic communist conglomerates was not subject to indiscriminate repression, nor did the departure of Marxist ideology create an "ideological vacuum", which then presumably began to fill up with nationalist ideologies. The unfounded hypotheses that ethnicity as such was suppressed under communism (on behalf of the category of social class) opened the way for a simplistic line of reasoning, according to which the former repression caused the later outbreak of nationalism in a pathological form. This kind of view could be observed soon before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall in Western journalists' columns (in *Newsweek*, *Time*, etc.). On the other hand, claims of ethnic identity being repressed under communism were first uttered in Slovenia by some politically conservative groups, which also developed conceptual platforms for newly established right-wing political parties. The most prominent such group in Slovenia was gathered around the journal *Nova revija*, which, as it happens, had been published from the mid-1980s onward and had received subsidies from the (formally still "communist") government. Dozens of citations in various texts published in *Nova revija* could be offered in support of this assertion. They more or less affirmed this claim, just in different words: "The *national crisis* stems from an underestimation and neglect – typical of communist ideology – of pressing national issues and from suppression of legitimate national demands. They just sweep them under the carpet of a phantasmal 'unity of the working class' or 'working people' and their supposedly unified 'international' interests (Urbančič, 1989: p. 580).

In fact, communism placed the attribute of ethnicity within its (symbolic) system. "Hard data are hard to get at, but it seems that around 1950 the states of Europe had achieved an unprecedented ethnic homogenization of their populations" (Therborn, 1995: p. 47). These processes also took